

“I HOPE I GET IT. I DO HOPE I FIGURE IT OUT.”: PRE-SERVICE SECONDARY  
LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS’ NEGOTIATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’  
LITERACIES

by

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B.A., Friends University, 2002  
M.A.T., Friends University, 2006

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

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## **Abstract**

As the curriculum of American schools becomes more standardized, while teachers face the elevated levels of accountability, and definition of adolescent literacy rapidly expands, teacher education programs must do more to help pre-service teachers prepare for the realities of public education (Boyd, Ariail, Williams, Jocson, & Sachs, 2006). Among these realities exists the looming pressure to demonstrate the ability to help students succeed on standardized assessments that test comprehension-based literacy skills. Meyer (1999) suggests two sets of teacher education reforms have emerged as a result of rising awareness of adolescent literacy in public schools. Meyer (1999) explains “one set focus[es] on the content of teacher education—what courses and topics should be included—and another set focus[es] on the structure—where and when should teacher education take place and who should manage it” (p. 459). In addressing the second set of teacher education reforms, pre-service teachers are often afforded the opportunity to gain valuable professional training in public school classrooms, as field experiences are increasingly seen as an integral piece in the training of pre-service teachers. And, though these initiatives have shown improvement in teacher education, there are concerns, specifically in the field of language arts, that new teachers are not successfully negotiating the void that exists between theory and practice that is evident in some public school settings. So, with an expanding definition of literacy, and the rising awareness of secondary students’ literacy practices, there is a concern that pre-service teachers may in fact be unprepared to negotiate the demands of the career they have chosen for themselves. This study sets out to examine this problem.

In preparing for a career in public education, certain expectations are formed by the teacher candidate based on what he or she understands adolescents should be able to do. These expectations are formed from a variety of sources. This study utilizes narrative inquiry to investigate the experiences of pre-service undergraduate language arts teachers who are completing a series of arranged field experiences. This study uses the stories of the participants to examine how the expectations of undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers are formed in regards to the range of high school students’ literacies. The data collected in this study

indicate that while each participant in the study is operating from a different life stage, each has developed her own understanding of literacy and has the ability to apply that understanding to improve her practice. The ways in which these individually unique understandings of literacy vary widely and are, by in large, based on the personal experiences of each participant.

This narrative study utilizes narrative analysis to investigate the storied experiences of three pre-service language arts teachers, one traditional undergraduate, one nontraditional undergraduate, and one self proclaimed “semi-nontraditional” undergraduate. Throughout the inquiry period, the primary research participants completed a field experience at a public high school located in American Midwest. During this field experience, each primary participant assisted a classroom teacher and tutored high school students during a common study hall period. Data was collected from a variety of sources including: personal interviews, video taped observations, reflective journals, and field notes. The storied experiences provided by the primary participants and field data were then reconstructed into narratives that present a meaningful representation of each participant’s experience in the field. These narratives also served as a meaningful platform for discussion in the final chapter of the report.

The results of the study indicate that the participants base their expectations of high school students’ literacies on their own personal experiences. Throughout the inquiry period, each participant recalled their own experiences as a high school student when referencing literacy practices of the high school students under their direction. The narratives further illustrate noticeable differences in the understandings of literacy between the traditional and non-traditional participants. Where as the traditional undergraduates in the study were more reflective in their assessment of high school students’ literacies, the non-traditional undergraduate was more active in meeting the needs of the students she tutored and assisted during the field experience.

In addition to providing answers to the primary and secondary research questions that investigate the participants’ developing expectations in terms of high school students’ literacies, the data also present themes that contribute to a better understanding of how the three pre-service language arts teachers negotiate the challenges that come with the major life transition of entering the professional workforce as a schoolteacher. While all three participants represent three different populations of undergraduate college students (i.e.: traditional, “semi-nontraditional”, and nontraditional), common themes of fear and uncertainty are present in each

participant's narrative. While these results are reminiscent of Fuller's (1969) findings, it is important to understand that these feelings of fear and uncertainty are still present after forty years of advancements in teacher education. Which leads to further examination of the experiences these three participants have shared about the training they have received. Additionally, because each participant's life experiences vary greatly from the other participants in the study, these feelings of fear and uncertainty are manifested differently for each participant.

The findings of this study could have lasting implications to the fields of adolescent literacy and teacher education. While the definition of literacy is expanding to include not only academic literacy but social literacy practices that students experience beyond the classroom, the data in this study indicate that the participants who are close in age to the students they are preparing to teach seem open minded to use alternative texts that support academic literacies while encouraging students to explore their own interests. Additionally, each participant shared that she could benefit from more extensive field experiences where she could learn more about teaching as it is done in the field. And, as the data collected in this study indicate, more varied experiences tend to provide undergraduates with the necessary context to more successfully negotiate the demands of providing quality instruction.

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In addition to providing answers to the primary and secondary research questions that investigate the participants’ developing expectations in terms of high school students’ literacies, the data also present themes that contribute to a better understanding of how the three pre-service language arts teachers negotiate the challenges that come with the major life transition of entering the professional workforce as a schoolteacher. While all three participants represent three different populations of undergraduate college students (i.e.: traditional, “semi-nontraditional”, and nontraditional), common themes of fear and uncertainty are present in each



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The findings of this study could have lasting implications to the fields of adolescent literacy and teacher education. While the definition of literacy is expanding to include not only academic literacy but social literacy practices that students experience beyond the classroom, the data in this study indicate that the participants who are close in age to the students they are preparing to teach seem open minded to use alternative texts that support academic literacies while encouraging students to explore their own interests. Additionally, each participant shared that she could benefit from more extensive field experiences where she could learn more about teaching as it is done in the field. And, as the data collected in this study indicate, more varied experiences tend to provide undergraduates with the necessary context to more successfully negotiate the demands of providing quality instruction.

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Finally, to those who are beginning their journey, this project is for you. Though I was able to develop these thoughts to a certain degree while completing my program of study, the time has come for you to pick up where I left off. Do not run away from the questions that resonate in your mind when the rest of the world grows silent. Face them head on, for this is where the truth is found.



## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the life and work of Mr. Lawrence Pacey, the last one room schoolhouse teacher in the state of Kansas.

## CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

*“My central memory of that time seems to hang on one or five or maybe forty nights—or very early mornings”* (Thompson, 1972, p. 67).

### A Personal Story

I began my career in public education in August 2003 as a seventh grade language arts teacher. Like many other first year teachers who entered the field before them, I learned more about the art of teaching during those first 180 days than I had in all four years of college combined. To document some of these lessons learned, I kept a journal. One day in particular that remains quite clear in my memory is September 3, 2003, a day that I realized there might be some differences in how my college teacher education program prepared me for the job and how the real world operates.

....

September 3, 2009

I feel as though I am the last one standing on a dodge ball team, and the other team has all of the balls. The kids were hell today.

I am exhausted. I spent the better part of the day digging up assessment data and missing assignment information for the administration office. Consequently, because I was running these numbers for the office, the needs of 125 students were put on hold. I am sure my students acted so horribly today because they could sense I was close to the edge of insanity.

Reading inventories were put on hold which sets me back yet another day. These reading inventories are taking a lot more time than I originally thought. I am in the third week of school and I have completed only 75 interviews. I realize that this is the best way for me to learn more about each unique reader enrolled in my classes, but I am afraid it is taking far too long. I sat down and ran the numbers. If each interview takes fifteen minutes, instead of the five or six minutes I originally planned, the entire process could take nearly 1,875 minutes—or about 39 class periods. If I stick with it, and I am able to

interview four students each class period, I could have this process knocked out in about seven school days. Wow!

I have noticed that most, if not all, of the English department utilizes the Scholastic IR computer program. In about twenty-five minutes, the computer spits out a bunch of numbers that describe the students' reading interests and abilities. Though this probably saves the teacher a lot of time, I wonder how effective the computer program really is.

So far, of the interviews I have been able to collect, I have noticed that most of the students can easily read the cuttings from *Freak the Might* and *Trouble River*. However, most students are having trouble with the language in the cutting from *Call of the Wild*. And, while all students are able to read at least one of the selections, all of the students are having trouble answering the simple comprehension questions following the cuttings. I wonder if the Scholastic program could figure that out.

....

My career in education began with questions about the training I received in my undergraduate teacher training program. My college professors encouraged me to provide quality, student-centered instruction that would help me better understand the people attending my classes, but I quickly found that these methods, by in large, were not utilized in the real world. With each day, I wondered if efficiency was overriding quality in the classroom. Although I came to the profession with several great ideas and high expectations for my students, I quickly realized that I would need to adopt some of the efficient practices utilized by seasoned veterans if I was going to survive my first year of teaching. It did not take long for disillusionment to settle into the high hopes and aspirations I had for myself as a public school teacher. During that first year, my thoughts consistently drifted back to the experiences I had collected during my teacher training program. I couldn't help but wonder why I was grossly unprepared to successfully negotiate the early days of my career.

This study begins with a personal story that launched an early examination of teacher education and the realities that exist in a secondary language arts classroom. Since those first days of my career, I have continued to explore these aspects of my professional experience. This research project expands my early explorations into these topics. Further, these issues converge in a snap-shot glance at how emerging pre-service language arts teachers expect from high

school students form their expectations about high school students' literacy practices, and how these future teachers plan on negotiating their expectations should they not be met early in their careers.

## **Overview of the Study**

As the curriculum of American schools becomes more standardized, while teachers face the elevated levels of accountability, and definition of adolescent literacy rapidly expands, teacher education programs must do more to help pre-service teachers prepare for the realities of public education (Boyd, Ariail, Williams, Jocson, & Sachs, 2006). Among these realities exists the looming pressure to demonstrate the ability to help students succeed on standardized assessments that test comprehension-based literacy skills. Meyer (1999) suggests two sets of teacher education reforms have emerged as a result of *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983). Meyer explains “one set focus[es] on the content of teacher education—what courses and topics should be included—and another set focus[es] on the structure—where and when should teacher education take place and who should manage it” (p. 459).

In addressing the second set of teacher education reforms, pre-service teachers are afforded the opportunity to gain valuable professional training in a public school classroom. Field experiences are an integral piece in the training of pre-service teachers (NCATE, 2009). Experience in a classroom provides essential tools to the developing teachers. However, it is during these field experiences that teacher candidates begin to see a difference between the real world and what has been discussed in teacher education courses. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) refer to this phenomenon as the “two-worlds pitfall.” In this foundational commentary, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) compose three fictional vignettes of typical pre-service teacher field experiences to explore the usefulness of pre-service field experiences and power personal experiences has on the development of teachers. The “two-worlds” pitfall, as described by Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985), has “two aspects.”

The norms and rewards associated with [the teacher candidates'] formal professional preparation fit with the academic setting. Doing well at the university brings immediate and highly salient rewards that may not have much to do with success in teaching. On the other hand, the pressure to adapt to the way things are in schools is great. (p. 59)

Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann suggest that teacher candidates often fall into this pitfall without addressing it later on in their practice. The work they completed at the university seems impractical and disconnected as the teacher candidates survive in the secondary school setting. Just like Lynn Anderson, the main character in the fictional account above, secondary pre-service teachers run the risk of falling into the two-worlds pitfall very early in their experience as teachers.

While negotiating the differences between the two worlds, and the literacy needs of adolescents, teacher candidates are also in the process of working in two different discourse communities—that of a student and of a teacher. A discourse community is a group of people who acquire similar characteristics to establish a community with shared goals, language and conduct (Swales, 1990; Gee, 1990). As pre-service teachers progress through their licensure programs, each must negotiate the differences between the life of a student and that of a practicing teacher. This narrative study will utilize qualitative research methods to examine these negotiations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the International Reading Association, adolescent literacy has become one of the more researched topics in academic literacy (International Reading Association, 2007). The discussion among teachers and academics in this area of research focuses on the growing disparity in reading ability among American teens. As noted in the February 2007 issue of *Reading Today*,

Many U.S. high schools produce students with world-leading skills. But national and international assessments find with depressing regularity that, in general, U.S. adolescents have widespread problems with comprehending more challenging material.  
(p. 12)

The “widespread problems” are now under the academic microscope as school administrators, classroom teachers, and academics attempt to find solutions to the proposed reading crisis in America.

According to several education researchers (Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Good, 1987; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), expectations set by classroom teachers can have a lasting effect on student performance. Teacher expectations have been extensively researched in areas of student

organization (McMullen, Shippen, & Dangel 2007), student disabilities (Knowlton, 1983) and student integration (McKown & Weinstein 2008). In many cases, as described in the studies mentioned above, the gap that exists between teacher expectations and student abilities can be a main source of stress and disillusionment among teachers (Hughes, Ruhl, Schumaker, & Deshler 2002).

One area that continues to show a gap between expectation and performance is the area of literacy. An overwhelming amount of literature suggests there is a reading crisis among adolescents in the American public school system (Gardner, 1983; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1985; Jacobs, 2008). And, though progress has been made at the elementary levels of reading instruction, an ever-widening gap exists in adolescent literacy rates among middle level and high school readers (Smith & Willhelm, 2002; Snow, Porsh, Tabors, & Harris 2007). This trend in low achievement among young adults could not come at a more inopportune time. As stated in a 1999 International Reading Association Official Resolution, with the rise of digital media and mass communication on a global scale, the ability to read and write effectively has become a crucial skill for learners today.

With a growing demand now placed on adolescents to perform on standardized tests designed to measure literacy, a heightened awareness of literacy has developed in the middle school and high school language arts classrooms of America. While researchers understand that teacher expectations have an impact on student learning, including in areas of reading and writing, little has been done to examine how and when these expectations are developed. In order to better understand the extent of teachers' expectations in regards to literacy, it is necessary to understand how these expectations are formed.

### **Purpose of the Study**

While training to become a licensed secondary language arts teacher, teacher candidates engage in a number of learning opportunities to develop the skills necessary to successfully teach the finer elements of language and its usage. Courses, early field experiences, and internships are arranged for candidates to develop their own teaching practice. However, throughout the course of one's training there is a great deal to navigate between theories discussed within the college classroom and the practices utilized in the field of education.

This narrative study examines the cross-section of three major issues in the fields of education and teacher preparation. First, because the study will focus primarily on the voices and experiences of pre-service teachers, the study will undoubtedly contribute to the ongoing academic debate over teacher education reform. As described further in chapter two of this research report, there are two prominent trends in the debate over teacher education reform. Though each side of the paradigm varies in thought and method, each side is driven by a critical view of historically traditional teacher training methods. During the data collection period, participants will be asked to reflect on the effectiveness of their own training. It is, therefore, safe to assume that these reflections may point toward the successes and failures of contemporary practices in teacher education.

Secondly, the study contributes to the enduring study of adolescent literacies. As it is further explained in chapters two and three of this research report, there is an ever-expanding definition of literacy in the academic landscape that begs for a broader understanding of the skills one must possess to contribute and participate in the world beyond high school. Modern measures of literacy at the secondary level focus on only a very small set of literacy skills. And, while there are a number of accepted theories of literacy instruction delivered to teacher candidates during their pre-service training, little is known about how pre-service teachers form their expectations in regards to adolescents' literacies.

Finally, the study empowers the voices of pre-service teachers, which have been absent from the conversations previously mentioned. The qualitative methods utilized in the study will bring the thoughts, opinions, experiences and insights of pre-service language arts teachers to the forefront of the debates concerning teacher education and adolescent literacy—providing a fresh perspective to each debate.

## **Research Questions**

The study addresses the following research question.

- How do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers develop their expectations of high school students' literacies?

Subsidiary questions include:

- What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of reading?
- What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of writing?
- What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of attitude toward the subject matter?

## **Limitations of Study**

Narrative inquiry is a focused method of qualitative inquiry that allows the researcher to explore the stories of specific people well-suited to answer the selected research questions. The personal accounts of the three participants in this study will offer rich details, which can be utilized to offer specific answers to the research questions designated above. As powerful as narrative inquiry can be to answer these specific questions relating to the field of education, it comes with some limitations. As it is designed, this study includes the storied experiences of three participants. The three participants in this study are female, and, during the inquiry period, each was enrolled at the same university located in the American Midwest. Further, each completed field experiences in the same high school located in close proximity to the university they attend. Because of these factors, these findings can not be generalized beyond the context of this study.

## **Definitions of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following terms shall be defined as:

Pre-service teacher- a college undergraduate majoring in secondary English education; presently enrolled in instructional methods courses one semester prior to student teaching.

High school students – Ninth and eleventh graders enrolled in an American high school ranging in age from fourteen to eighteen-years-old.



Expectations – the professional knowledgebase, or knowingness, teachers apply to completing the instructional and assessment duties required of them.

Adolescent literacies – literacies that address the specific needs of secondary students; using an explanation from Alvermann (2002) literacies encompass “all uses of written language (e.g., studying a biology text, interpreting an online weather map, and reading an Appalachian Trail guide) occur in specific places and times as part of broader societal practices (e.g., formal schooling, search the Internet, and hiking)” (p. 190).

### **Summary**

Increased reading expectations, now common place in English education, that repeatedly test narrow skill sets, coupled with an expanding definition of literacy, have further divided the two worlds of theory and practice in English education. Pre-service teachers who are trained at a university’s college of education often find themselves lost in what researchers call the “two-worlds pitfall” when they see the differences between what they expect to experience in pre-service field experiences and what those experiences actually provide. This study aims to examine how pre-service English teachers negotiate the expectations and realities of these two-worlds as they experience the demands of the secondary English classroom.

## CHAPTER 2 - Review of the Literature

*“Cover the story. Never lose sight of the primary responsibility. But what was the story? Nobody had bothered to say. So we would have to drum it up on our own. Free Enterprise. The American Dream.... Do it now: pure Gonzo journalism.”* (Thompson, 1972, p. 12).

This study examines an interesting collision of contemporary issues in curriculum and instruction as they pertain to teacher education, personal and professional development, and adolescent literacy. Each issue has a well-defined history in academic research and professional commentary. It is not the goal of this study to pick apart these established works. Rather, the purpose of this study is to examine these issues from a lens that investigates the perspectives of those standing at the crossroads where these issues in language arts education collide—making a lasting impact on those witnessing, or, perhaps experiencing, the collision in real time. Chapter two of this research report will frame a discussion which includes elements of teacher education and adolescent literacy as each issue is relevant to the study. Further, this chapter will provide a clear path to defining the theoretical components of the study.

The main research question of this study investigates how college undergraduates, who are planning on teaching secondary language arts after graduation, develop their understanding and expectations of adolescent literacies. Because reading and writing have become the most widely tested subjects in America’s public schools, adolescent literacy has become a topic of grave importance to teachers and teacher educators. Throughout the inquiry process, the participants will verbalize and demonstrate their understanding and expectations in regards to adolescent literacy. By doing so, they are attempting to join a new discourse community, a community of secondary language arts teachers.

The discussion in this chapter will begin with an overview of discourse communities and the generic boundaries that define the community of secondary teachers. From the discussion on discourse communities, I will then shift to a discussion on teacher education in order to discuss how teacher preparatory programs attempt to train future educators to participate in a discourse community of practicing teachers. I will then focus this discussion specifically on the field of

adolescent literacy to map the developing trends and misconceptions in this highly-tested and often misinterpreted field.

### **Discourse Communities**

The journey to becoming a school teacher is a developmental journey that begins when one first decides to take on the daunting task of educating children. This is a very important role in society that comes with varying challenges. However by accepting this role, one shapes his or her identity as a teacher based on the limitations and expectations set for this role by the community. The fabric of society is held together by the identity of each individual. Each identity, unique in its composition and application, is comprised of beliefs, experience, education, ideology, speech, and action (Gee, 2005; Kent, 1991). These attributes, the way each person appears, speaks, or acts—and the context in which each exists—forms a social role that each person carries out in his or her day-to-day life. Gee (1990) refers to this “role” as “a combination” of saying and doing the right thing at the right time while appearing to possess the proper values in the given situation (p. xv). Gee (1990) calls these combinations of “sayings-doings-thinkings-feelings-valuings” Discourses (p. xv).

Discursive studies began in the fields of political science, particularly in the area of French politics (Benveniste, 1971; Courtine, 1981; Pêcheux & Nagpal, 1982). The work of these French social theorists went to great lengths to understand and explain political trends in France. However, the work of these initial discussions in discursive studies went a long way to define French Nationalism (Wodak, 2004). Interestingly enough, these early analyses of French political identities formally recognized the importance of individual identities as they are framed in speech and action within a larger community. Discursive studies then splintered into many directions that included an investigation into the way in which groups of people with similar ways of knowing and doing were formed. These groups were called discourse communities.

In beginning his discussion of discourse community, Herzberg (1986) concedes, “The idea of ‘discourse community’ is not well defined as yet, but like many imperfectly defined terms, it is suggestive, the center of a set of ideas rather than the sign of a settled notion” (p. 1). The work of Swales (1990), Gee (1990), Kent (1991), and Schiappa (1992) attempts to define what Herzberg considers the “center of a set of ideas” in their explorations into academic and social boundaries. As it has been mentioned above, this research study examines a snapshot of

the perspectives of three pre-service teachers who are in the process of developing into secondary English teachers. The field of English education requires a great deal of practical and content knowledge. The methods, practices, and vocabulary utilized by practicing English teachers are only a few of the enduring generic boundaries that define the role of a secondary English teacher. Because this study will be framed within the theories of discourse communities, it would be helpful to explain this concept further.

To begin, Gee (1990) believes that everyone is a member of several different discourses. When we completely acquire a discourse, and thereby become a member of a discourse community, Gee (1990) explains,

When you ‘pull off’ being a culturally specific sort of ‘everyday’ person, a ‘regular’ at the local bar, a certain type of African-American or Greek-Australian, a certain type of cutting-edge particle physicist or teenage heavy-metal enthusiast, a teacher or a student of a certain sort, or any of a great many other ‘ways of being in the world,’ you use language and ‘other stuff’—ways of acting, interacting, feeling, believing, valuing and using various sorts of objects, symbols, tools and technologies—to recognize yourself and others as meaning and meaningful in certain ways. In turn, you produce, reproduce, sustain, and transform a given ‘form of life’ or Discourse. All life for all of is just a patchwork of thoughts words, objects events, actions, and interactions in discourse. (p. 7)

While most researchers will present discourses as in such a way that establishes sterile, permanent social boundaries, Gee (1990) provides a humanist perspective on discourses and describes these characteristics as vital building blocks to one’s personal identity. But, one may wonder then how these communities of similar identities are formed. Who makes the rules? And, why do we often automatically prescribe to these rules to shape our identity. To answer these questions and, perhaps, to further define the elements of discourse communities, we turn to a complementary work by Swales (1990).

Swales (1990) offers six “proposed defining criteria” of discourse communities. According to Swales discourse communities have six “defining characteristics that [are] necessary for identifying a group of individuals as a discourse community” (p. 24). The first of these six defining criteria is “common goals”. Swales (1990) contends that these common goals are publicly known “because spies may join speech and discourse communities for hidden purposes of subversion, while more ordinary people may join organizations with private hopes of

commercial or romantic advancement” (p. 25). Because these common goals are publicly known, they often serve as the entry point into a discourse community. For example, in the field of education, it could be said that most enter the field for one of three reasons: to give back to the community, to coach football, or to emulate an exemplary teacher one has had in his or her career as a student. And, while these are popularly held beliefs among those who begin a career in education, their reasons for continuing the job for years to come may in fact change over time.

Secondly, Swales (1990) suggests that all discourse communities have participatory mechanisms that are critical for intercommunication among its members. While these mechanisms vary from community to community, “meetings, telecommunications, correspondence, newsletters, [and] conversations”, are the vehicles that connect members of the community together (p. 25). This notion that regular vehicles of communication are necessary to the formation of a discourse community is a challenge to a community of public school teachers. By its very design, the job of a school teacher is quite isolating as the professional educator works with very few adults in his or her normal workday. Beyond the use of email, and the occasional staff meeting, a school teacher conducts his or her work in almost complete isolation from other like-minded professionals.

Swales (1990) speaks to this concern of isolation in his description of “The Café Owner Problem”. As it is described by Swales,

individuals A, B, C and so on occupy the same professional roles in life. They interact (in speech and writing) with the same clientele; they originate, receive and respond to the same kind of messages for the same purposes; they have an approximately similar range of genre skills. And, yet as café owners working long hours in their own establishments, and not being members of the Local Chamber of Commerce, A, B and C never interact with one another. Do they form a discourse community? (p. 25)

Like individuals A, B, and C mentioned above, school teachers operate in a great deal of isolation from one another; one could question if teachers are able to form a discourse community. However, Swales (1990) answers his own question, and perhaps the question as it pertains to school teachers, in stating that membership into the discourse community is typically “a key element” in their initial training (p. 25). Because school teachers, by in large are trained universally in the same manner, the training, in effect, becomes the price of admission into the community.

In his third criteria of discourse communities, Swales (1990) suggests “membership implies uptake of the informational opportunities” that exist within the lines of communication within the community (p. 26). By participating in the exchange of information, one maintains his or her membership to the community. The exchange of information is quite critical to the development and survival of a discourse community of school teachers, As Orton (1996a; 1996b) explains, when teachers come together to share their beliefs, what they know works, about teaching and learning, there is a natural “evolutionary push and pull that enables the best and fittest beliefs to survive” (Orton, 1996a, p. 144). In other words, the more information is exchanged among community members, there is a Darwinian-like process in which the best ideas survive to keep the community going. Building on this thought, Roberts (1996) responds to Orton’s belief that knowledge exchange among a community of teachers not only sustains the life of the community but also helps each individual develop into active community members.

The fourth criterion of discourse communities, according to Swales (1990), identifies the existence of community specific genres. Swales states, “A discourse community has developed and continues to develop discursal expectations. These may involve appropriacy of topics, the form, function and positioning of discursal elements, and the roles texts play in the operation of the discourse community” (p. 26). In expanding the boundaries of the community, participants may in fact find themselves engaging in activities that overlap into closely related discourse communities. In the ever-expanding field of secondary education, teachers find themselves expanding their skill sets to address the changing needs of their students. Fairclough (1992) states, “In education, for example, people find themselves under pressure to engage in new activities which are largely defined by new discourse practices (such as marketing), and to adopt new discourse practices within existing activities (such as teaching)” (p. 6). Fairclough (1992) continues by saying that by adopting these new practices common “activities and relationships” are in fact renamed or reworded to suit the expansions of the discourse community. In education this might take the form of rewording students to “clients” or “consumers” and rewording classes to “packages” or “products” (p. 7). And, while the roles of teachers and students are still well-defined, the expectations of each community continues to grow and expand with the demands of community (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

Additionally, discourse communities will have a highly specialized terminology. Swales (1990) adds that “the inbuilt dynamic towards an increasingly shared and specialized

terminology is realized through the development of community-specific abbreviations and acronyms. The use of these is, of course, driven by the requirements for efficient communication exchange between experts” (p. 27). As is true with most professions, education has its own set of terms and acronyms to fit this criterion of discourse communities especially when one considers the heightened attention given to acronyms like QPA (Quality Performance Accreditation) and AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) as they reflect on a school’s, and ultimately the teachers’ and the students’, performance on mandated state assessments.

The sixth and final criterion placed on discourse communities by Swales (1990) involves the development and expectation of a high general level of expertise. While Swales does not go into great detail as to how levels of expertise are identified or maintained, he does, once again, indicate the existence of range and growth among community members in saying, “Discourse communities have changing memberships; individuals enter as apprentices and leave by death or in other less involuntary ways. However, survival of the community depends on a reasonable ratio between novices and experts” (p. 27). A common practice in public schools is to pair novice teachers with a veteran mentor teacher (Coley, 1996; Hobson, Ashby, Maderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). And while mentoring programs vary from district to district, each employs some method of evaluation that measures novice teachers’ development.

Further examination into the use of discourse community grows more intriguing when one begins to examine how many different discourse communities to which one belongs. Gee (1990) explores the harmony and conflict one experiences when he or she identifies with more than one discourse community in *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. Gee believes that discourse is not learned; it is acquired through “active social practice.” Which, Gee goes on to explain, is why some non-mainstream students often struggle all the way through school. The under achieving student is typically not encouraged to develop and acquire the characteristics of a discourse different from the primary discourse community established at his or her home. By the time a student reaches secondary or post-secondary scholastic settings it may be too late, developmentally, to expect the student to completely acquire a new primary discourse. This idea of acquiring a new discourse suggests that entry into it is a developmental process that happens over time. As Gee (1990) has stated above, everyone possesses primary and secondary discourses. Primary discourses are fully acquired while secondary discourses may

only be partially acquired. When a discourse is in the process of being acquired, Gee (1990) refers to these discourses as “mushfake”. As Gee (1990) explains,

‘Mushfake’ is a term from prison culture meaning to make do with something less when the real thing is not available. When prison inmates make hats from underwear to protect their hair from lice, the hats are mushfake. Elaborate craft items made from used wooden match sticks are another example of mushfake. By ‘mushfake Discourse’, I mean partial acquisition coupled with meta-knowledge and strategies to ‘make do’ (p. 159).

So, whether there is complete or partial acquisition of a primary or secondary discourse, in applying these skills to “make do” as suggested by Gee (1990), there is attempt to survive by those attempting to become a member of a new discourse community. It is this developmental aspect of discourse acquisition that I, as a teacher educator, find most interesting and applicable to the development and instruction of pre-service teachers.

There is little argument among those in the field of education that teachers operate within well-defined social boundaries. Teachers work in a field that requires a special set of skills that are often acquired and mastered over time. Utilizing the six areas offered by Swales (1990) it is quite simple to see that those who identify with the social role of “school teacher” participate in a community with other teachers sharing common goals, specialized vocabulary, community specific genres, and a high level of specific expertise. The participants in the study are novices who are engaging in active social practice to join a new discourse community. This study utilizes qualitative methods to examine how the pre-service teachers utilize the skills they have developed from a variety of experiences to address literacy concerns. For these reasons, discourse community is a useful theoretical construct through which to examine and interpret the narrative data collected from the three novice, pre-service teachers to answer the research questions identified in chapter one of this study.

In the opening section of this chapter, I have explained that there are social boundaries and expectations established for those who wish to enter the field of education as a practicing classroom teacher. While colleges of education offer a wide range of learning opportunities to prepare teachers to be successful, widely accepted statistics indicate that a small percentage of those who begin a career in education remain in the profession. This being the case, it would seem that most who enter the field have difficulty joining the new discourse community. Because the participants in this study draw from their experiences as college students, taking



teacher education courses, a discussion on the issues surrounding teacher education might be helpful in understanding the shared experiences of those participating in the study.

### **Teacher Education: Worlds Apart**

As pre-service teachers enter the field, they do so through a common gate, that of the teacher training program of the college of education. Emblazoned on the hallowed halls of these institutions is a mission statement that, by in large, promises to bring up “ethical, caring, thoughtful and knowledgeable teachers.” If in fact it is the goal of university teacher preparation programs to bring up ethical, caring, thoughtful and knowledgeable teachers, then it is necessary to further examine how teachers learn and to what extent knowledge acquired at the university level is implemented in teacher practice. The record of educational research and professional literature has much to say in these areas. From the university’s point of view, a paradigm of practice and theory presents itself when attempting to prepare teachers for the classroom. A chasm of belief and practice exists and discussion on this chasm is present in all matters of literature in teacher education. Cochran-Smith (2004) states,

Despite teacher educators’ best efforts to establish closer connections between school and university, student teachers sometimes find themselves caught in the middle between what the university is encouraging them to think and do and what the school-based teachers they work with advocate. (p. 62)

As Cochran-Smith indicates above, there is an immediate sense of confusion and tension that exists in the opening moments of a career in teaching. As we have seen in the aforementioned discussion on discourse community, this tension between belief and practice is a normal occurrence during the initial transition. The concern for teacher educators is how these initial inner-conflicts effect the progress of pre-service educators. The environment and expectations for college students are quite different compared to those of school teachers. In an inquiry-based environment, as is often found in higher education, students are encouraged to ask questions of commonly held beliefs and create new avenues of thinking. These behaviors are all too often discouraged among school people. As Cochran-Smith (2004) continues in saying,

Sometimes new teachers who have been prepared in an inquiry and reform-centered program “fail” at certain aspects of their early teaching experiences because they do not fit smoothly into the system or because they view teaching as a process of questioning

assumptions and challenging traditions rather than adopting the practices modeled by much more experienced educators. (p. 62)

It is obviously not the goal of a teacher education program to prepare teachers to fail in the field, but there is a concern that Cochran-Smith highlights here by saying those who excelled in a post-secondary environment would be most likely to fail early on in their careers as classroom teachers. This failure may have something to do with the differing expectations that exist in the two vastly environments in which young teachers participate.

The college or university setting offers an automatic rewards system that provides constant, positive feedback for the achieving student studying to become a classroom teacher. The more the student can think critically, the more he or she is rewarded for their efforts. Those who are quite successful in a collegiate setting may find it difficult to assimilate into a professional environment. Beyond the university setting exists a system that requires compliance and cooperation. Further illustrating the differences in expectations, Rovegno (1992) took a different approach by analyzing those who are successful in public education and compared those teachers who were more successful in higher education. In doing so, Rovegno (1992) believes that the two worlds that exist in education (e.g. the world of higher education and the world of K-12 learning) are in fact perpetuated by the practices of two different groups of teachers. Rovegno (1992) explains one group of teachers possesses an extensive knowledge of a specific content area. This first type of teachers focuses on passing on that knowledge to their students. (Brickhouse, 1990; Gudmundsdottir, 1990). The teachers that fit into this group also place a priority on their specific content area and particularly value the connections that can be made in reference to their specific content. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a second group of teachers is represented by instructors who only possess a limited understanding of the content they are asked to teach. These teachers are able to only cover the surface knowledge and avoid approaching critical thinking in their classes. (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Hashweh, 1987; Stein, Baxter, & Leinhardt, 1990).

Regardless of how the gap between university and the K-12 schools is maintained, the truth of the matter is that there is indeed a difference in culture between the two. In some cases, it would seem that the college of education and the very system it supports are worlds apart. These two worlds exist and without notice, a young teacher can fall into what Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann (1985) call the “two-worlds pitfall”. The danger that exists when one falls into the

two-worlds pitfall is that the young teacher is confronted with overwhelming pressure to “adapt to the way things are in schools” (p. 59). Further, Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann (1985) believe that when young teachers are at long last confronted with such pressure, “academic learning is liable to evaporate, regardless of its worth” (p. 59).

Cochran-Smith (2004) maintains a critical view of the present system in public schools where young, inquiry-minded teachers are marginalized. To further address these concerns, she takes aim at the practices of teacher educators. According to Cochran-Smith (2004) teacher educators favor two methods of training when preparing pre-service teachers. The first is an inquiry model that encourages critical assessment and further inquiry to the present models traditionally used in public education. This “transformative” stance promotes critical thinking and promotes dialogue and community unity (Freire, 2004; hooks, 1994). On the other hand, there are traditions in teacher education that prevail opposite of transformative initiatives. One of those timeless traditions is the lesson plan.

Perhaps the lesson plan has survived over time due to the direct, linear nature of instruction one must adopt in order to produce consistent records of activities and outcomes. Efforts to teacher-proof education have also perpetuated the use of the lesson plan. Take for example the basal reading curriculum plans. Cochran-Smith (1995) points out that these teacher proof curriculum programs attempt to control the entire learning environment by “not only tell[ing] the teacher exactly when and what to say but also control[ing] the children’s part in the script by stipulating precisely which responses are to be elicited” (Cochran-Smith 1995). So, in an attempt to help teacher candidates maintain control of not only the classroom, but also the content and the manner with which acceptable answers can be provided by the students, the traditional college of education is, by in large, perpetuating a teacher-centered model of education.

A growing body of research on teacher planning and teacher thinking suggests that experienced teachers do not proceed in a linear fashion when planning for teaching. Instead, they plan in ways that are significantly more recursive and cyclical, more learner-centered, and structured around larger chunks of content and time than those of the single lesson. Cochran-Smith (2004) continues in saying that experienced teachers utilize a “wide range of planning strategies over the course of a school year.” Yet, by the time a teacher candidate graduates, he or she only has one primary strategy in planning and implementing lessons.

In this gap of instruction and practice, tension begins to arise in the search for the best methods to prepare future teachers, Cochran-Smith (2004) provides advice in negotiating these two approaches in teacher preparation.

Teacher educators can perhaps best handle the tension between the lesson plan stance and a transformative, inquiry stance on teaching by arming their student teachers with thorough knowledge of current practice as well as the ability to construct and act on a trenchant critique of that practice. (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 63)

And, Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann (1985) support Cochran-Smith's argument in that this approach provides significant elements of practice and inquiry to build a successful teaching practice. Academic learning is sustainable when students are able to connect "personal meaning and felt significance" to particular instances in their future practices (p. 59). In short, by providing relevant information that helps teacher candidates negotiate the challenges that exist in reality, teacher educators provide lasting information that will help the candidates succeed beyond the lesson plan.

Teacher educators have made great strides in addressing the concerns of the contemporary classroom teacher while preparing pre-service teachers for a career in public education. Historically, field experience has been utilized to assist young teachers in the transition of becoming a classroom teacher.

Teachers claim that most of what they know about teaching came from firsthand experience. In short, they learned to teach by teaching. When teachers look back on their formal preparation, they generally say that student teaching was the most valuable part. In deference to this belief, teacher preparation programs give more and more time to classroom experience, while in-service programs stress teachers' sharing their experiences with one another. (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985)

Providing first hand experience to teachers has proven, by in large, to prepare people to become professional educators. However, student teaching does not typically offer pre-service teachers the opportunity to talk about their experiences. Early field experiences, completed throughout the teacher training program, provide the pre-service teachers ample opportunities to discuss their own expectations, experiences, and fears about the profession while progressively developing their own philosophies and practices.

One particular study that directly addresses these concerns is a 2004-2005 study conducted by E. H. Stoughton. In this study, the researcher, a teacher educator at a major midwestern university, used the classroom conversations and writings from cohorts of pre-service elementary education majors to assist them in developing classroom management skills. While the study sought to begin the conversation of effective classroom management skills, as Stoughton (2007) states, “the study also examines the ‘if’, and ‘in what ways’, these novice teachers are able to go beyond questions of simply ‘what works’ to reflect more deeply on behaviour [sic] practices and decide how they fit with their beliefs about justice and equity.” Stoughton (2007) contends that as pre-service teachers progress through teacher training programs, open discussion about contemporary issues is an important aspect of developing identities as teachers. Building these new identities, Stoughton (2007) claims, is a process of negotiating, “One’s personal experiences and conflicting beliefs.” And, through constructing what Stoughton refers to as a “central narrative,” these future teachers will begin to form their teaching practice.

Stoughton (2007) utilizes early field experiences and classroom discussion to open a conversation about classroom management with pre-service teachers. In an attempt to bridge the gap between the college of education and the public school classroom, Stoughton has the pre-service teachers bring what they have witnessed in the classroom to the college of education for analysis. Although Stoughton believes these efforts were successful in assisting the pre-service teachers further develop into effective teachers, this study was conducted because the researcher believes there needed to be more open discussion about the two different settings in which pre-service teachers operate.

### ***Bridging the Two Worlds of Teacher Education through “Simultaneous Renewal”***

The Conference on English Education (CEE) a professional community of the National Council of Teachers of English has published a number of position statements establishing the community’s stance on critical elements of English education. In contributing to the debate on teacher education, specifically as it pertains to English and the language arts, CEE believes,

Students do not learn to teach in a vacuum or in any one location. Ideally, programs include partners in developing courses, field experiences, and other professional

activities. Explicit conversations should take place among all participants including teacher education faculty, English department faculty, teacher candidates, secondary school personnel, parents, and students with an understanding that there will be multiple perspectives and that the conversation will be ongoing. (CEE, 2009)

As it is explicitly implied by the CEE, if teacher candidates are going to be adequately prepared for real world as it exists beyond college, multiple approaches must be utilized in their training. The CEE (2009) also believes that a collaborative relationship between the college of education and secondary schools needs to be established and maintained for the use and benefit of bringing up informed novice teachers. K-12 schools that have an established relationship with colleges of education, for the purposes of providing pre-service teachers with guidance and experience in a working classroom, are often referred to as professional development schools (PDS).

Many of these discussions have begun in professional development school settings to bring about positive reform in teacher education. However, the path to teacher education reform is wrought with name-calling and blame shifting between two mutually important groups, further widening the gap between university and lower schools. The K-12 school system, the system that produces students for the university, consistently condemns the university's college of education for inadequately preparing teachers. Consequently, the university often complains about the lowering expectations of the K-12 school system and the sub-par students it produces for their hallowed halls of research and thought. Though the two institutions typically seem at odds with each other, research has shown that a bridge between colleges of education and K-12 public schools can be built to form a mutually beneficial relationship.

The introduction of the professional development school (PDS) model sought to bring these two groups together in an effort to help each other meet their mutual goals. In an overview of the history of PDSs, Tietel (2003) states,

Professional development schools are innovative types of school-college partnerships designed to address this disconnection and finger-pointing and bring about the simultaneous renewal of schools and teacher education programs—restructuring schools for improved student learning and revitalizing the preparation and professional development of experienced educators at the same time. (p. 2)

By establishing the partnership between the school and the university's college of education, there is a hope that an open dialogue will create a culture of mutually beneficial growth and

enrichment—all the while providing practical classroom experience for pre-service teacher candidates.

Among the extensive record of research and professional literature the term “simultaneous renewal” mentioned above by Tietel (2003) and further explored by Shroyer, Yahnke, Bennett, and Dunn (2007) is paramount in a discussion about PDS’s (Campoy 2000; Clark 1999; Guadarrama, Ramsey, & Nath, 2005). As stated by Shroyer et al. (2007) the term “simultaneous renewal” refers to the, “process through which [the university] faculty, and K-12 PDS educators jointly examine, reflect on, and enhance the [university’s] teacher-education program and the K-12 PDS system.” Further, as described by Shroyer and others, the long-term partnership between universities and public schools has been illustrated by changes in policy and practice in the landscapes in which each participates. As described by Shroyer et al. (2007) a strong PDS network can work together to help each group, the university and the public schools, meet the new requirements each is to face in the future.

For example, in a 2007 study conducted by Lafever-Davis, Johnson, and Pearman, a college of education, set in an urban area, was in the middle of restructuring the licensing requirements in the teacher education program and several local schools were facing strict accreditation guidelines. The two parties reestablished their PDS network to assist each other. While this relationship was beneficial at first, one of the overwhelming challenges in a PDS setting is maintaining the partnership over time. The researchers found that as the needs of the university and the K-12 schools change, the presence of a mutually beneficial relationship seems less focused. As Lafever-Davis et al. (2007) state in their research article, “It is difficult to maintain a common vision or purpose when the major players continue to change.” As experienced by the authors, principals and professors have a habit, in many cases, to move within the system. Without consistency, a long-term PDS partnership is often unsustainable.

It is interesting to find in those who are most critical of PDS partnerships are those in higher education—the very community that overwhelmingly strives to build PDS partnerships. As Campoy (2000) found, those at the university level who often have a difficult time assimilating into a PDS partnership are those who find drastic differences between the instructional practices demonstrated at the university level and those employed by classroom teachers in the public school classrooms (p. 98). The struggle between the two-worlds appears once again in the literature. In this instance, however, the differences between the two worlds

can have a damaging effect on the PDS partnership. In ideal situations those participating in a PDS partnership will find ways in which all parties benefit from the relationship. However, as stated in Campoy's 2000 study, classroom teachers are often the first to point out that PDS partnerships are often more beneficial to the university than to the partner school (p. 99).

So, the question remains, is the time, effort, and energy put forth by the university college of education and the public K-12 schools progressing the university's efforts to better prepare new teachers? Ridely, Hackett, Landeira and Tate (2005) reported that according to several studies (Neubert & Binko, 1998; Stallings, 1991; Wait & Warren, 2001) teachers prepared in PDS settings were in fact better prepared in areas of classroom management and organization when compared to new teachers who were trained in traditional, non-PDS environments. And, though it seems quite evident that PDS partnerships have the ability to help universities train effective teachers in some areas of professional practice, what seems to be missing from this area of research is how pre-service teachers are able to apply their skills in areas of content knowledge and pedagogy in a PDS experience. In fact, the voices of pre-service language arts teachers are all but absent from this discussion.

Stoughton (2007) indicates, as it was mentioned above, there is ample room for more conversation among teacher educators and pre-service teachers. The research questions selected for this study were designed to open a dialogue with pre-service language arts teachers in an effort to learn how each was utilizing what he or she learned throughout their training, including the experiences he or she collects working in a PDS partner high school. In the analysis of the data in chapter four the differences noticed by the participants between the two settings will be further discussed when, just as the work of Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) indicates, the pre-service teacher participants are somewhat stuck between two worlds. Their shared experiences while working, learning, and living in between the college of education and a public school classroom will unfold as they retell their experiences and share their accounts of working with reluctant readers in a high school setting.

So far in this chapter, I have described, in general, the social boundaries that exist for school teachers and the ways in which these boundaries are developed and maintained, by in large, by those actively participating in the profession and those who train novices to join the profession. I have also gone on at some length to describe contemporary practices utilized by colleges of education while training pre-service teachers. In order to truly grasp the challenge



that now faces those novices entering the profession as secondary language arts teachers, and to better address the primary research question of this study in chapters four and five, perhaps I will now discuss the expanding definition of adolescent literacy and the implications this expanding definition has on the profession.

### **Adolescent Literacy: Two Worlds of Thought**

For pre-service language arts teachers entering the profession, there are many pressing issues that must be addressed early on in order for the new teacher to be successful. The demands of a new language arts teacher include the demands preparing students for local and state level assessments in both reading and writing. The results of these mandated reading and writing assessments are closely monitored and are often the foundation on which a school's accreditation is based. The growing importance on literacy skills among youths in the United States has been intensifying for nearly thirty years. These concerns are based on two very influential reports that were published in the 1980's (Jacobs, 2008). The first of the two reports, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) provided shocking results about the reading abilities of America's teenagers, noting for example that "about 14 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States [could] be considered functionally illiterate" and "functional illiteracy among minority youths may run as high as 40 percent" (p. 11). Further, the National Commission on Excellence in Education stated that, "average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests [was] now lower than 26 years ago when Sputnik was launched" (p. 11).

And, while these statistics inspired a great deal of concern, the most distressing finding in *A Nation at Risk* was that American adolescents' lacked "higher order" intellectual skills. Specifically, "nearly 40 percent cannot draw inferences from written material; only one-fifth can write a persuasive essay; and only one-third can solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps" (p. 11). The second foundational report from this era, the 1984, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1985) Reading Report Card, further supported the findings of *A Nation at Risk* in stating that reading abilities among American teenagers had either leveled-off or increased minimally since 1971.

The results of these two reports called into question the methods employed by schools to teach American school children how to read and communicate. The findings of *A Nation at Risk*

and the NAEP allowed the American school system to look closely at how the American landscape had changed since compulsory education had been instituted (Marsh & Willis, 2007). For nearly a century American schools had prepared the masses to join a highly industrialized work force. But, the American economy was changing and expanding as the turn of a new century rapidly approached. As Jacobs (2008) states,

Such data raised concerns about the ability of the nation's youth to participate productively in a work force that was facing an increasingly complex world economy. While the labor market had long required high levels of mathematical, verbal, and technological literacy, such literacies were no longer sufficient as the need for more sophisticated problem-solving and communication skills grew. (p. 7)

The effects of *A Nation at Risk* have had a lasting impression on the American Educational system. It has set off what is arguably the largest literacy initiative the world has ever seen. And, while the fallout of this foundational report has yet to be determined, there are some questions the literature can answer.

In approaching the topic of adolescent literacy, it seems best to first ask if the literacy crisis in American High Schools actually exists. Educational policy makers seem to believe we have arrived at a critical point in the history of American education. Accordingly, policy makers have catapulted the public education system into an era of accountability and transparency. Based upon the high stakes tests that now serve as a foundation upon which contemporary public middle and high school is now built. However, if adolescent literacy is properly and thoroughly examined, it is apparent that perhaps the standardized reading examinations administered as part of the No Child Left Behind Law are illustrating only a mere fraction of the rich and relevant literacy skills American students use to communicate, connect and collaborate on a daily basis.

There is a growing interest in adolescent literacy due to the growing performance gap between primary and secondary students. Snow, Porsche, Tabors and Harris describe "the ever-narrowing path to school success" in their book *Is Literacy Enough?* (2007). Within this volume the authors observe that although certain grade levels have shown increased improvement on comprehension based reading assessments over the last decade and a half, there has been little improvement observed in the ranks of middle and high schools. Further, the authors ask,

If schools are succeeding at teaching students to read by fourth grade, why not expect equivalent levels of success in the later grades? Should good fourth grade readers not

find it easy to read in the later grades, and to learn the math, social studies, and science to which literacy skills contribute? (p. 1)

Indeed, the field of adolescent literacy is wrought with mystery. There is little definitive evidence to support the gap in achievement between elementary and secondary readers.

In 1999, the International Reading Association presented an official resolution on adolescent literacy that specifically defines the gap present in literacy instruction.

Whereas adolescents entering the adult world today will do more reading and writing tasks than at any other time in human history, they will need reading and writing to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will also need to use literacy to feed their imaginations so that they can create the world of the future. In a complex, diverse, and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read is crucial. (International Reading Association, 1999)

The crisis in adolescent literacy is not a new concern for academics and researchers. Investigating the illiteracy crisis in America can be traced back to the work of Basso (1974) and Szwed (1981). These foundational studies investigate the supposed crisis in adolescent literacy. In fact, it is Basso (1974) who first introduced the term “writing event” which took the investigation of literacy outside of the classroom. Furthering this line of thought, Szwed (1981) claimed that the academic community had yet to “conceptualize literacy.” In a commentary of Szwed’s work, Hull and Schultz (2001) state,

Szwed (1981), a folklorist by training, argued for an ethnography of literacy and proposed that rather than a single continuum or level of literacy, we should imagine a variety of configurations or a plurality of literacies... He called for a study of the relationship between school and outside world and specified that the focus should be an inventory of on community’s needs and resources. Szwed’s call for the cataloguing of how and where literacy occurred in the community was the basis for many studies that sought to document empirically this new concept of multiple literacies. (Hull & Shultz, 2001)

Building on this foundational work, contemporary researchers have begun developing definitions of adolescent literacy with a focus on the multiplicity of literacies now practiced by adolescents. Alvermann (2002) gives an excellent example of effective adolescent literacy instruction that “acknowledges that all uses of written language (e.g., studying a biology text, interpreting an

online weather map, and reading an Appalachian Trail guide) occur in specific places and times as part of broader societal practices (e.g., formal schooling, search the Internet, and hiking).” Although real-world literacy skills are important, the literacy skills receiving a lion’s share of the energy and attention in the language arts classroom are those concerned with academic literacy. In other words, our educational system is bringing up people who can efficiently complete a standardized reading exam, but, beyond the classroom, the same students lack the necessary skills to read and think critically in the real world. In light of the commentary from Alvermann (2002), Szwed (1981), Basso (1974), and Hull & Schultz (2001), it would seem that public education has been missing the mark on adolescent literacy for some time.

In response to the growing research base in adolescent literacy between 1995 and 2004, The National Council of Teachers of English Commission on Reading published a position statement on adolescent literacy (2004) citing research that most adolescent readers “do not need further instruction in phonics or decoding skills.” The position statement goes on to support this claim with the findings of the National Reading Panel Report (2000) in which the expert panelists agreed that phonics training was best suited for students in first grade with “diminished results for students in subsequent grades.” And, “in cases where older students need help to construct meaning with text, instruction should be targeted and embedded in authentic reading experiences.” Again, the research indicates that adolescent readers need to graduate beyond comprehension level literacies and begin to study and apply real, authentic literacies that will help them succeed in the real world. And, this requires a different set of skills that are typically required to complete a multiple-choice reading test.

The ability to effectively analyze or criticize a text is securely based upon the ability to first understand the text. The logic that readers apply to what they read is based upon existing logical models that have formed as a result of prior learning experiences. These existing logic models are often referred to as schemas. A great deal of research in adolescent literacy is linked to theories in schema development and schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). These schema models readers use to comprehend the material they are reading have been given many names (e.g. *frames* (Minsky, 1975) and *macrostructures* (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978)). No matter the label, throughout the literature, as Sadoski (1991) states, “schema theory has had two major salutary effects, focusing attention on (a) the constructive nature of comprehension and (b) the crucial role of the reader’s prior knowledge in that construction.” Contemporary reading

research has certainly carried on this tradition. When attempting to teach teens how to read, instructors often attempt to identify the gaps in a struggling reader's experience to determine why he or she has difficulty understanding a particular text. Schemas are the building blocks readers use to understand what they read and apply the information to their lives (Anderson & Pearson, 1988).

Directly related to the research on schema theory in the field of adolescent literacy research is a growing discussion concerned with discourse groups and their effect on how and what adolescents read (Gee 1997). A compelling aspect to consider in an investigation of adolescent literacy is the fact that teens typically interact with multiple discourse groups. At school they interact primarily with their peers. Beyond school they primarily interact with adults. This social overlap can have a lasting impact on the priorities adolescents place on reading and their literate identities. Consequently, a growing number of research studies have been framed around the impact that social influences have on the literacy of teenaged students. As Alvermann, Young, Green and Wisenbaker (2004) state,

A theme that is central to much of the research on adolescent peer culture is the importance of communal activity—a term used to refer to the interactions that occur as adolescents negotiate, reinvent and jointly create their lifeworlds with others of their own age and with the adults who share their worlds.

(p. 871)

The words of Alvermann and others certainly focus on a theme that presents itself often in the literature. As each “lifeworld” is created, some (Hinchman & Zalewski, 2001; Moje & O'Brien, 2001; O'Brien, Springs, & Stith 2001) would suggest that each literacy activity that is conducted in the classroom and beyond are critical building blocks to one's social identity and the role each will play in a developing society. These literacy activities that expand a young person's perspective on knowing and doing essentially help develop critical thinking skills—an area of concern originally addressed in *A Nation at Risk*.

Indeed, those who are literate are afforded a great number of opportunities to participate in society. And, without question, learning to read is one of the most important skills taught in the American public school system. However, the methods to which teachers help adolescent readers develop—and perhaps even what it means to be literate—has changed drastically over the last half century (Stevens & Bean, 2007). With the ever expanding means by which people

read, write, and communicate, so too has the range of literacies utilized by adolescents, and people of all ages, expanded to include a wide range of literacy practices.

There is no shortage of research studies that attempt to identify the wide range of literacy events identified in the field of adolescent literacy research (Hubbard 1989, MacGillivray & Curwen, 2007; Stanford & Madill, 2007). Research in this field has begun to shift in a way that legitimizes the literacy activities that occur beyond academic settings—embracing the expanding definitions of adolescent literacy presented by Alvermann and others. In one such study, Hubbard (1989) is a participant observer in a classroom in which she examines the nonacademic writing students use to create a subculture completely separate from the daily operations of the classroom. Hubbard found that the participants in her study used a great deal of writing to establish individual identities, social cliques and social boundaries within a functional, productive classroom that were all but completely hidden from normal outside observers. Within the commentary, Hubbard (1989) states,

There is a community which coexisted with that of the “official classroom culture”—the underground culture of the 11-year-old children in the class. Although it existed throughout the scheduled segments of the school routine, its time, space, and community boundaries existed on a different plane. And it was able to survive largely through the written word. Hubbard (1989)

In further defining the reach of the broadening definition of adolescent literacy, Hubbard (1989) gives an excellent example of the separation that exists between “official” and “unofficial” literacies.

Studies of writing typically focus on the ‘official writing’ that these students create during the course of the school day. But as educational ethnographers begin to look at the broader context surrounding students’ writing, another layer is being uncovered. (Hubbard 1989)

And, it is these layers, Hubbard (1989) suggests, that are beginning to blur the lines of literacy in and beyond the American educational landscape.

Perhaps a fresh view of looking for literacy practices beyond the classroom can be found in a study entitled “Tagging as a Social Literacy Practice” by L. MacGillivray and M. S. Curwen (2007). In their study, the two researchers explored the work of taggers, young men from the marginal neighborhoods of Los Angeles who create textual messages on public property.

Tagging is often referred to as gang activity, but in interviewing the participants in their study, the researchers found that tagging is far more meaningful than the crude symbols gangs use to mark their territory.

Tags can be a youth's signature moniker, a slogan, a protest, a message, and occasionally a lengthy tribute. They differ from graffiti in that they always consist of letters in which alphabetic style, use of colors, and crafted script is highly valued. Inventiveness, flexibility, and playfulness with textual spellings and meanings are integral to the tagging community. Rarely recognized by outsiders, highly stylized script, one of the main characteristics of tagging is often only readable by tagging insiders. (Macgillivray & Curwen, 2007)

In their report, MacGillivray and Curwen establish tagging as a "literacy output" comparable to slam poetry, song writing, and journaling. Similarly, tagging is a social literacy practice. Those who participate, use existing boundaries to create textual messages that visually communicate meaning to other taggers in the community. Because tagging is illegal, it has been marginalized, perhaps unfairly, as a menacing gang activity when in fact, adolescent literacy researchers are beginning to identify creative, valuable implications in tagging.

In further examining the use of alternative texts found in the lives of students outside of school, one must discuss the power and influence video games have on the literacy development of adolescent readers. In their study "Understanding the Power of New Literacies Through Video Game Play and Design" by K. Sanford and L. Madill (2007), the researchers use non-participant observations and focus group interviews to discover the multi-layered literacies present in video games and video game design. However, the most interesting aspect of this research study is the fact that the participants in this study were adolescents who were hired by a Canadian video game design firm to lead video game camps. In the analysis of their findings, the researchers uncover several examples of operational and functional literacy in their observations of the camp sessions. However, in the focus group interviews the researchers identified countless instances in which the adolescent teacher participants could question critical elements of the video games (e.g. semiotics, story line, and aesthetics) being created in the class and how they might help their students create better games. And, as the researchers noted,

The instructors did have an opportunity to practise critical literacy through their critique of how to teach effectively. Relying on their own extensive experience with teachers, the male instructors used some effective teaching techniques and tried to adopt other

techniques to create what they felt was an effective learning environment for creating video games. (p. 433)

United through a common interest, these adolescent instructors were able to apply a set of literacy skills in a real world application. Through this process they learned a great deal about themselves and the impact they could have on those under their instruction.

As popular as video games are, they are not the only vehicle in popular culture driving adolescent literacy research. Graphic novels have rapidly grown in popularity in America over the last decade. Within the graphic novel genre, several sub-genres have developed in the response to the popularity of the visually based texts. Manga, a sub-genre of graphic novels relatively unknown to teachers and educational researchers, is based on *anime*, popular Japanese animated television shows. In a review of manga, A. Schwartz and E. Rubinstein-Avila (2006) contend there are two very powerful reasons teachers' attentions should be drawn to manga: "(1) the comics' sheer popularity—evident by the sale of manga across the United States—and (2) the unique multimodal reading that manga seems to demand" (p. 41).

Manga provides a contemporary canvas for authors to share their stories with young readers using a fresh, relevant approach. Librarians who have embraced this new genre of literature have difficulty keeping titles on their shelves. Further, they are pleased to see more young people checking out books from library at a time when video games and the internet seem to take up so much attention away from books. With the growing demand and popularity of graphic novels the authors find it "surprising that these comics have not been explored in greater depth in the literacy research literature" (Schwartz & Rubinstein-Avila, 2006, p. 42).

Perhaps the most compelling reason for investigating manga further is the second reason offered above by the authors. In their description of manga the authors state, "Unlike many Western comic strips geared toward youths, manga plots are rather indirect: It is not always clear who the main protagonists are. Moreover, the plots are usually nonlinear, much like soap operas or movies" (Schwartz & Rubinstein-Avila, 2006, P.42). These texts, which are often referred to as merely "comic books", have evolved into complex texts which require critical reading skills to consume and interpret.

Through non-traditional means, adolescents have developed raw literacies and critical thinking skills—developed in a world outside of school and beyond academic settings. In an attempt to legitimize academic literacy, and bridge the two worlds of adolescent literacy,



teachers of all levels have attempted to bring elements of technology and graphic centered texts into the classroom. For the most part, these attempts to bring together a critical approach to adolescent literacy are all but absent from the field of academic research. Comber and Simpson (2001) open their text with a call pleading for more research that addresses these emerging areas of adolescent literacy and English education.

Academic research is time consuming and with the increased demands that are placed upon those who work in America's classrooms, it is no wonder that a void is now apparent in the professional literature and research explaining the success and trials of expanded literacy practices as it is applied in the classroom. However, I would suggest that the time and effort is very important to this cause. As Giroux (2001) states,

Addressing the problems that many youth currently face suggests that rigorous educational work needs to respond to the dilemmas of the outside world by focusing on how young people make sense of their experiences and possibilities for decision making within the structures of everyday life. The motivation for scholarly work cannot be narrowly academic; such work must connect with 'real life social and political issues in the wider society' (xxvii).

## **Summary**

In order to successfully join a community of school teachers, one must quickly acclimate to the community specific guidelines and negotiate the differences between primary and secondary discourses. The process by which pre-service teachers in this study are trained at the university level quite often includes a number of learning opportunities that give the pre-service teachers a wide range of experiences from which to draw from as they prepare to enter the profession. While these efforts by the university are well-intended, it has been documented that pre-service teachers often recognize differences between what they learned about teaching in college and what real teachers do. Pre-service teachers are then left to their own to reconcile these differences, or gaps, in their experience.

In an effort to close these gaps in their experience, the academic research suggests that an open dialogue among teacher educators and pre-service teachers can provide both parties with valuable perspective as the pre-service teachers transition to working professionals. One area of concern to most beginning a career in secondary language arts is adolescent literacy. For nearly

three decades, adolescent literacy has become an area of increasing importance among academic researchers. As a result of these intensified efforts, it has become apparent to those in the field that the definition of adolescent literacy is in fact expanding to include elements of visual literacy and other social literacies—areas commonly beyond the focus of standardized tests.

As the primary research question for this study indicates, the researcher assumes that the pre-service language arts teachers participating in this study have established expectations in regards to the literacy practices of adolescents. Being that these pre-service teacher participants are novices who are about to become professional teachers, there is an opportunity in the analysis of the data, located in chapter five, to examine how these three participants have prepared for this major transition in the lives. Because this study is narrative in nature, as it is explained in detail in chapter three of this research report, the researcher will examine how the participants developed their understanding and expectations in regards to literacy over time. Further, the researcher will also examine how the participants use this knowledge in a real-world setting. During the inquiry period, the participants take the opportunity to examine how their own expectations measure up to the abilities of an actual high school student. These interactions between the pre-service teachers and the high school students are illustrated in chapter four of the report. And, the analysis of this research report will focus on how the pre-service teachers respond to the interactions they have with the high school student.

## CHAPTER 3 - Research Methodology

*“Buy the ticket; take the ride...”* (Thompson, 1972, p. 89)

The purpose of this study is to examine how undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers develop their expectations of high school students’ literacies. This narrative inquiry based study uses qualitative methods to examine the personal stories of pre-service teachers as they reflect on their experiences in working with reluctant readers in prearranged field experiences. Data analysis relied on the theories of Swales (1990) and Gee (1990) in discussing discourse community and the level at which each participant is willing to participate in his or her community.

As it has been discussed previously, this study seeks to examine a specific research question:

- How do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers develop their expectations of high school students’ literacies?

Subsidiary questions include:

- What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of reading?
- What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of writing?
- What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of attitude toward the subject matter?

The researcher collected data from personal and focus group interview transcripts, transcripts of videotaped interactions between the undergraduate college student participants and the high school students in the field, field notes collected by the researcher, reflective journals kept by the undergraduate college student participants, and final reflections offered in a limited case study composed by the undergraduate college student participants. These data sets were used to develop the storied experiences of each participant.

## Narrative Inquiry

Just as Kim (2008) describes her long relationship with narrative inquiry as a vehicle to discuss theorizing narrative, I too must open this section by defining my position within the narrative landscape. Early in my graduate studies I observed narrative from a distance, admiring the work of some of the best narrative inquirers from an observational stance. I was mystified at first by the use of stories as research data. However, my mystification quickly transformed to intrigue as I began to see the stories in my own life that could serve as research data as well. That is how this research study began—with a personal story that has gone seemingly unanswered in my mind. In a very short amount of time since my introduction to narrative inquiry, I have now immersed myself in the literature supporting narrative inquiry as a meaningful method of research. Upon doing so, I hoped to find specific rules and traditions by which I could follow in developing a narrative study of my own. Instead of established boundaries, I found very little direction in the literature. So, the task belongs to me. In order to build a research study on narrative inquiry, I will attempt to bring together the essential discussions together in a description that will permit me to go forward in my research and with this study. Specifically, this section will define the position of narrative in the qualitative inquiry landscape and present a foundation for the use of narrative inquiry in educational research.

Narrative inquiry provides researchers with the opportunity to examine—with great care and attention to the finer details—the storied pasts of individuals who are uniquely able to answer the researcher's questions. With the ability to transcend time, geography, and culture, narrative inquiry allows the researcher and the participants to reflect and analyze new and often unexplored perspectives of the human experience (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). The ability of narrative inquiry to focus on specific questions as they pertain to specific people has allowed it to grow very popular among qualitative researchers in the education, medicine and anthropology. However, the growing fame of narrative inquiry has drawn its fair share of criticism as well—suggesting that narrative inquiry does not exhibit the rigor of more “scientific” research methods (Barone, 2007; Conle, 2000).

In the realm of academic research and professional literature the paradigm war between quantitative and qualitative research methods—the two overarching research methodologies—has a well documented past. While quantitative methods enjoys a historically comfortable position of acceptance by the academic community, qualitative methods have

struggled to gain acceptance and legitimacy across the board (Barone, 2007; Cresswell, 2007; Rosiek 2007). As qualitative methods become more popular, particularly in the social sciences, the battle for acceptance continues (Barone, 2007). Although there is a growing acceptance for research conducted in qualitative forms among small communities of well-established academic researchers, it is often regarded as practitioner research and regulated to a sub-category all to its own (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While the struggle for acceptance may seem tiresome to those in the field conducting qualitative research, those who believe in the effectiveness of qualitative methods understand the unique methods utilized by qualitative researchers can bring new perspectives to the foreground. Each rigorous and trustworthy qualitative study not only discusses the critical issues of inquiry, but also furthers the cause for qualitative research methods in the realm of academic research.

In the 1980's, as qualitative methods were beginning to be utilized more frequently, especially in the field of education, Bruner (1985) published a foundational work that explained two modes of thought, a logical-scientific mode of knowing and a narrative mode of knowing. Bruner's work is now widely cited in establishing the need for both quantitative and qualitative methods in academic research. Specifically, Bruner (1985) states,

That there are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another.... Each of the ways of knowing, moreover, has operating principles of its own and its own criteria of well-formedness. They differ radically in the procedures for verification. (p. 11)

Bruner (1985) provides an excellent explanation for the existence of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Because, as Bruner so eloquently puts it, the two ways of knowing have their rules and boundaries in form and meaningfulness. And, though the narrative mode of knowing mentioned above appeals to the use of qualitative research methods, proponents of narrative inquiry have used Bruner's work to establish a foundation specifically for their own cause (Polkinghorne, 1995; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Narrative inquiry is a focused research methodology which requires a great deal of time, commitment and perseverance. On the surface, narrative appears to be one of the easier methods of qualitative inquiry, but those who practice narrative inquiry know the opposite is true. Developing a study that is trustworthy and rigorous—a study that elicits critical

thought—demands the researcher to submit true dedication to the study, the participants, and the story. And, although there are several methods at the disposal of the researcher to deliver his or her story to the anticipated audience, narrative inquiry is special. To better understand how one arrives at utilizing narrative inquiry in academic research, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) discuss the four “turns” one typically makes in their journey toward narrative.

The first turn involves the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) state,

In the turn toward narrative inquiry, no change in the direction is more important than the change in an understanding of the relationship of the researcher to the researched. In the move toward narrative inquiry, the turn is characterized as a movement away from a position of objectivity defined from the positivistic, realist perspective toward a research perspective focused on the interpretation and the understanding of meaning. In turning, narrative inquirers recognize that the researcher and the researched in a particular study are in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter (p. 9).

Indeed, the researcher’s purpose for conducting the study and establishing vital aspects of perspective during data collection is important to the life of the research study. In completing the first turn to narrative inquiry, the researcher becomes immersed in the collection of data and establishes lasting connections with those directly affected by the study. It would not be beneficial to the researcher, the participants, or the research process if narrative inquiry was completed from a stark, emotionless point of view. After all, one’s experience in education is highly personal and individually unique. With each passing day, throughout a school person’s career, a life story is being composed along the way (Bateson, 1990; hooks, 1994). Narrative inquiry collects these unique compositions, these storied experiences, and shares them with the rest of the community.

The second turn Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) discuss is the turn from numbers to words as data. Fundamentally speaking, the turn toward words and their meaning would lead a researcher to more qualitative data collection. Narrative inquiry requires word data for examination. However, as the Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) suggest, “the turn from numbers to words as data is not a general rejection of numbers but a recognition that in translating experience to numeric codes researchers lose the nuances of *experience* and *relationship*

(emphasis added) in a particular setting that are of interest to those examining human experience” (p. 15). Although there is considerable value in numerical data, the experiences narrative inquirers are examining are not easily quantified in numbers and formulas.

Utilizing words as data, instead of numbers, is where narrative inquiry parts from most other forms of inquiry. And, while this very fact may indeed contribute to narrative’s growing popularity among educational researchers, there is a growing concern that narrative research methods could be left by the wayside in light of politics and funding practices (Barone, 2007). New legislation governing the funding the American educational system may pose a serious threat to the work of qualitative researchers who study American education. Most recently, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has radically changed the manner in which school people conduct themselves. Educational researchers who employ qualitative methods may find themselves at odds with this law in that it calls for, “explicitly and exclusively for the use of *scientifically based research*” (Barone, 2007, p. 455). The emphasis on scientific research that supports a logical-scientific mode of knowing leaves the narrative mode of knowing completely absent from the arena of educational research. Narrative inquiry is now well on the way establishing itself in the classrooms of America’s schools. To ignore the findings in these narrative studies would be a detriment to the system, its teachers, and the students.

During the third turn, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) suggest that at some point in their research, narrative inquirers begin to turn their focus from the general research idea to “a particular experience, in a particular setting, involving particular people” (p. 21). The stories of individuals have fueled the movement of social change throughout history. In the midst of change,

Personal stories became the rhetorical basis for grassroots movements. These stories played at least four roles. They united members of the movements by making public the experiences that, when hidden, were reminders of their oppression. They made it possible for people without ‘expertise’ to contribute to the intellectual work of the movement. They created a repository of stories upon which movement leaders could theorize and plan. And they provided powerful, authentic evidence of the need for political and social change, evidence that had more persuasive power than positivist social science (p. 24).

As illustrated by Pinnegar and Daynes, the third turn is a highly personal turn that can have lasting effects on those who are closely related to the study. The opportunity to affect change in

one's community or school has an empowering effect that further fuels the importance of investigating the voice and experiences of the individual. Because narrative is an intensely focused methodology that seeks to bring forward the voices of those previously unheard, there is a liberating force behind this turn toward narrative inquiry. As each story is shaped in a meaningful, yet artistic fashion, narrative researchers have the opportunity to, as Greene (1995) suggests, "[expose] the darks and the lights, the wounds and the scars and the healed places, the empty containers and the overflowing ones, and the faces ordinarily lost in the crowds" (p. 28).

The fourth and final turn in moving toward narrative inquiry requires what Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) refer to as a "blurring of knowing." Blurring one's perception of the world as he or she knows it allows the researcher to explore "multiple ways of understanding human experience" (p. 25). Much to the advantage of narrative inquirers, a social movement toward personal experience, has occurred in the way with which mass media is captured and presented to the world.

Memoir and creative nonfiction have been among the most successful genres in popular publishing; museums have embraced the stories of individuals as a way of making connections with the public; new confessional and 'reality' shows populate the television; and blogs, Webpages, and podcasts have granted individuals both the audience and the freedom to narrate.... social science and public culture are converging on stories. The blurred nature of knowing provides narrative researchers the tools for exploring these concerns (p. 28).

This social trend toward narrative will have a lasting impact on how research in the social sciences is conducted. New genres of writing, reading, and viewing have been developed with the advent of user generated content that is published on the global stage of the World Wide Web. With multiple means for individuals to tell and share their stories to a vastly unlimited amount of people, narrative inquirers have a great opportunity to address the many perspectives openly available for observation. The growing acceptability of public memoirs is perhaps indicating a social turn toward narrative as an extension of expression, connection, and existence.

My relationship with narrative inquiry is growing rapidly in so many different directions and each turn presents new considerations and new possibilities. By making each turn toward narrative inquiry, I now find myself standing squarely where I began at the onset of this study. My research questions have been identified, and, after taking each turn, I now firmly believe



narrative inquiry will effectively help me answer my research questions. Before proceeding, it would seem appropriate to broaden my understanding of narrative inquiry and its uses as it pertains specifically to teaching and teacher education. To do so, I return once again to the established research.

### *Narrative in Education*

As I have alluded to above, teachers and teacher educators alike have found narrative inquiry helpful in their professional development. Specifically, there is a particular level of reflection those in education can utilize while in the process of developing a narrative study. These reflective studies can, in fact, have a lasting effect on a teacher's practice (Barone, 1995; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007; Richards & Morse, 2002; Stoughton, 2006;) and curricular priorities (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1994; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002).

A foundational structure of narrative inquiry in educational research is the three dimensional narrative inquiry model developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). As the authors suggest, the three dimensions allow researchers to examine their work by “looking inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within place” (p. 49). The three dimensions are in fact “directions or avenues to be pursued in narrative inquiry” (p. 54). In applying these three dimensions, one particular study that is consistently referenced is that of Murray Orr and Pushor (2007). In applying the three dimensions of narrative inquiry to the narrative data they had collected from their students, Murry Orr and Pushor (2007) state that they were able to

begin by looking outwardly to our student's responses. These responses led us inward to examine our pedagogical practices and forward to transformations in our practices that we hope will lead to better transformative possibilities for students situated in teacher education and school classrooms. (p. 821)

The reflective power of narrative inquiry makes it an excellent choice for those researching all levels and aspects of education particularly as it pertains to teacher development.

As suggested by Brunner (1985), there is a generous need for research that addresses both logical-scientific and narrative modes of knowing. In the landscape of academic research—particularly in field of education—there is a tendency to favor studies that derive from logical-scientific mode of knowing. And, as it has been mentioned above, research methods that utilize narrative data could be marginalized at the hand of American educational policy (Barone,

2007). However, this trend toward scientific-based research should not discourage narrative inquirers from completing rigorous, trustworthy studies. Education experiences vary quite differently from one individual to the next. The diversity in experience from one school person to the next seems well-fitted for studies situated from the narrative mode of knowing. Before moving forward, perhaps it would be wise to discuss how teachers and teacher educators align themselves with narrative inquiry.

Teachers are natural story-tellers and their experiences have become the hallmark of narrative research in education. The research these stories produce has the ability, as Lyons & LaBoskey (2002) state, to “direct or redirect a teacher’s actual practice” (p. 14). However, those who construct narrative study often find their work rejected by the educational research community.

Although it is a common place that teachers frequently and almost naturally turn to story to communicate their classroom experiences and their knowledge of teaching, it is just as likely that in doing so they have been easily dismissed and often demeaned. At least two issues have proven problematic: that a teacher is an inside inquirer, not the detached, objective observer of standard experimental science; and whether the knowledge narrative inquiry produces should be considered as knowledge at all. (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002, p. 15)

As Lyons and LaBoskey (2002) explain, this all changed through the work of Bruner (1985). Lyons and LaBoskey explain that Bruner’s argument for the existence of two modes of cognitive thought, a logical-scientific mode and a narrative mode, ignited the support base of qualitative researchers. Lyons and LaBoskey (2002) continue in saying,

While Bruner’s work paralleled the unprecedented shift of interest in narrative and interpretation in several social science disciplines, it especially caught the attention of educators who were making use of narrative in their own research and practice.

Narrative as story seemed especially useful to capture the situated complexities of teachers’ work and classroom practice, often messy, uncertain and unpredictable. (p. 15)

If anything can be said about public education, “messy, uncertain, and unpredictable” are three fascinating descriptors. With this thought in mind, it is simple to understand how difficult it might be to conduct authentic scientific research within a living, breathing, and often chaotic

classroom. Each classroom is unique in makeup and function. This being the case, qualitative methods typically fit more easily in the classroom environment.

Although I firmly believe narrative inquiry can work well within the classroom, early on I questioned whether or not teachers would be receptive to using stories as data for research. This question is quickly answered by Clandinin, Pushor, and Murry Orr (2007). As the authors state,

Narrative inquiry is a methodology that frequently appeals to teachers and teacher educators. Part of the appeal is, no doubt, the comfort that comes from thinking about telling and listening to stories. This comfort associates with narratives and stories carries into a sense of comfort with research that attends to teachers' and teacher educators' stories. (Clandinin, Pushor & Murray Orr, 2007, p. 23)

The findings of Clandinin, Pushor & Murray Orr (2007) would seem to support the usefulness of narrative in education wherein the researcher and the researched would find the inquiry process beneficial where stories are told and examined. Further, storytelling has even become an integral piece of many educators' identities. As Gordon, McKibbin, Vasudevan, and Viz (2007) explain,

We confess that our desire to tell stories has led to our affinity for narrative inquiry. For us, stories are gather places of meaning that convey the contexts, complexities and situatedness of experience. Stories offer up the living traces of multiple forms of consciousness. (Gordon, McKibbin, Vasudevan & Viz, 2007, p. 328)

Narrative inquiry is often utilized to capture specific learning experiences by teacher researchers (Kim, 2006; Schaafsma, Pagnucci, Wallace & Stock 2007). Unlike any other qualitative methodology, narrative inquiry gives priority to the voices of those participating in the research study.

We create narrative descriptions for ourselves and for those about our own past actions, and we develop storied accounts that give sense to the behavior of others. We also use the narrative scheme to inform our decisions by constructing imaginative "what if" scenarios (Polkinghorne, 1988).

The expansive landscape of narrative inquiry in educational research can help teachers and teacher educators examine different aspects of education. School people, no matter their position or level of experience, can provide insight to those wanting to further examine the field.

As illustrated above, narrative inquiry is well-positioned in the answering questions directly related to education. With these thoughts in mind, some decisions must now be made in order to build my narrative inquiry based study.

### *Two Types of Narrative Inquiry*

Narrative inquiry, as defined by Polkinghorne (1995), is, “a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action” (p. 16). However, there are several methods in which the stories of research participants can be utilized to answer the researcher’s questions. Just as Bruner (1985) established a paradigmatic foundation for two complementary modes of knowing, Polkinghorne (1995) provides a paradigmatic analysis of narrative inquiry.

The first mode, which requires more of a scientific or logical mode of reasoning in the analysis, Polkinghorne (1995) refers to as analysis of narrative. In a study that utilizes analysis of narrative, the researcher uses a variety of methods to collect the stories of those participating in the study and provides a paradigmatic analysis to “discover or describe the categories that identify particular occurrences within the data” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 49). However, it is important to note that this type of narrative inquiry is not used to simply discuss random anomalies mentioned in the stories of the participants. Rather, when the analysis of narratives is utilized properly, the researcher structures his or her discussion of the data in such a manner that allows for discussion that “attempts to detect the covariance among concepts” identified in the storied experiences of those participating in the study (Polkinghorne, 1995, pg. 50).

The second mode, which Polkinghorne (1995) calls narrative analysis, more closely aligns to the narrative mode of knowing as described by Bruner (1985) in that,

Narrative cognition configures the diverse elements of a particular action into a unified whole in which each element is connected to the central purpose of the action. Hearing a storied description about a person’s movement through a life episode touches us in such a way as to evoke emotions such a sympathy, anger, or sadness. (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 40)

In analysis of narrative, the researcher uses a matrix system to draw connections in the stories provided by the research participants. While the researcher who employs narrative analysis is also connecting occurrences presented in participant’s stories, he or she is also crafting an experience that draws the readers into a memorable experience. Thus, by presenting the stories

of the participants in his or her study, the researcher has the ability to connect his or her work directly to those who choose to read the study.

According to Polkinghorne (1995) the purpose of narrative analysis is, to answer how and why a particular outcome came about. The storied analysis is an attempt to understand individual persons, including their spontaneity and responsibility, as they have acted in the concrete social world. The storied production that is the outcome of the research is the retrospective or narrative explanation of the happening that is the topic of the inquiry. (p. 69)

Narrative analysis is a reflective research methodology. In the process of developing the story for his or her audience, the researcher is charged with explaining how the question came to be answered through the data collection process. The stories shared by the research participants may in fact come to a reasonable conclusion that finally answers the research questions. However, it would be a detriment to the process if only the conclusion was shared with the readers. Narrative inquirers must, above all else, be true to the story and trust that a well-written, trustworthy narratives will in fact deliver the readers to an epiphany just as the researcher found as he or she completed his or her research. Although both formats of narrative inquiry produce findings based on the personal stories of those participating in the study, it is narrative analysis that can bring forth meaningful, first-hand accounts to affect change and reform in teacher performance and practice.

### **The Use of Narrative in This Study**

The experiences and collected stories of three pre-service teachers are utilized in answering the questions pertaining to this study. During the early planning stages of this research report other qualitative methods (e.g. case studies or a multi-case report) were briefly considered for this project, however narrative analysis was ultimately chosen in order to allow the three very distinct voices of those participating in the study to completely develop. Although arriving at this conclusion was relatively simple, developing a plan of action in completing the data collection for this project would be another matter all together.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provide a pattern that is widely used by narrative inquirers, especially in applying narrative inquiry to educational research. In developing a

narrative analysis as described by Polkinghorne (1995), Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest a methodological pattern with three primary steps.

- Identify one or more individuals whose experiences and stories could address the established research questions.
- Collect the stories or “field texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Participants can record their experiences in journals, share their stories verbally during personal interviews or focus groups, or the experiences could be captured in field notes collected by an observing researcher.
- Analyze the collected stories and then “restory” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) them in such a way that makes sense. “Restorying” refers to the process with which the researcher organizes the collected stories in such a way that is logical and follows a specified framework.

This general pattern is extensively modeled by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and further expanded by other narrative inquirers (Cresswell, 2007; Kim, 2006; Orr & Olsen, 2007). The freedom with this general model for completing a narrative analysis study allows the researcher to continually reflect and focus his or her understanding of the research question, the purpose of the study, and the impact the results will have on the academic community. And, while the content, perspective, and framework of each narrative study varies widely, the focus of each study is the story. In telling the stories he or she has collected from extensive fieldwork, the narrative researcher provides an extensive look into the perspectives of the research participants. Each fascinating point of view, illuminating detail, carefully crafted narrative guides the readers on a journey of thought and enlightenment. This journey begins with a few simple words and the introduction of a character—the focal point of the research study.

### ***The Characters- Participant Selection***

Each story begins with the introduction of the main characters. In this narrative study there are three primary participants. It is my belief that their stories and experiences build a meaningful foundation for relevant discussion at the conclusion of the inquiry period. The primary participants are in their senior year of an undergraduate pre-service teacher training program at Flint Hills State University (pseudonym), a large university in the American Midwest, at which the researcher was employed during the inquiry period. The participants were

purposefully selected for this study for two very important reasons. First, the participants were enrolled in a secondary teaching methods course that focuses on the teaching of English, language arts, journalism, and speech. Although I have historically been closely involved with this course as a teaching assistant, during the inquiry period, I was not involved in the operations of this course. Secondly, each participant was placed at Davis High School, the accepted research site, for early field experiences in the aforementioned secondary methods course. Though each participant may have common interests and goals, each is quite different. Each participant will be featured in her own narrative later in chapter four of this study. However, it might be beneficial to provide a brief introduction before moving forward. It should be noted that the research participants' names used in this research report are pseudonyms.

### ***Rose***

Rose is a non-traditional student and a mother of six children. She has returned to college after taking several years away from her studies in order to raise a growing family. Rose's mature perspective on children, learning, and commitment weigh heavily on the decisions she makes as a developing teacher. Upon returning to college, Rose is highly motivated to complete her licensure program so that she may become a secondary English teacher.

### ***Amy***

Amy is a self-proclaimed "semi-nontraditional" student who took a couple years off from college after graduating from high school. Like Rose, Amy is very motivated to complete her program of study and begin her career as a teacher. By becoming an English teacher, Amy hopes to provide quality instruction for her students while providing a safe, inviting atmosphere for learning.

### ***Holly***

Unlike Rose and Amy, Holly is a traditional undergraduate student who grew up in a large city located in close proximity to the college that she now attends. Holly has wanted to be a teacher for as long as she can remember and is also looking forward to the day when her career begins. Holly also has plans to begin working on a graduate degree in curriculum and instruction soon after beginning her first job as a secondary English teacher.

### ***Supporting Characters—Secondary Participants***

Throughout the inquiry period the primary participants were paired with a high school student at the selected research site. In their description of their field experiences, the primary participants often refer to these secondary participants. Each secondary participant, and his or her legal guardian, was made aware of his or her rights to be immediately excluded from the study upon request. As prescribed by the Internal Review Board, each primary participant and secondary participant mentioned in the final study must have a release statement signed and on file with the researcher in order to be included in the study. These release statements have been collected and safely stored. Again, to protect the privacy of the participants in this study, each was assigned a pseudonym in the write up of this report.

### **The Setting- Site Selection**

Davis High School (pseudonym) is the chosen site for this study. Davis High School (DHS) offers a unique setting to conduct educational research due to its proximity to a major military post with well over half of the student population representing families in which one parent is a member of the American Armed Forces. Davis High School has experienced both a period of dynamic growth and a period of precipitous student turnover. These two opposing trends are likely tied to the school's relationship with the nearby military post.

Serving over 1,700 students in one building, DHS educates a widely diverse population of students with 56% of students identifying with a minority group. And, nearly 39% of students attending class at DHS come from an economically disadvantaged background. Although DHS has a very diverse student body that represents a range of socio-economic backgrounds, Davis High School celebrates many academic successes as well. During the 2007 – 2008 school year DHS was awarded Standard of Excellence in reading and received national recognition in 2005 as a Model School by the International Center for Leadership in Education.

DHS is a Professional Development School partnered with a large state university, and over the past year and a half, the researcher has built a significant relationship with the research site. As a graduate teaching assistant and student-teacher supervisor, the researcher has worked closely with the clinical instructor and several members of the faculty. And, though the researcher's duties as a student-teacher supervisor were purposefully limited from including DHS during the inquiry period, it must be noted that a relationship with the site existed prior to



this study. Davis High School has a longstanding relationship with area universities as a professional development site. The diverse setting that DHS provides is not only an ideal setting for pre-service field experiences; it also serves as a remarkable setting to conduct research in the area of teacher education. These indicators also had an impact on site selection for this study.

### *The Field Experience*

In addition to student teaching, Flint Hills State University, a pseudonym referring to the university the participants in which the primary participants named in the study are enrolled, provides a number of field experiences for students enrolled in both elementary and secondary teacher training classes. Field experiences at Flint Hills State University are designed to give the pre-service candidates enrolled in its program the opportunity to progressively take on more responsibilities as a teacher with each new placement. During these field experiences undergraduate students to work as classroom aides and present lessons in classrooms. The public schools that provide these opportunities are part of the expansive professional development school network established by Flint Hills State University. As the field experience each primary participant is completing is an important detail to the findings of this research study, perhaps an explanation of these field experiences is necessary.

In an effort to provide a robust series of field experiences for each pre-service teacher, Flint Hills State requires each student to enroll in courses specifically designated to complete these field experiences. In explaining these field experiences, the student handbook for undergraduate pre-service teachers at Flint Hills State indicates,

You will have opportunities for field experiences prior to student teaching. These experiences typically begin in the sophomore year. You will work in local schools so that you will have experience performing teacher responsibilities and working with individuals or small groups of students. The number and kinds of these experiences vary according to the curriculum. (Flint Hills State University, 2009, p. 20)

Typically, these “early field experiences” require students to complete thirty to forty hours of work in the field. The responsibilities of each student in the field during these early experiences vary from providing support to the classroom teacher to working with small groups of students on enrichment activities. More importantly, these early field experiences provide the teacher candidates with a valuable first hand perspective as to how a real classroom operates.

As the candidates proceed through the teacher training program at Flint Hills State University, they are also given the opportunity to prepare and present lessons as part of their initial teaching methods courses. During this introductory block of courses in the teacher education program, candidates prepare and present lessons in a team teaching format with two or three of their classmates who are interested in focusing in the same content area (i.e.: English, social studies, math, and science). Beyond the early field experiences, Flint Hills State University encourages students enrolled in the teacher education program to seek out opportunities to work with school aged children beyond the traditional offerings of the program. The handbook for undergraduate pre-service teachers further states,

Take advantage of opportunities to work with children and young people through extracurricular activities (e.g., summer camps, baby-sitting, Sunday school teaching) and/or additional formal field experiences. (Flint Hills State University, 2009, p. 3)

These additional field experiences provide valuable learning opportunities for novices to further develop vital communication and management skills that may not typically present themselves in traditional early field experiences.

In the case of the three participants in this study, secondary English education majors at Flint Hills State University, and as part of a secondary methods course typically taken the semester before student teaching, each participant required to complete fifteen hours of field experience in a secondary English classroom. The participants in this study, in completing this field experience requirement were placed with a teacher at Davis High School. This placement provided the pre-service teachers the opportunity to provide instruction to the entire class, work individually with students, and provide support for the classroom teacher. Additionally, the pre-service teachers in this study were placed with a teacher in a common study hall period referred to in this study as “Seminar Period” to tutor reluctant readers. In completing the requirements of this field experience the pre-service teachers visited Davis High School on seven occasions during the spring semester prior to their student teaching semester.

At the conclusion of the early field experiences described above, pre-service teacher candidates then complete their student-teaching semester. As the Flint Hills State University Handbook for undergraduate pre-service teachers indicates,

Student teaching is a total experience for a full semester or more. It lasts all day, and you follow the schedule of the school to which you are assigned. The school may start prior to the beginning of the Flint Hills State University semester and/or extend beyond the end of the Flint Hills State University semester.... During student teaching, you will take over more and more of the teaching responsibilities of the classes to which you are assigned until you are primarily responsible for most or all of them. (Flint Hills State University, 2009, p. 19)

As indicated here, the student-teaching semester is designed to give the pre-service teacher the opportunity to take on a great deal of the responsibilities of a classroom teacher thereby meeting the intended goal of the varied field experiences offered at Flint Hills State University.

As it has been stated earlier in this section, the participants in this study are in their junior year of college at Flint Hills State University and are enrolled in a secondary teaching methods course for English education majors. These students, as part of the university's requirements, must complete fifteen hours of field experience during this course. To meet this requirement, the undergraduate pre-service teachers named in this study completed this required field experience at Davis High School, the setting mentioned earlier in this chapter. The field experience at Davis High School was implemented to give the undergraduate pre-service teachers the opportunity to take on more responsibilities as instructors in a secondary setting.

## **Procedures**

In accordance with university policy, the methods for this research study have been reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB). Please refer to Appendix A of this research report to review the IRB application and acceptance notification.

## ***Data Collection***

The data sets used in this study include transcripts from individual and focus group interviews, reflective journal entries from each primary participant, field notes collected by the researcher during the inquiry period, and a limited case study of a high school student prepared by the primary participants based on the information they collect from the secondary participants. All of these data sets were utilized in creating a meaningful narrative account of the experiences shared by each of the primary participants.

### ***Personal and Focus Group Interviews***

At the onset of the inquiry period, three participants enrolled in a secondary language arts instructional methods course were approached to participate in the study. The researcher conferred with the major professor in order to identify three suitable candidates enrolled in the major professor's secondary teaching methods course. The researcher then retained official consent from each participant. Each was interviewed at length before engaging in the arranged field experiences. The researcher conducted the individual interviews utilizing the approved interview protocol (Appendix B). The individual interviews focused on the participants' educational experiences and develop a sense for what each participant anticipated from his or her experiences in the field. Specifically, the researcher focused on the participants' feelings about working one on one with reluctant readers. These individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Additionally, the researcher conducted a second personal interview in which the primary research participants discussed the findings they found as a result of completing the limited case study on high school student. More information about the limited case study is available below this section.

Throughout the course of the inquiry period the researcher and the three primary participants met on three occasions to hold focus group discussions. These discussions were structured on the approved focus group protocol (Appendix C), and they also served as an opportunity for the research participants to discuss what they had witnessed in the field. The focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

### ***Video and Journal Reflection***

As the participants completed their field experiences, each experience was video taped and transcribed for future analysis. The purpose for recording these experiences was two-fold. First, it gave the researcher a first-hand account as to how the pre-service teacher interacted with the high school student she was working with. Secondly, it provided the participants with a record of their field experience for reflection and professional growth. While viewing these recordings, the participants wrote a reflective journal entry for each experience. These journals were collected and analyzed as data for the study.

### ***Field Notes***

As it is critical for the researcher in a narrative study to participate at some level during the inquiry process, I assumed the role as observer during while the primary participants interacted with the secondary participants. As mentioned above, these interactions were video recorded and transcribed for analysis and restorying. However, in order to capture some details that may not have made shown through on film, I collected a series of detailed field notes (to be included in the appendix). These field notes proved to be quite useful in developing detailed nuances in the restoried narratives.

### ***The Limited Case Study Guide***

This data set, unlike the others previously mentioned is special in that it serves two very distinct purposes. As mentioned in the description of the primary participants, those participating in this study are also completing the required course work for a secondary instructional methods course. One of the primary assignments of the course is a limited case study that the undergraduate prepares after a collecting data from a high school student. This limited case study has proven to be quite useful in the assessing the undergraduate's ability to analyze a realistic student's performance in the field. Further, the limited case study provides an opportunity for pre-service teachers to practice inquiry in the classroom.

At the time of this study, the limited case study assignment has been utilized for four consecutive semesters. In its earliest form, the case study assignment began as a group project. Undergraduates were placed in groups of four, each group was assigned one high school student participant, and each group member was responsible for writing up one section of the limited case study report. Upon reflecting on this practice, it was determined that perhaps the high school student may in fact be more likely to provide more detailed information for the case study if the assignment was completed as an individual project instead of a group project. For each following semester, the limited case study assignment has remained an individual project.

As the teaching assistant for the secondary instructional methods class mentioned above, one of my responsibilities has been to design and grade this particular required assignment for the course. I have read and assessed each case study for two semesters. As I have read these completed case studies for the past two years, I have observed several instances in previous students' writing that suggest they were addressing some serious concerns they had as a result of the participating in this field experience. My familiarity with this particular assignment is the

main reason I wanted to place it in this study as a major set of data. This limited case study assignment allows the pre-service teacher to make perhaps his or her first formal decisions about a real high school student. Further, in writing up the report, the pre-service teacher is required to analyze and synthesize several data sets (i.e. observational data, interview data, and formative and summative assessment data)—truly putting to task the skills he or she has been taught throughout his or her professional training.

The first section of the limited case study assignment (Appendix D) guides the undergraduate to learn more about the high school student. The questioning scheme has been designed in such a way that allows the high school student to share as much as he or she can about his or her background and scholastic interests. Hopefully, these questions will serve as a foundation on which a professional relationship can be built between the undergraduate and the high school student. The undergraduates understand that the questioning schemes in this case study guide are merely suggestions for data collection.

As it has been discussed at great length in this research report, reading and writing are two areas of concern at the secondary level in American schools. The second section of the limited case study (Appendix E) provides an opportunity for the undergraduate to learn more about the high school student's interests in a wide variety of reading activities. In addition to collecting information on the high school student's reading interests, the undergraduate is also encouraged to collect data that illustrates the high school student's reading ability. This can include, but is not limited to, professional observations and/or reading assessment scores.

The third section of the limited case study guide (Appendix F) focuses on the high school student's interests and motivations toward writing. The case study guide encourages the undergraduates to expand their understanding of the high school students' interests toward a wide range of writing activities. Just as in section two, the undergraduates are encouraged to collect writing samples from the high school student for analysis in their write up of the case study.

At the conclusion of the inquiry period, each participant submitted a copy of limited case study they completed during the inquiry period. It is important to note that the interview data provided by the participants in this study served as primary resources in structuring the narratives. However, the ancillary data sets (e.g. video taped interactions, journal reflections, and limited case studies) will be secondary resources used in the restorying process.

### *Analysis and Restorying*

As a novice to narrative inquiry, I have quickly learned that building a quality narrative study requires far more than a well-written story. Conle (2000) claims that there are few who have further investigated the “inquiry in narrative inquiry” (p. 190). In fact Conle explains,

I suspect that candidates doing a narrative thesis are so taken up the process, enjoying the doing of it, that they are not much interested in characterizing its inquiry quality abstractly. They are more interested in telling what they have learned through the process. They may even view it as therapeutic. It is this reaction that fuels the doubts of critics of narrative work. They dismiss it as therapy which lacks the rigour [sic] expected in research. (p. 190)

Further, Conle (2000) explains that there are in fact two voices, often speaking simultaneously in a well-formed narrative study. The first voice, that of the narrator, presents the story. The second voice, the theoretical voice, “conceptualizes what is being presented” (p. 193). In utilizing both of these voices, Conle (2000) believes the researcher is able to address two audiences, as “narrative inquirers will benefit from a theoretical understanding of the process they are engaged in; and those who are used to theoretical discourse may benefit from lending an ear to experiential testimony, at the risk of being put off by the underdeveloped argumentative structure of [the] narrative account” (p. 194).

Simply collecting stories from enlisted research participants and restorying them for those consuming the research is simply not enough in establishing a lasting base for inquiry. Framing the presentation of the story in from a theoretical point of view will give meaning and purpose to the work. In fact, Kim (2008) believes “The ultimate goal of narrative theorizing is to look for possibilities that will lead narrative research to re-establish and reaffirm its significance as a research methodology and pedagogical tool in teaching and learning in the current political context” (p. 253).

In chapter two of this research report, I have defined the parameters of discourse community theory as it pertains to this study. After all data sets were collected and transcribed the researcher completed the restorying process. The goal of restorying was to synthesize the collected data into a meaningful story that captured the unique experiences of each participant. This process required the researcher to frame the meaningful elements of each participant’s

contributions using the theories of discourse community explained in chapter two as they pertain to the context of each participant.

### ***Member Checking***

When utilizing narrative inquiry, the researcher and the participants enter into a relationship that is built, by in large, on a great deal of trust and transparency. In the spirit of transparency, each primary participant has been debriefed at the conclusion of each stage in the inquiry period. Further, each participant has read this report and offered clarifying suggestions to the completed narratives presented in chapter four of the report in order to ensure an accurate depiction of each participant is offered in this research study.

### **Summary**

In order to find specific answers to the research questions established for this study, the researcher decided that narrative inquiry, specifically narrative analysis, would be utilized to investigate the storied experiences of three pre-service language arts teachers participating in early field experiences. Throughout the inquiry period, the researcher collected data from personal interviews, focus group discussions, reflective journals, videotaped observations, field notes, and limited case studies composed by the research participants. After all of the data sets had been transcribed, the researcher synthesized the data into three meaningful narratives to serve as a platform of analysis.



## CHAPTER 4 - Presentation of Data

*“The important thing is to cover this story on its own terms; leave the other stuff to Life and Look—at least for now”* (Thompson, 1972, p. 57).

In an effort to answer the research questions discussed at length in chapter three of this research report, the storied experiences of three research participants are presented in this chapter. As discussed in previous chapters, pre-service language arts teachers participating in this study are completing early field experiences, and the assignments required therein, as part of their teacher training program. The narratives from each participant are presented in three parts. The data is presented in such way in order to frame the discussion and analysis included in chapter five of this report. Because the focus of this report is to examine the interpretations, expectations, and understandings of the primary research participants, the data is structured to give the reader, and the researcher, a format for interpretation. In the following sections, the researcher will provide a brief introduction of the research participant in the researcher’s voice. Then, each participant will provide a detailed introduction of her life and experience as a student and pre-service teacher candidate. Several observational illustrations are then interjected into each participant’s story to provide a point of analysis for the primary research participants to explain, in their own words, their understandings of those illustrated events.

As discussed in chapter three, several sets of data were collected. And, as the narratives began to take shape, the different data sets seemed to lend themselves to being presented from different points of view. In an effort to stay true to the process first and third person points of view were utilized to create the narratives in this chapter. The video taped observations were used to create the observational illustrations in each narrative. Personal interviews, focus group discussions, and journal reactions were utilized to create the other sections of the participants’ narratives. The combination of first person accounts and third person illustrations presents an episodic stream of consciousness that weaves a complete narrative between what was experienced and what was understood. By reflecting on these experiences, each participant

provides the researcher and the readers a glimpse into the progression she is making into becoming a professional teacher from her perspective.

In the presentation of the data, each participant will reference two different field experiences they completed at Davis High School. The pre-service teachers were placed with a high school English teacher. They were asked to assist that teacher with day-to-day duties in the classroom. While in the English classroom, the participants worked with small groups of students, offered individual assistance to students with special needs, and presented lessons to the entire class. Each participant was then placed with a single student to tutor during a common study hall period at Davis High School referred to as “seminar period”. Aspects of each of these experiences will present themselves in the participant’s stories.

As Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) suggested in chapter three of this report, there are four turns one makes toward narrative inquiry before he or she commits to the research process. These turns are manifested differently for each narrative inquirer, however each turn does occur at some point throughout his or her experience. The time has now arrived for us to make yet another turn. In doing so, we set our sights on the voices of those who volunteered to help me find the answers to the research questions I established for this study. These narratives were composed purposefully because I truly believe that from these carefully crafted narratives, truth will be revealed.

## **Holly**

Holly is a traditional undergraduate student who has found a great deal of success in her academic career. Beyond her success as a student, Holly has also enjoyed many social successes. Specifically, she was named *Ms. Greek 2009* at Flint Hills State University—an award that she proudly places on her resume in a list of notable accomplishments. Driven by this success, Holly verbalizes specific goals for her future students. Additionally, Holly provides a detailed account of where she has come from and where she hopes to go. While completing her required field experiences at Davis High School, Holly worked with Dante, a young African American man who is in his junior year of high school.

### ***Holly’s Introduction***

Well, I grew up in a suburb of a major midwestern city, for most of my secondary education. My parents both graduated from Flint Hills State University, and when I was

originally looking at colleges I wanted to look at colleges on either coast, but we could not afford that. I originally wanted to major in apparel marketing, and, as it turns out, Flint Hills State offered a major in that field. It certainly made that decision easy for me; Flint Hills State was the place. When I arrived, I was obviously very impressed with the school, the people, and the atmosphere. I knew I had made the right choice. I just didn't know that fairly soon I would be changing my major to English education.

When I started taking the apparel classes, I thought, "Wow, this is not that challenging! I am kind of bored!" And, I realized that if I was going to make something of myself in that field, I would have to move to New York or some big city like that. At that time in my life, moving across the country didn't seem like something I would like to do. In the mean time, I kept adding English classes to my course schedule which seemed silly because I wasn't an English major, but I enjoyed the content and the instructors in English. I decided to look into English further and found that education seemed like a natural, logical fit.

Up until that point in my life, I had not thought about being a teacher since I was little. But, once I started taking my education classes, I realized that I could not be where I am today without many helpful, encouraging teachers I have had along the way. I think that is why I began to think of teaching as a new challenge to take on; somewhere that I could make an impact; somewhere I could make a difference. It certainly has been an interesting road thus far.

I have always been a good reader and writer in high school and college. I was enrolled in honors English classes in high school. It was in these classes I met a very influential teacher in my life. I was in her class during my freshman and senior years. As a freshman in honors English, I don't know that I was ready for that level of thinking. But she kept her high standards and really pushed me to learn at a higher level than I thought I could. I remember that I almost got a zero on my first paper in her class because I did not know how to use in text citations. But she was flexible. She took advantage of a teachable moment and let me redo the paper. That is something that has stuck with me.

I also remember how energetic she was in front of the classroom. The class was reading *Beowulf*, and, well, she was quite small, only about 4'-11", and I can remember her playing the part of Grendel. So, here was this little woman trying to be a big monster in this small classroom full of high school seniors. It was really funny, but memorable. She always had a way of

showing us how the literature could come alive. She was very well respected by her students and that made it okay for us to like literature, to buy into her class.

I have really enjoyed my time here at Flint Hills State. There are several teachers in the English Department and the College of Education who have made a positive impact in my life. My favorite part is being in the schools; learning first hand what being a teacher is all about. Obviously, I wish we could have some of our experiences on learning how to teach earlier in the program. I think in some respects we learn too late. Most people don't typically get into their teaching methods courses until their junior and senior year. I wish we had some of that earlier. I think it would be helpful to let people decide if a career in education is for them.

As I look ahead to my future as a high school teacher, I think about all of the things high school students should be able to do. However, I believe we often forget the basics. High school students should be literate; they should be able to read and write. To me, literacy means... at first you think of literacy as the ability to read and write. But, at a deeper level it means to be able to understand and comprehend. For example, when you talk about having literacy in technology, when you are able to understand what the foundational elements are, you understand how to use that information. So, if you are literate, you have the knowledge and you sort of have the power to use that knowledge to the ends you want to use it for.

I think there are too many students who graduate from high school who are unable to read critically and really analyze the text they are reading. Writing is a huge obstacle for some as well. I have edited a lot of papers for my friends here at Flint Hills State and I am shocked at their level of writing. Focusing on communication skills will be critical, I believe, to the future success of my students.

This semester, as part of a required field experience, I interviewed a student named Dante. Dante, a junior at Davis High School, lives with his mother and father, an older brother, and a younger sister. He has moved around significantly throughout his life having previously lived in parts of the East Coast and the Midwest. Dante is enrolled in a reading seminar class that focuses on helping reluctant readers prepare for state assessments. When I wasn't interviewing Dante for a case study assignment, I helped him work on homework.

### ***Holly and Dante: Observational Illustration #1***

There is a slight buzzing from the florescent light perched above the small room adjacent to the school's media center. There is a muffled clamor spilling over into the small room from the neighboring hallway. Dante, an athletic African American high school student is working quietly next to Holly, a college undergraduate. Holly occupies herself with light record keeping until Dante asks a question about his work.

"Did... do you...?" Dante looks up from his papers for a moment, quite unsure how to phrase his question. He is working on a worksheet that focuses on homonyms. A topic in which Holly seems quite confident.

"Did you get stuck on one of them?" Holly turns her head slightly to read the worksheet as Dante sees it. She rereads the passage that Dante has corrected and asks, "Are you asking me if you have written this part correctly?"

There is a pause of uncertainty as Dante takes another look at his work. "Yeah, well, I mean... I know it is wrong to write it like *that*. But, I don't think the sentence makes sense." Dante points to the line on the worksheet he is trying to rewrite correctly.

Sensing that Dante was truly struggling in his attempt to correct the misplaced homonyms, Holly takes a closer look at the worksheet and the corrections Dante has made. "Okay," Holly began. "Let's go through it sentence by sentence, okay? I'll have you read the first paragraph to me and we can look at your corrections. So, why don't you begin with the first four lines."

The pair work through the activity, line by line, until all of the errors are corrected.

### ***Holly's Understanding***

The activity Dante and I worked on together was a worksheet entitled "Ode to Spell Checker." The worksheet contained a poem full of homonym errors. The activity was relevant because many people rely on spell checker to catch their errors rather than proofread on their own. This activity showed that spell checker only checks the spelling and not the meaning of the words being used.

Dante moved through the activity fairly quickly, and asked me questions when he was unsure about what to do. He seemed to have trouble articulating what exactly his question was, but we worked through it together to identify what he needed clarified. After Dante worked

independently on the worksheet, we reviewed it together to catch errors and make changes. To assess Dante's reading skills, I asked him to read through each stanza before we checked for errors. Asking Dante to read aloud helped me identify where the disconnect was between what he said and what he wrote.

When reading the sentences over again, Dante often immediately caught spelling mistakes before I could point them out to him. Other times, specifically with punctuation, I had to provide more guidance. When Dante knew there was a spelling error, more often than not, he knew how to spell the word he meant to use. Only a few times did I have to give more direction in spelling. Dante had the most trouble with using words or phrases he wasn't accustomed to hearing. This tendency leads me to believe that he is not an avid reader, and is used to casual conversation more than formal written speech. Using "it is" for instance seemed out of place for him when most people use "it's" in conversation.

In another tutoring session I asked Dante to read from a magazine with me in the library in order to observe his reading ability first hand. I was impressed by Dante's ability to self-regulate as a reader. I was also impressed with his ability to ask questions when he was unsure. Dante mostly caught and corrected his mistakes while reading which showed that he was paying attention and reading carefully. I wondered while we were reading if I should tell him how to say the words he was struggling on, or if I should have him try pronouncing the words on his own first. I got the sense that it might cause embarrassment to make him struggle through a word he was uncomfortable with. I'm still not sure this was the best route to take. Looking back, I could have used a few opportunities to check for understanding, specifically with the meanings of words he may have found unfamiliar. We could have worked together to define some of the words I knew he understood as we read along.

I hope that by alternating reading I was able to model reading fluency for Dante while also making him feel that we were equally sharing in the weight of reading the article. My biggest regret for this session was that I didn't do more checks for understanding and analysis of reading comprehension. At the end, we could have had a discussion about the meaning of the article and its main arguments. However, absent of these opportunities to check on Dante's comprehension of the reading material, I believe my first assessment of this session remain true.

There were several instances where Dante mispronounced a word, didn't catch it, and I didn't correct him. I struggled internally where I should correct all of these mistakes as well. I

didn't want him to feel uncomfortable taking risks and trying to pronounce words only to be constantly corrected, but I also realize how important it is for him to know how to pronounce the words. If words are mispronounced, this can really have a negative impact on comprehension. And, I saw Dante struggle with this a few times. When he caught it himself; problem solved. But, when he didn't and I didn't address it, then I'm not sure about the level of comprehension in those instances. This activity led me to try and learn more about him as a writer. And, while that conversation was very important, it began with a very interesting interchange.

### ***Holly and Dante: Observational Illustration #2***

Holly and Dante take a seat at a secluded table in the school's media center. Holly opens a notebook and grabs a pen as she flips through the pages of notes. Something in the margins of Holly's notebook catches Dante's attention.

"Is that your notebook from school?" He asks.

Holly momentarily takes her attention away from the business of trying to locate the page she needs from her notebook to answer Dante's question. "Yep, this is what I take to all of my classes."

Dante looks down at the paper in the notebook once again and asks, "So, you draw pictures?"

Holly looks down and laughs as she sees that Dante had inadvertently identified the bubble-letter designs Holly had composed during a recent lecture in one of her college classes. Down the right margin of the particular page Dante referenced, big letters spelling out H-o-l-l-y were prominently displayed. Slightly embarrassed by this discovery, Holly says, "I try to... I draw in class. I find that is how I pay attention. That's how I remember the information... when I doodle during the lecture. You know, just like any other student, I guess."

In just a few short moments Holly finds the page she was looking for in the notebook and prepares to learn more about Dante and his experiences as a writer. After giving a brief overview of the types of questions she is going to ask throughout the course of the interview, Holly begins, "So, our first question is, and I guess this is pretty appropriate considering the pictures here I was drawing... do you like to draw?"

### ***Holly's Understanding***

It's funny the first thing that flashed into my mind was, "Oh, I guess he knows my first name now." That was funny because I feel like I am continually trying to find that balance between being a professional being able to relate to the students on their level. I think I haven't found the ability to be in both places at once, if that makes sense. So, sometimes when stuff like that catches me off guard, I think, "Oh, how do I respond to this?" The more I work with students, the more comfortable I feel dealing with these situations—being a teacher, being myself, and begin able to laugh about trying to be both. That is one thing that I admired about my teachers. When they could be focused and professional in front of the class, but then move seamlessly into that quirky personality they had, made me appreciate who they were. I want to be able to show my personality, but I don't think I have quite figured out how to.

Being young, I can relate to the student so much more, at least in a different way. I was just there. I know how it is to be growing up in this time. I know what it means to be in school and what it means to be a student. Because I am close to their age, I understand the world as it is and I understand what it means to grow up in the world as it is right now and that is helpful I think. But, when it comes to discipline or being a credible source as a professional teacher, that is where the challenge lies—to take command of the classroom and to have your students take you seriously.

When I work with students it is something that is always in the back of my mind. I feel like as a young person, as a young female even, trying to get up in front of students and wanting to be taken seriously, you feel like you have to overcompensate for your age. And so you think, "I need to be more professional and not joke around as much as I normally would." I still wonder how I should act in these situations. I think with more practice in the classroom I will be able to be more comfortable with my role as a teacher.

### ***Holly and Dante: Observational Illustration #3***

"So when you are asked by one of our teachers to write a paper, can you describe for me how you would complete the assignment?" Holly pauses for a few moments to allow Dante to form an answer. After a few moments of silence, Holly rephrases her question for her student. "So how would you go about completing that assignment, what steps would you use? Do you make an outline? How do you go through the steps of writing a paper?"



Dante's face lights up as he answers, "I do a web. Then, I start filling in the different parts of the web."

"What types of things do you include in the web? What all do you usually put in there?"

Dante quickly replies, "Setting, outline, just stuff like that... I don't know." Unconfident in his answer Dante looks down at his hands folded on the table in front of him.

"No, that is good." Holly says encouragingly. "I know that there are several ways you can do that and I was just curious as to how you did it. So, you start with a web. What do you do from there?"

Dante looks up momentarily to answer, "I pick out stuff that I want to talk about, out of the web. I just start writing. Sometimes I don't do the web; I just write." A bell rings signaling a midpoint in the common study hall hour. The area around the shared table is instantly crowded with students passing from one room to the next. In a matter of moments, calm is restored once again by another bell. Holly investigates further.

"Do you enjoy writing?"

"Yeah, I do because you can make up your own stories and stuff." Dante continues, "In Kindergarten we had to write a book. It was pretty hard. I think I told you about this last time, but they gave us our own book. We had to write a story and type it up and draw pictures."

"So, do you typically like writing creative stories or essays? You know, sometimes you might have to write serious essays for your classes."

Dante is quick to answer, "Stories. I like to write mystery stories."

Holly picks up on Dante's enthusiasm on this topic and continues, "That's good that you like being creative. Do you typically find it easy or difficult to start writing?"

"Sometimes, if I don't have anything to start off with, then..." Dante's reply trails off, but Holly quickly picks up the fading response.

"Do you find that if you have a prompt or something to help you get started, does make it easier for you to get started to write?"

"Yeah, I think it is easier. Like when you can see something that helps you think and get started."

Holly takes a moment to scribble notes in between questions, trying desperately to keep pace with what she is learning from Dante. When the moment presents itself, she continues,

“Yeah, sometimes the fear of the blank piece of paper can make it really hard to get in there and get started. Is there a particular piece of writing that you are proud of?”

“Umm, yeah, we did a death penalty research paper. I like that paper because it showed all of the different types of methods that they use, and what they used to use, to kill people and stuff.”

### *Holly's Understanding*

When it comes to writing a paper and his personal writing process, Dante usually starts with a web in order to map out what he would like to say. Once he sets up the web, he fills in the outer components with setting, problem, etc. Sometimes Dante skips this step, and instead simply picks out what he would like to talk about and then begins writing. Dante sometimes uses a computer or books for sources when he is researching or needing to include evidence in the paper. One of Dante's writing strategies is to skip lines as he writes so that there is room for him to go back, proofread, and edit the original draft. He believes that the editing process is helpful because he sometimes rushes through the first draft, leaving out important elements. Skipping lines and editing allows him to go back, rewrite, and add to the paper. The only time that others edit his work is when they do partner editing in class. Dante finds this to be helpful as well, because his peers can often read and know what he was writing about or intending to say more than the teachers might. During these class swaps, Dante edits the writing of others too.

Dante enjoys writing because he likes to make up stories. He remembered his kindergarten project where they wrote a book filled with stories and pictures. Dante enjoys writing stories more than essays or other forms of writing, and he especially likes to write mysteries and “how-to” pieces. He does not enjoy the basic writing that he is typically required to complete during a class period. Dante often chooses to incorporate humor in his writing. Sometimes he finds it difficult to begin writing, but when he is provided with a prompt or topic it usually helps spark his creativity. Dante would rather write with a pencil because he can write faster than he can type.

The piece of writing about which Dante was most proud was a death penalty research paper. In this paper, Dante showed different methods that were used to kill people throughout history. Analysis of this writing sample showed that Dante can compile information and facts, but that he is still challenged to put it together in a cohesive way. The paper is essentially one

big paragraph with personal pronouns sprinkled throughout. Dante is a bright student with strong ideas, but he needs assistance in formulating them in a more mature manner. Sentences tended to be run-ons with misspellings, and grammatical structure was often incorrect. Some of the errors likely could have been caught through better proofreading, but others would have needed additional instruction on grammar, spelling, and the five traits of writing. It would have been interesting to see the requirements of the writing assignment and see how they compared to Dante's final product. With some instruction on the basic five paragraph writing structure, this piece could have been made stronger in a number of ways, perhaps more detail, increased use of logic and reasoning, for example.

I was really interested to read this essay because he had said that it was the one piece of writing that he was most proud of. So, I was excited to get a chance to read it. And, I did think he had strong ideas in there and he was interested in the topic. I mean you could sense that voice and that passion when you read it. But, I would have liked to have seen what the assignment actually was, because it turned to be just one big paragraph instead of being structured like an actual paper. I was surprised to see a lot of personal pronouns and word confusion—a lot of things that could have been caught with editing. But, I think he needed some more instruction on who to write well and on the traits of writing. So, I think he is definitely not at the level he should be at in writing. However, he has a willingness to learn and an interest in writing. I can't explain why he is so far behind, but I think Dante has a lot of room to grow.

I think Dante started in a different school and has moved around quite a bit, and I know that plays a huge role in students' lives where there is inconsistency in the curriculum and what they are learning from year to year. He could have missed out on the whole five-paragraph structure thing and that is why he only ended up with one paragraph in his paper. You just never know what they missed out on. And I think it is interesting to see those gaps and to capture a teachable moment. It doesn't have to be for the whole class either, it might be something you can work on with the student directly. By dropping a tip, the light bulb comes on. I have had that happen to me in classes even in college,

Overall, Dante believes that he is a good student. He comes to school, does his work, is never late, and completes all assignments on time—in short, he is responsible. He does, however, recognize that he could perform better in some of his classes by studying more, specifically chemistry. Fortunately, the most frustrating part of school for Dante is having to get

up early. For the most part, he is not frustrated by school and enjoys the experience. He views the most rewarding part as getting an education and receiving a diploma at the end.

I think he needs to build his confidence up a bit more. Throughout our interchanges, he seemed hesitant to answer questions because he wanted to have the right answer. He'd say something and get kind of embarrassed and say, "I don't know." So, I think that helping him build his confidence, and helping him develop his communication skills, would go a long way. He has expressed that education is important and he knows that it is helping him become a better person and it is helping him get to where he wants to go. He is a student who has goals and who is motivated, I just don't know that he knows what it will take to get to where he wants to go.

#### ***Holly and Dante: Observational Illustration #4***

Holly flips through another page in her note book, makes a few more notes, then asks, "Do you feel you have taken school seriously?"

Dante answers confidently, "Yeah, I believe I take school seriously"

"What would you change about school, the teachers, or the learning experience in general to make it better for all students?"

"I would have some teachers not rush, make sure everyone is on the same page, you know?" Dante's eyes return to the familiar landscape of his hands folded on the bare table in front of him.

"Mm hmm, they go too fast sometimes?"

" Yeah."

A gentle silence falls between them. Holly looks up from her paper and asks, "What would be on piece of advice you would give students to be successful in high school?"

"Keep an agenda." Dante says with great certainty, "write down everything so that you don't forget your homework or something else. Because in some classes you might forget; I do sometimes. And I would tell them to ask questions. Because if they don't ask the question, they might not know. Then, when the test comes..."

#### ***Holly's Understanding***

I wish I could have been able to have these one on one interviews with all of the students I've been working with throughout my field experiences. The interviews, one-on-one work sessions, tapings, and reflections have been incredibly useful in helping me understand Dante

and understand my personal growth as a professional. Dante was pretty shy and I think by working with him over an extended amount of time really helped me to get to know him better, helped him open up, and helped me work with him better. Doing the interview questions, mixed with reading and writing, doing the worksheets and activities really helped me. I felt like I could understand where he was coming from more, understand his needs better and help him understand better. If I didn't have the videotape and wasn't able to see myself interacting with him, I don't think I would have noticed some of the things I noticed while I was watching things that I could do to improve. You know, letting him answer more, rather than continually feeding him more questions. I tried something different the next time; that was better. It helped me grow a lot in my teaching ability.

### ***Holly's Conclusion***

However, more importantly, I learned that it can be difficult to convey the finer points of learning how to help students open up during discussion. To prepare them well and to keep those high expectations. I know it can be really tempting to relax those high expectations when the students aren't doing that well. To think, "Oh, well, are my expectations too high? Or, is it my responsibility to get the students to where they need to be? Not to lower your expectations." This is something that I really want to focus on. To let students know that they are capable of achieving those expectations and to perform at a high level. Instead of dropping my expectations to the level they are at. That is one of the things I want to work on.

On a broader scale, I tried to learn as much as I could from the English teacher that I was placed with at Davis High School during this field experience. In conversations with her, I felt that she was very creative. She used a lot of modern texts in the classroom which is something I didn't get to experience when I was in high school. We did a lot more of just the classics. I think the classics are great, but I really love how she included more of the modern texts that we are studying in our classes at Flint Hills State. I thought that was a great addition for the students. She also talked about the challenges that she faced in bringing some of those texts to the classroom. That was really enlightening to see the hurdles and barriers you will have to overcome to teach the things you want to teach. But, I thought she was very creative and that was helpful.

Beyond the content, I believe I have a lot to learn about classroom management. I think just trying to get a handle on classroom management—watching to see how one student can be a distraction can really put the class off course. No matter how much they are interested in learning and the classroom dynamics are going well, one student that is a continual disruption can really harm the ability of other students to learn. So, that was interesting to see from a teacher's perspective because I hadn't had a chance to see that yet. I am sure I saw it in high school, but I was a student then.

## **Amy**

Amy is a self-proclaimed semi-nontraditional undergraduate who declared a major in English education after attending community college part-time for two years. Amy was the most reserved participant in this study. However, Amy provided a valuable perspective as she is part of an “in-between” population that is often lumped together with non-traditional undergraduates. While composing Amy’s narrative, I noticed that she did not provide the extensively detailed responses like Rose and Holly. In order to remain true to the story, Amy’s direct manner of communicating was emulated in her narrative. While her story may not be as lengthy as Rose’s or Holly’s I believe there is a great deal of value in what Amy provided during the inquiry period. While completing her field experience at Davis High School, Amy was paired with another very reserved young lady named Katie. Throughout the inquiry period, Amy worked with Katie both with and without the video camera. Almost immediately, Amy noticed that Katie began to share inconsistent information while the camera was recording. Amy’s narrative begins with this interesting discovery.

### ***Amy and Katie: Observational Illustration #1***

The camcorder on the tripod beeps in a digital tri-tone as the observer initiates the tutoring session by taking his seat in the corner of the secluded room. He quickly opens a small notebook and clicks a ballpoint pen into the write position and scribbles a few lines of initial observations. Sensing that the responsibility now rested on her shoulders to begin the session, Amy, a pre-service English teacher presently in the field participating in an early field experience as part of her teacher preparation program at Flint Hills State University, begins the session with a series of interview questions. Amy is asking the questions in order to learn more about Katie, the high school she had been placed with in this early field experience. Katie sits quietly for the moment in her chair. Waiting with guarded anticipation.

Amy takes a look at her notes and begins, “Do you remember the case study questions I have asked you before? The reading and writing questions? You told me about your family in Illinois.”

Katie shrugs her shoulders and replies, “Yeah.”

A silence settles among the two young women. Amy checks her notes and decides to try a different line of questioning, “Have you ever thought about a major? We never really had a chance to talk about your interests or things like that.”

“I am interested in basketball, sportsmanship, sports management. I want to be a basketball player, so I want to play basketball in college.” As Katie answers, her eyes never move from the vast blankness on the large table in front of her.

Amy follows quickly with a clarifying question, “So would you basically see yourself going into physical therapy or sports management...? Anything more specific than that?” I mean do you see yourself more on the business side of sports, or as an athlete?

Katie looks up from the table to answer, “An athlete. I want to be a WNBA player.”

“So, basketball has been your thing for a while?”

“Mm hmm.” Katie’s eyes are affixed on the table again.

“Have you played for a long time?” Amy asks.

Katie’s reply is almost a whisper. “Mmm hmm.”

“Have you? What got you into basketball?”

“My dad.”

Both laugh nervously at the realization that they share something in common. “Same here. Does he still help you and all of that stuff?”

Katie replies, “My dad and my cousin do.”

“Now, you said that your cousin played in the NBA?”

Again, Katie’s response is a well-measured whisper. “Mm Hmm.”

“You mentioned once that you don’t see yourself in Kansas when you grow up. And you said that California, is that you?”

“Yeah, L.A.”

“L.A.? And you want to go to school where? Was it... because your brother is in Chicago?”

“Yeah, at the University of Illinois.”

“So does your brother have a big impact on your school career?”

“Yes.”

“I remember you saying that you really liked that town a lot and you wanted to go back there.”



“Mm Hmm... And, play basketball for the Fighting Illini. Like him.”

“Really?”

“Mm hmm.”

### *Amy's Understanding*

While I was conducting my interview with Katie, I realized her demeanor changed once the cameras started rolling. She changed her original story that she first told me two weeks prior. The first thing that gave away the fact that she might be telling two different stories as when she talked about her brother. When it was just her and I, before we went to the room with the camera, her brother was just in Chicago. But, when we went to the room, her brother was a basketball player and all of this. When I questioned her a third time about it she said, “Well, I think I misinterpreted your question, or something.” So, I don’t know if she was putting on a show for the camera, but that’s when it clicked.

I know that if I were in that position I would want to keep some things private. I don’t know if she was embarrassed, or it was just something that was very personal to her. Maybe she really did struggle with school and she was afraid of that coming out. I wasn’t sure, but there were a few times when I asked a question about reading or writing in the class and she wouldn’t say anything about it in front of the camera. Then, when I went back through and asked her some of the questions she would open up and say, “I know my grades are not what they should be.” And, “I have some problems at home.” That is when stuff like that came to the surface.

I really liked this experience because Katie was a completely different person away from the camera. So, when meeting with her outside of class, I got to know her on more of a friendship level. It wasn’t so much a teacher/student relationship. Which, I wasn’t expecting when it came to Katie. She opened up more about her family and her grades and stuff like that when it was just her and I in the seminar class. I don’t know if she was afraid to mention this stuff on the camera, but sometimes I would interview her again when the camera wasn’t on. Because I had received a few answers that were different, I went back to make sure she had told me an accurate story. This is how I used most of my time outside of the interview sessions on camera.

With Katie, I picked up pretty quickly that she was ashamed of her grades. When someone was around us, she wouldn’t answer some questions that might reveal potentially

sensitive information. Then, when we were in corner by ourselves, she would open up about it. I think while we were in front of the camera I didn't ask her certain questions because I knew that it might embarrass her. So, I kind of skewed the questions so that she would feel more comfortable.

Katie is the type of student that I have never worked with. She is also completely different from me. I chose Davis High School because I have never worked with students like that before. So, with Katie, I made sure to choose somebody that was the opposite of me and I tried to make a connection with her. I wrote in my journal, "MAKE A CONNECTION WITH HER." Because, to me, I think if I cannot connect with someone who is opposite from me, how can I connect with someone who is *totally* opposite from who I am? I think learning from her, I can at least, if it's one little thing that we share a common interest in, it is going to change our entire relationship. It is something you can build off of. For Katie and me, we both love college basketball.

### ***Amy and Katie: Observational Illustration #2***

The camcorder makes a familiar beeping sound to indicate that it has begun recording. This time Amy and Katie are sitting at a secluded table in a corner of the media center. Several sports-related magazines are scattered on the table. Mythic heroes from all manner of sport and fame are plastered on the glossy covers. Katie and Amy flip through the pages of the periodicals searching for an article they can read together.

"Would you like to read about golf?" Amy asks, jokingly. They both laugh nervously.

Katie thinks about it for a moment, putting her magazine down. "Mmm... Yes."

"Really?" Amy doesn't believe that Katie would be interested in reading about professional golf. She quickly offers another suggestion. "Or, there is this college basketball one."

"Mmm... Yeah."

"You want to read this one?" Amy asks referring to her second suggestion.

"Yeah."

Amy searches further in the magazine to see if there is another option. "OK, this article is pretty long... So, I guess we can read as much of this one as we can. Oh, here is one about the NBA. We also have the 'Tragedy of College Basketball' too. Which would you like to read?"

“The NBA.”

“OK.”

The two begin reading the article about Nate Robinson, the shortest player in the NBA. Katie and Amy take turns reading a paragraph a piece. As they read, Katie misreads words like “colleague”, “improvisation”, and “characteristically”. Amy corrects the words for Katie as she continues to read her portions of the article. While Amy reads, she asks Katie if she is correctly pronouncing the player’s names mentioned in the article. After the two conclude reading the short article, Amy asks a few questions of Katie.

“Do you remember what the article, in general, was about?”

“It was about Nate playing; how his life is as a player in the NBA.”

Amy then asks, “Right. And, what was his biggest challenge he had to overcome?”

Katie, searching for the answer, glances down at the glossy pages on the table in front of her. After a moment or two of silence, Amy offers a clue, “Remember, he isn’t the world’s tallest player, right?”

“Oh, yeah, he’s the shortest.”

“Yeah, it said he is the shortest. The article said, ‘he is 10 inches shy of the average height of his colleagues.’ Do you know what that would look like? Do you know what they are saying here?”

“He’s not as tall as Yao Ming.”

“Right, because Yao Ming is what, about 7’-6”?”

“Mm hmm.”

“That’s pretty tall. What do you think he means by this last sentence? ‘It’s like Charles Darwin’s theory, survival of the fittest, when it comes into the theory of his height and his job?’ Do you know what that means by that last sentence?”

“It doesn’t matter if you’re short.”

“Yeah, because survival of the fittest would refer to the tall players, right?”

“Mm hmm.”

### *Amy’s Understanding*

She was very reserved. I don’t think she likes to read aloud. To me, she didn’t read that bad. And those words she got stuck on, they weren’t common everyday words. I think there

might be some students out there who wouldn't know them either. When she came to a word she didn't know, she would skip it. Or, she would just say the first syllable and pretend that I wasn't listening. I would repeat the word and she would just kind of look up at me and she would say the word again. So, I thought she was trying to be sneaky to see if I was really paying attention to what she was reading.

From talking with her, I found out that Katie absolutely hates to read or to even be involved with her junior English course. The word "reading" translates to Katie as "boring". Reading does not interest her whatsoever. Katie did state she would much rather read in groups. She believes that she could concentrate much better if something is read aloud to her. Katie can not remember the first book she ever read. She just shrugs her shoulders and said, "I guess *Sports Illustrated*."

Katie is unsure of how much she spends in one week reading. The only thing she would consider worthy of reading is e-mails and text messages. Those are the only things she reads on her own free will. At first, I was shocked to learn this, but I later realized that teens her age do this. Then, I further realized how true this is for everyone—sometimes even me.

Katie rarely visits the school's library. I traveled up there twice with her when the seminar class goes to the library for silent sustained reading time. Katie usually sits on the couch with a magazine, but talks to her friends when she feels she can get away with it. She never checks out books from the library as well. Katie also has a limited library at her home. She is uncertain how many books she owns, but she would guess four. Katie finds textbooks to be the most boring of all books. She believes that they have too many words and are very unexciting. I showed her a list of genres asked her to identify those that she likes. She chose seven of the twenty-five listed. Ironically, she did not choose nonfiction. This seems strange to me because she loves to read the short biographies about the athletes in *Sports Illustrated*.

### ***Amy and Katie: Observational Illustration #3***

The tutoring sessions continue. The camcorder continues to record. Amy and Katie sit, once again, at a table in the school's media center. A constant murmur of noise drifts in to the common area of the media center as the entire school settles into the seminar period. As the session begins, Amy has a series of questions she would like to ask Katie to answer about her writing habits.

“When you are asked to complete a writing assignment, what steps do you use to complete the assignment?” Amy begins.

Katie seems unsure about the question; she says, “First, if I have a question... if...”

“Well, like if your English teacher gave you a writing assignment, do you collect research first, highlight information, and make resource cards?”

“Mm hmm. I research first. I use Google, type the topic in the search page. Then, I highlight the important information that goes with my topic.”

“So, when you are researching stuff, you are printing this information out, do you ever handwrite things like an outline and stuff like that?”

“Mm hmm.”

“So do you always write a manuscript by hand before you type it out?”

Katie nods, reluctantly.

“What kind of writing do you like to do?” Amy asks.

“Describing myself—talking about myself.”

“Hmm... Do you typically find it easy or difficult to start? That is the hardest part. What do you find difficult about it?”

“You have to think how to start it.” Katie’s voice trails off as she answers.

“Is there any particular writing style that you like to use?”

“Like, cursive?”

### *Amy’s Understanding*

I was not surprised by Katie’s reaction when I said the next section of questions was about writing. She slouched down in her chair, rolled her eyes and said, “When are we going to talk about something important?” I was unsure how to answer that question to be honest. I looked at her and said, “Why do you say that writing isn’t important?” She turned her head and rolled her eyes at me once more. This was very disheartening for a future English teacher.

I knew I wanted to be a teacher, seriously, since I was four years old. And, I just didn’t know, once I got closer to graduating from high school, where I wanted to go. I went to community college to start with. I went there for two years. Then, my best friend, she was two years younger than me, was coming to Flint Hills State. She said, “Just come with me.” So, I ended up here and I absolutely love it.

I had a high school teacher—Mrs. Wilson, my English teacher—who I absolutely loved. She was my honors English teacher my junior year. I had always been put on the level of honors English, but I would take regular English and I would just finish my assignments way before anyone else. She made me push myself just a little harder. I remember we read all of these books in her class and that is when I fell in love with reading. That is what led me toward English. But I have always known that I wanted to teach.

Looking ahead, I am pretty organized, so lesson plans aren't too scary for me, but I am sure that will change. Classroom management, however... I have completed my beginning classes on discipline and all of that stuff, but that's kind of scary to me. I don't know how I am going to handle myself. In my early field experience I worked with eighth graders and they were squirmy, but if you just kept them on the right track, they were fine. This semester during my field experience at Davis High School, that is when I realized that I am not prepared for the classroom management aspect. I have never worked with these types of students before. That has kind of thrown me back. So that's why I am kind of nervous.

In my classroom I would like to use a lot of hands on activities. And, if I am teaching a book, I want to bring in an activity that brings them into it. So, a snapshot picture of my future classroom would probably include a lot of activity. The kids would be doing a lot of activities instead of me standing in front of the room lecturing about the book. Maybe, I would be working with one of the groups of students. If you think about Standard of Excellence or test scores, I want to accomplish that. I have not been exposed to that yet, but high expectations are there. I would like to have, like I said I am kind of scared about classroom management, so, like, my classroom environment is very respectful, or very stable you might say. And, I want to have an atmosphere that all my students can come to me with whatever problem they have. I want them to know that they can trust me and that I am not going to shut them out for any reason. They should be able to come to me for support or whatever they need.

To me, literacy means that a student can read, or comprehend, what he or she reads. In my field experience at Davis High School, I would say the teacher in the English class I am placed with is very good about reading with the students. She will read aloud or students will read aloud to the class and they will answer questions. Based on the class discussion, I can see that every student understands what has been read to them. And, they can understand what is going on the text. When I work with my seminar class, and we do what is called Mad Minutes, it

is a simple paragraph of text, they are just so confused. So, I don't think they are very literate. I think they can understand what is going on, but they can't get it out.

In this class, the students are being told to read, but they choose not to read at all. I think it is an independence issue. The teacher is not enforcing the rules, so they choose not to. When they have silent sustained reading time, they just sit there and draw. They don't even pick up a magazine and think it is because my seminar teacher tries to put out *Forbes Magazine* or something that I wouldn't even read. We went to the library a few weeks ago and I tried to help a student find something to read and he was into cars. So, I told him to read the articles in this magazine about cars and he sat there the entire hour and read.

If these seminar students were my responsibility, I would be more than willing to work with them before and after class if they needed it. But, one thing I that I am trying in my seminar class, they hate reading, so I am trying to introduce different magazines and graphic novels to them. Or, just anything, like magazines, that will spark their interests. To me, if they can get through that, that is a building block. So, trying to interest them in something that they are required to read, but something that they can read on the outside, on their own time is good.

Katie is very sports-oriented, and that is fine. I kind of wish, I don't know if her teachers doing it, or maybe they have so many students in the class that they can't fit their curriculum for a group of students who have common interests. I mean there has got to be more than one student who likes sports as much as she does. So, maybe if you integrated stuff that they are interested in, into a novel or just touched on something, I think that kind of opened my eyes to what they want to see in the classroom beyond what is taught. That is one thing I really learned through this experience. I think if I had Katie in class, she mentioned that she really liked that book *Monster* by Walter Dean Meyers and I think that maybe they could have done a little more with that to keep her interested in it. If you can find something that students like her are interested in, that is when they shine.

I learned a lot from this experience. I learned that it takes more than one try. Actually, it takes several tries to teach something. I am kind of bad about expecting my students to learn things quickly. So, this experience allowed me to learn that you need to try more than once. Or, there might come that opportunity when a student isn't learning something and I need to meet with him after school, or something like that. This experience has really shown me that some teachers need to further than they do in a fifty-minute class period.

I don't know if I like No Child Left Behind, but I think it makes teachers responsible. I kind of wish they would have had it when I was in high school. I had some of those teachers who just sit behind the desk. It kind of makes them more responsible for what they teach. It kind of makes them more aware of their students. So, I am kind of in favor of it because if you see a student who is slacking it's on me to help that student. Not necessarily due to the law, but it's just in me to help them do well. So, I am in favor of it because it just opens your eyes a little bit.

While at Davis High School, I learned that some teachers share this opinion too. The English teacher I was placed with does. She is a person I could really learn a lot from. I wish I could have spent a little more time with her. She is the type of person who arrives at school at 6:45 in the morning to work with students. That really impresses me. My seminar teacher, on the other hand... Well, I learned not to call students names to their face. I learned not to be completely disorganized. Don't fight with your students because they are going to win. Really, I mean especially the group of seminar kids I was working with. I learned from the get go that you either drop it or meet with the student when there is no audience. And the seminar teacher I was with chose to fight with them in front of the class and it turned into... I could go on for hours.

But, I think I learned the most from Katie. I chose to work with her because she is completely different from myself and every other student I have ever worked with. I only wish I would have had more of an opportunity to work with her on writing. That is something we just could not come to terms on.

#### ***Amy and Katie: Observational Illustration #4***

Amy looks up at the clock to see that she has just a few minutes left with Katie during this tutoring session. She looks at her notes and asks, "Do you want to see more student interests in school work? Would you like to see students explore more of what they are into?"

Katie replies, "Yes, because they would be more into what they are studying if they enjoy it."

"Do you find that it is easier to write if you don't have to research first, if it comes from your head?"

"Yes."



“Is there something that your current English teacher does that you would like to see more of?”

“Yes, journaling.”

“OK, what is one thing that you do not like about English class?”

“He assigns too much homework.”

Amy laughs. “Oh, I see.”

Amy scribbles a few quick notes on the pad of paper in front of her. The camera beeps once more signaling the end of the tutoring session. Katie stands up quietly, puts her backpack back on, and walks slowly out of the media center. Amy picks up her notes and follows her.

## **Rose**

Rose is a nontraditional undergraduate student who began her college education fourteen years prior to the inquiry period. Through an interesting, and often challenging, set of personal experiences, Rose has refined her perspective on her perspective of life, teaching, and learning. Her story begins with an account of this long journey Rose has taken to arrive at the point she is at today. While at Davis High, Rose worked with James, a freshman who has developed an apathetic attitude toward school.

### ***Rose's Introduction***

It might help if I begin by telling a little bit about myself because I am a nontraditional student. I graduated from high school in 1995 and I started at Flint Hills State as a secondary education major. That seems like such a long time ago. I met my husband here, we were both students; we got married in 1997. I took a year off of school and he took a year and a half off when we moved to his hometown. When we came back to Flint Hill State we had our first child. So we were living in family housing, going to school, switching back and forth. It was a lot of fun.

In 2001 I switched to part-time because I was so much farther along than he was, and he had just taken more time off from school and had taken less classes in the beginning. In order for us to graduate at the same time, I backed off to part-time status. Then, two weeks before classes started in the fall semester of 2001, my sister-in-law, who was eighteen at the time, had a baby that year and showed up at our door unannounced and dropped her baby off. She never came back.

So, there we were, living in a two-bedroom, family housing apartment on Flint Hills State's campus with two kids and a baby that had a ton of problems. This baby had been very neglected, and we knew that. I had approached my sister-in-law about the care she was giving her son. I warned her that if she didn't do something, we were going to have to get other people involved. So, she didn't call; she just dropped him off. She came to us, which was the best thing.

We adopted him, but I stopped going to school. I made it through the fall semester but I was stressed. He needed a lot of attention. I was starting methods courses that spring semester and so I had to put him in daycare for a few hours while I was in classes. When I picked him up

he would have a 102 or 103 degree fever. But, it was all psychological. He was afraid we were abandoning him. He had been with us for six months at that point and he started getting comfortable. Then, when I did that—when I left him at the daycare center—it was not good. It really sent him into a tailspin. So, I just stopped. It wasn't worth it. My husband went on ahead and graduated that following December and we moved to another university where he went to graduate school. He made it through and worked there for a year and a half. Then, he got a teaching job here at Flint Hills State. We had our third child in before we moved. He is four and will begin Kindergarten in the fall. It seemed like the right time to come back and finish my degree. It has been a crazy ten years.

While my husband was going to school, I was of course taking care of our family and trying to get them settled. Our nephew, well he is our son now, struggled at first, when the adoption was final and everything started to settle down. But, when he turned two, it was almost like overnight, he began to struggle again. It was like he had fits of rage. He would wake up in the morning and he would be fine for ten or fifteen minutes and then it would be a total meltdown. He would cling to me and he would scream and yell. He would throw things. We had an electronic keyboard on a stand. This little two year old, he was already small due to other complications, would pick the electronic keyboard up over his head and throw it across the room. That is how much strength he had. It was really scary.

We took him to see a child psychologist to try and figure out what is going on at this point. It really helped. She was able to explain what happens—what we believe happens anyway—in a child's mind. Basically, he was caught between two different worlds because his foundation said, "I am on my own and I don't have anybody in this world taking care of me." And he couldn't mesh. He couldn't decide between the two. It was interesting because she explained that we were going to have to separate the worlds. It was going to be the hardest thing I ever had to do because he needed to make the decision on his own and realize that we were not part of that foundation he had built. She told us to take anything out of his bedroom that might hurt him and close the door when he begins rage and to let him know that we were on the other side of the door. Which seems cold, right? But, the psychologist explained that we had to do this. We could come into his room while he was raging every once in a while to remind him where we were, but he had to decide on his own. She said that if we didn't catch it at a young

age, the research showed that beyond a certain age there is no turning back in terms of severe attachment disorders and things like that.

We started to see real progress as he got closer to three. The psychologist said that the raging would get worse before it got better. That is not what you want to hear. I mean, you go to the store, and it was the change from the car to the store and he start to rage again. He would scream throughout the entire store and she said we had to let him scream. He had to choose to trust us on his own. I asked the psychologist what I was going to do if he didn't choose to trust us, to trust our family. She said, "No, he'll choose... I am confident he will choose you. You have enough there that he can cling to. He is going to choose you."

So, our longest day was six hours of raging—of hitting his head and raging. We put stuffed animals and softer things that he could throw about his room. And then, I thought was going to have a nervous breakdown at that point. I mean how do you listen to someone scream at the top of their lungs for six hours? Then, when he was done, he just walked out of his room and he was like, "Hi, what are you doing?" It was one of those breakthrough moments where he was like, "What's going on?" From that point on he raged less and less; he did choose us. She was right. He got better and my husband was in school so I did some daycare from my home. Our son wasn't to the point where I thought I could leave him in a preschool environment; it would have been too much for him. So, I thought it would be just as good. I could make some extra money and he could get that extra interaction with children his own age. That was really good experience for him. And, for me.

Looking back to when I entered college for the first time, I claimed an education major right away. That has always been the major I have claimed. I just really like school when I was in high school. I was a tutor for middle school students and I had a lot of success and I really enjoyed doing it. I was able to help a couple of failing students. It wasn't through the school, however. It was through my mother. People had heard that I was a good student. I loved school and it was my thing. So, that is how I got started tutoring. It was a lot fun for me.

The first student I tutored was an eighth grade student and she just didn't care. Her parents were very performance oriented, they wanted her to get good grades, and they had a love of expectations for her. She was basically rebelling and not doing her work. She was capable, but she just wasn't interested. Math and English were her two weakest subjects. I worked in an

English classroom as an aide for two years; that is how I decided it was my thing. I can do math to a certain point, but I told her I would give it my best shot.

She was a challenge. When we started I would go to her house and she would sit there. It was a good experience because I got to know her. We would talk. I was a junior at the time, but we had enough in common that I could be her friend to a certain point and learn what was going on. I explained to her that we could make this very painful or we could just get this done. I told her that I was going to be there every day. Two years later they moved on, they were a military family, and her mother called my mom and said, you know, what a difference that had made for her. Her grades went from D's and F's to A's and B's. You know I just worked with her, showing her how it worked.

I have a son that is about to go into middle school, which is frightening, but he is the same way right now. He gets really overwhelmed even though he doesn't have a lot, and it is just that growing thing where you want to go and play and do your own thing. But, you have this other thing over her to do too. It is about time management where you do a little here and little there and get it done. Then, you can go play. The good grade is not the only payoff. There is accomplishment, your parents' approval, you know it just makes life a lot easier. So, this first student I tutored really changed the way I saw things. When that happened, it became less of a fight.

In junior high I had the most influential teacher of my life. He died when I was freshman; it was a sudden thing. But I had some rough experiences from fourth through sixth grade with my mom moving around and that is just a hard time to move. Especially when moving to a small town where everyone had been their since they were babies. So, I was shy at that time and I didn't really know anybody. Sixth grade was a bad year for me. When I got to junior high, which is what they called it, I met this influential teacher who was very unconventional. He pretty much told me that I was better than that. He really pushed me to better in a very nice way that also scared the crap out of me. He challenged me, and he kind of brought me out of my shell that year. It made a big difference because when I got to high school I was kind of ready to take on the whole world.

Becoming a teacher has been a long time coming for me. I am just ready to be done with college. It's been so broken up for me that I don't have... I took my introductory block of education classes in 2000. So, that was a long time ago. It's sort of like jumping back into

something that I did a long time ago. It's sort of strange. Overall, my college career has been pretty lackluster. I have a good GPA, it's not great. I had to run a house, because I have a family, after I came back so I had more responsibilities. Even now some things just have to give, which is tough because I am a perfectionist at heart so the "A" is what you get. Nothing else is acceptable. If you can do it that is what you go for. However, that is not a reality for me anymore. Last semester I had three English classes and I didn't like one of my teachers and I still don't agree with the grade he gave me, but that is another story. Through all of this, I thought maybe I could do everything he was asking for and maybe I would get the "A". But, to do so, I would be up all night. At that point I decided it just wasn't worth it. I took the "B".

So, it's all been secondary. It is not primary. Most college students go to college. They have other priorities too in terms of hanging out and partying and whatever. It is just a different perspective. I have other challenges. My challenges are family life. I think I work just as hard, but sometimes I have to let something slide. College to me has always been a lower priority. I mean, I can do it. I can do it pretty well, and do the best I can. But, with kids, you never know what the day will bring. So, like I said, it has been a long time coming for me. I am ready to move on.

This semester I am at Davis High School with ninth graders who are pretty underachieving right now. They just barely score out of Read 180; it is a whole new experience for me. I was certainly on the opposite end where I pushed myself. That is a whole new ballgame. I really like it, but it has made me think about what a class looks like when the majority of them don't care. So, that is something I am still working out in my head. Sometimes I get a little frustrated and wonder, how do you do this everyday when they are doing the least they can do to say they're doing the work. It's a challenge, I think, to walk in there everyday when your students don't really want to be there.

I think in terms what we learn here at Flint Hills State in our classes and in our field experiences we aren't very prepared at all. That is just from my experience which has been fragmented. My introductory block of education classes was taken during summer school and that was horrible. They throw you in there as a very inexperienced pre-service teacher and it makes you wonder why on earth you would ever want to be a teacher. Again, they throw you in front of a class of students who don't want to be in summer school, but they have to be in summer school or they won't pass. And, to think you are going to teach them anything... you

don't have the experience. So, it was slightly intimidating. And, I didn't share that experience all by myself. As you are standing up there with your group, and you have to tell the student something, we were like, this sucks. Well, sort of, you know the students were sitting in their desks, chipping their black fingernail polish and falling asleep. What are you going to do? There is nothing we have been taught that prepares us to do that. But on the flipside, in terms of my life experience, I feel like I am better prepared.

I really enjoyed going to Davis High School and talking to these kids and getting to know them. Some of them are really hard to reach. Some of them have really opened up and some are still so distant. To some, you are just another teacher. I feel comfortable around them; I think I have enough life experience of just being around kids and other things. When you have a kid who screams at you for six hours straight, you can handle a lot. There isn't much you can't handle. You know what I mean? But, at the same time I don't think there isn't much I have learned in the classes that teach me how to deal with something like that. I am not sure I feel very prepared to do it—not that I couldn't do it. I guess for me, as a teacher, you are going to screw up, you are going to do things wrong, but I had to learn the hard way. I want to know it all right now.

This semester I have been working with James. James is a fifteen-year-old male. He lives with his mother, stepfather, and three siblings. He has two older brothers who do not live in the house. He has a total of five siblings. He has one older brother attending college. Another brother dropped out of high school to work because he had a child. James does not seem particularly proud of his family. He commented that most of his family (immediate and extended) smokes and he does not approve of smoking.

Davis High School is the fourth school that James has attended. James doesn't like the academic portion of school. He is currently failing all of his core classes—English, science, geometry, and communications. His least favorite class is communications because in his words it is, “too much work.” James is failing because he does not complete his homework. He is assigned a lot for homework but chooses not to do it.

In the initial interview, James said that he does not care about school. He does, however, enjoy his elective courses. He is taking Spanish, choir and ROTC. His favorite elective is ROTC. He also likes Spanish and wishes there was more time in that class. He says he can see

himself joining the military, although he realizes he has to finish high school or acquire a GED in order to do so. He only likes two of his teachers because they are, “cool.”

Overall, James displays quite an apathetic attitude toward school and home life. He bobs his head a lot and tries not to appear interested. He was adamant that he did not care about school. I think he wants to seem uninterested and cool and throw me for a loop. He does not recall a time when he ever liked school, even in elementary years. He laughed when he talked about being yelled at by his parents. He even claimed it was kind of fun because he would just take it and nothing would really happen to him. Despite his current apathy, James does think about the future. In ten years, James sees himself in the military in twenty years, James sees himself with a family and possibly making a career out of the military.

When I asked James what reading meant to him, James responded unsurely saying, “Nothing.”

### ***Rose and James: Observational Illustration #1***

“Do you like to read?” Rose asks hoping to learn more about why James appears to have very few positive feelings about reading.

“Yep.” James answers nonchalantly. “I like certain books. Like action, romance, and all of that stuff.

Rose attempts to pry further. “Do you like to read at school?”

“No.”

“Why?”

James puts his head down and answers quietly, “Because I get yelled at for reading?”

“You get yelled at? Why do you get yelled at?”

James looks up to Rose and says directly, “Because I get caught reading when I’m not supposed to.”

“Do you like to read when it’s assigned at school?”

James’ head lowers. He focuses on his hands, which are folded in his lap. “No, that’s boring. I like to take my time.”

“So, English class for example, if you were assigned to read...”

“I don’t like to rush. Depends on when the due date is.”

“Do you like the material you asked to read, the stories and books?”



“Somewhat.”

“You just don’t like to be rushed. Do you like to read in groups?”

“No.”

“No group reading? Why?”

James looks up once again and answers in saying, “Because sometimes I read faster than other people and I get bored waiting for them to catch up.”

“So you just get board. What about reading out loud in class or if the teachers reads aloud to you?” Rose asks.

“Mmm... not my favorite.”

“And why is that?”

“Because I mess up a word and people laugh at me.” At that answer, Rose and James sit quietly for a moment.

Then, Rose asks. “What have you read lately?”

“*Twilight*.”

“The *Twilight* series? Have you read them all?”

“Multiple times. I have them all.”

“How much time do you spend reading each week?”

“Four or five hours.”

“Outside of school?”

“Mm hmm.”

### ***Rose’s Understanding***

I have witnessed James reading in class as well as reading one-on-one with me. My observations were surprising. In seminar class, the students took turns reading an assigned article. When James took his turn he read barely above a murmur and did not attempt to pronounce words he found questionable. He simply skipped over words he thought he did not know. I stayed next to his seat, so I could listen closely to his reading. Although it seemed like James was struggling, his reading was quite fluent. It seemed, to me, that he lacked confidence rather than reading or speaking abilities.

## ***Rose and James: Observational Illustration #2***

Rose and James are seated at an open table in the high school's media center. The table is placed in an otherwise secluded corner of the bustling library. A number of students are lounging about the library. Some are checking out books or surfing on the Internet on the student workstations prominently placed in the center of the room. James and Rose have found a copy of *New Moon*, one of the books written by Stephanie Meyer as part of the *Twilight* series.

"So, you want me to find a place to read?" James asks taking a hold of the large, hard cover volume.

"Sure, you're the expert." Rose notices James' excitement. However, he seems momentarily embarrassed by his recent designation of *expert*.

"I'm no expert."

"Compared to me you are."

James flips through the pages quickly and finds a place to begin reading. "Do you want me to read first?" He asks.

"That is up to you. Do you want me to read first." Rose says looking briefly at the page he has selected.

"Sure."

"Well, I will start and then you can go. Okay?"

James nods his head quickly at that suggestion and Rose begins reading. After a few paragraphs, Rose passes the book over to James so that he can take a turn at reading. Then, after several pages passed, Rose takes a moment to ask a few questions of James.

"Okay, let's stop for second because I am curious. Who are these two people?"

James counts the different characters mentioned in the first few pages of their selected reading off on his fingers and replies by saying, "Jacob is her best friend. Uh, Lorent is a bad guy. Victoria is a bad person too. Charlie is her father."

"So, who is talking right now?"

James answers quickly, "Bella."

Needing further clarification, Rose asks, "So, Jacob is her best friend and that is who she is trying to get a hold of?"

"Yeah."

James and Rose continue reading Bella's account. James reads with ease and expression. As the tutoring session between Rose and James progresses, Rose takes fewer opportunities to read from the book and lets James read longer sections of the text. The pair stops often so that James can provide contextual information to Rose so that she can better what is happening in the story.

### *Rose's Understanding*

How frustrating! Here is a kid who is failing everything in school, but he reads so well. I am happy that he has found something that he enjoys reading, who knew? We went from paragraph to paragraph and then he was taking over entire pages; he just wasn't stopping. He doesn't seem like the type who would get very excited about much of anything, but you could see that he definitely go into a reading pattern. He could read really well. He handled it all very well. He has all of the abilities; he has all of the skills. He's at grade level at least. I think being literate means being able to read, comprehend, contextualize and relate it to what you are reading to something greater than what is on the page. I think he is doing that.

In my experience at Davis High School, I think there are definitely some readers in there. They have their books and they pull them out when asked. There are a few like that in the class where they don't really want to know what's going on in class, they just want to get their books out and read. And, they are big books from the library. They are the kids that don't really seem connected to what is going on in the class. They could be the drop out that is perhaps highly intelligent, but they seem as though they aren't going to make it. One boy in particular had three books on his desk and he really was reading and he seemed like a good reader. But, his handwriting was horrific; he wasn't writing complete sentences. And, whether he couldn't do it or he was just interested in doing his own thing, he didn't really make the effort to communicate. He probably didn't have many friends in the class either.

On the opposite end, there is one kid in there who, I don't now for sure, but as I have watched him the times I have been there, I don't know that he can read. Anytime he does group work I have noticed he wasn't doing his work. He wasn't doing anything. He was letting his group do everything. Then, at the last minute he was like, "Oh... Oh yeah, I should hurry up and get this done. What did you write?" Then, he would just copy.

I left frustrated from this session with James because here is a kid who enjoys reading, and who has found something he is interested in. He is good at it and I think he could be a good writer too because of his interests. I think he is personable—he has lots of friends. But, I don't think he has applied the forethought to see what he was doing by being so apathetic. I don't think at the beginning of ninth grade he said, "You know, I am just going to tune out and not really care." I think he was kind of seeing what will happen in the end because he knew he was going to really have no chance of succeeding. So, yeah, I was frustrated because here is a kid who doesn't appear to have a learning disability, he just has factors of home life or upbringing or past school experiences, I think there are several things running him down. The mom in me wants to come out, but I'm trying to stay objective.

### ***Rose and James: Observational Illustration #3***

Rose and James are once again in the media center chatting about schoolwork, reading, and writing. James is far more communicative today.

Rose begins with an explanation as she searches for clarification. "A lot of what we talked about the last few times is about you saying that getting good grades was not important, that you didn't care about school. Is there anything that you feel could motivate you that could change you thoughts on school?"

James isn't quite certain how to answer. "Yeah, maybe a couple of things. Or, maybe just one thing."

"Would you share that with me?"

"My friends."

"How would that change your mind?"

James shifts in his chair and says, "Because they would be off, going to college, while I'm at home, dropped out of school, low job."

"Do most of your friends want to go off to college?"

"Yeah, some of them do."

"So maybe you might want to rethink that a bit. That's a good motivator."

"Mm hmm."

"How would you feel if you started passing all of your classes, would that change things for you?"

James thinks for a moment and says, “I would start getting a lot more respect from my parents. I wouldn’t be grounded.”

“Hey there you go.”

“I might be able to go places.”

Rose continues this line of questioning. “What do you think you have to give up in order to get that done?”

“Texting a lot.”

“Oh, putting the phone away.”

“Yeah.”

“Anything else?”

“My Xbox, although that is my music most of the time.”

Rose continues, “Is there anything at school, in terms of teachers, that might be able to help you meet this goal?”

“Sandra, my girlfriend, is the only one who can get me to do work.”

### ***Rose’s Understanding***

At the conclusion of our time together, I think James was already seeing things differently as we walked through it. I just asked him questions and he was able to articulate that. I just set the framework from him to answer some questions that would make him look at this summer, into next year and on into the future, and how that would separate him from his family, his friends, and to see what direction he was going. He could see that; I did not have to spell that out for him.

I hope that conversation leaves some sort of lasting impression. Whether that will make a difference right away, I don’t know. The reality is that he is still flunking everything. He will not pass any of his classes even if he tried at this point. He knows he will have to complete summer school; that is a long road for someone his age. I know in my life there were certain events that marked a turning point. Maybe the same will happen for him. He has walked through the process, but he is running a very high risk of failing. What I said in the report is that I believe he is very insecure. I think he is afraid. I don’t think he has enough support at home or at school. I think his teachers have written him off. I know that his seminar teacher wrote him off and that is sad. She admitted that she didn’t know anything about him. And that is sad for a

teacher to say, “I don’t care. If he doesn’t care, I don’t care.” Then, when I would come back from interviewing him, she would say, “Oh, what did you learn about him?” And that was frustrating for me because she saw him every-other-day for an entire year before I came around to do this project. How hard is it? If he is here and is not doing anything anyway, take five minutes a day to learn about who he is.

I am not in that position so I am not going to be that critical. Maybe in a year I’ll know and think, “What was I thinking?” But I don’t know. So, I am not trying to be too judgmental, but it was very frustrating because I think he could do so much better and I don’t think it would need to be something life-changing, but if he had a mentor or something it might help. I think he is afraid and he doesn’t have the confidence, that his why he doesn’t read in class, that is why he doesn’t write because he doesn’t know. I think it is a lack of confidence in his abilities. It is a fear of failure, or succeeding. If he succeeds he might think that he needs to succeed all of the time, that’ll be the expectation and he doesn’t have the confidence to do that. And, if you try and you fail then you look stupid and he already feels that way. It’s just easier not to care. That’s my take on Mr. James.

I personally really enjoyed the experience of getting to know a student one on one. I don’t think you get that opportunity very often. I know he does well. Even after the last interview, when we were back in the classroom, he was a completely different person for the rest of the time. I know that was partly because he got his new iPod, but the other part was that he said he really enjoyed it. He had a lot of fun. I think it was more of, “Hey somebody paid attention to me.” It was pretty positive and something good came out of it. I don’t think that happens for him too often right now in his life. So, yeah, he enjoyed that. It was very difficult the first couple of times. He was like, “I don’t like being at school. I don’t like being at home. Everything sucks.” So, it was a little bit of challenge to get him to start talking and make sense. I am not even sure if had ever thought through why he does what he does. It was kind of interesting to see him process these things because I think he went out with a different attitude than when he went in. It wasn’t life-changing or earth-shattering but I do believe, because I did interact with him during different parts of the day, he seemed different.

I enjoyed this experience at Davis High School. I really enjoyed the students. There weren’t any discipline problems that I said, “Oh my!” to make you want to hate being in there. The kids were very pleasant. All different levels though. Even in the English class that I was in.

They were gifted all the way to students with special needs and learning disabilities. I think the things that surprised me were... well, we had a moment in that we had two students in the English class who were special education students. We had a para in the room and I saw that she wasn't working with any particular student. She called me into the hall one day and said, "I have a few questions." I thought that was interesting for her to say that. So, she pulled me into the hall and she wanted to know why she was in the classroom. She told me that she was supposed to be working with one particular student and he was passing and he hates her to be there. He has a high "B" in the class and he doesn't really need the support in the class. There is this other girl in the class and the para didn't know if she was identified as special needs or not. I was helping her quite a bit and that is what prompted this conversation.

So, I asked if she had an IEP. The para's first question to me was, "What's an IEP?" So, that surprised me too. I backed up and gave her an overview of what an IEP is. I don't know how dropped what ball there, but a para didn't know what an IEP was! Somebody missed a big meeting or a day of training. I asked if the student she was supposed to be working with had an IEP that called for para support. I then explained that if his IEP called for support, that is why she was in the classroom. I asked her to go to the resource room to ask about these two particular students. Sure enough, the girl had an IEP and the para brought it in for us to look at. I showed it to the teacher and explained that it was required by law for her to make the accommodations listed on the form. It was a big mess. Finally, the para received permission to work with the other student.

If I hadn't been there to have that conversation, I don't think it would have happened at all. The para didn't feel comfortable talking with the teacher. I am not sure why; I didn't ask. And, this poor girl I was working with is extremely difficult. She has zero social skills almost. She is a sweet girl, but she would belch in my face and things like that right after lunch. That is hard to work with. I have little boys at my house and that was even something I had to suffer through at times. I eventually just turned my face and said, "OK, time to regroup here." So, she was difficult to work with and she clearly had some issues to work through. She was failing and she was not understanding what was going on. And, there she had an IEP that mandated several things that she was not getting in that class.

One lesson I learned from this experience is to be in constant communication with the support people in your classroom. For one, make sure that person is doing something. Put them

to work. They are getting paid to be there. Put them to work and make sure your students are getting their support. If you have struggling students ask questions. Or, better yet, get to know them. It is not about being their friend. I don't think I ever had to leave a non-authoritarian role. It was more of a... well, I think I am like that with my own children, that is best way I can describe it. I don't stand up here and they are down there. I get down on their level. You can remain in authority while on their level and know who is in control. I mean, that is me, everyday. They know what to expect and what they are going to get from me. But, they also know that I am aright there and I am interested in what they are doing at their level. They don't have to meet me or my expectations as I am standing above them, pointing my finger. That is not my way.

### ***Rose's Conclusion***

What I am most looking forward to as a teacher? That is something I haven't thought about. That is mostly because my head isn't always there. I definitely see myself graduating and getting a job and doing all of that. I just don't sit around and dream about it. Do I think I could do a lot of it, and do it well? Do I think I could get up there and fill a class period and teach a lesson? Sure, I think I can. But I have never had to. I have done bits and pieces here and there. I think there are several things that I can do pretty well. I don't have the experience and I haven't been tested. I don't really want to say that I have nailed anything quite yet. I just don't think I can honestly say that I have. I just hope I am good. I do hope I figure it out.



## CHAPTER 5 - Discussion

*“This is the moment of truth,  
that fine and fateful line between control and disaster”* (Thompson, 1972, p. 89)

As it was explained in chapter three, narrative inquiry examines the lived experiences of those best suited to answer specific questions. Polkinghorne (1995) states that the purpose of narrative analysis is, “to answer how and why a particular outcome came about. The storied analysis is an attempt to understand individual persons, including their spontaneity and responsibility, as they have acted in the concrete social world” (p. 69). In the presentation of this narrative analysis, the researcher assembles the collected stories into a meaningful way and then provides an interpretation of the narratives. In the previous chapter, the lives of three unique women were presented in narrative form to investigate their experiences as pre-service teachers making their way to becoming professional educators. Holly, Amy, and Rose provided a range of thoughts and illustrations throughout the inquiry period. From their experience, I believe we can find meaning.

As I listened to these three women share their lived experiences with me, it became very clear that certain themes were beginning to emerge. Through personal interviews, focus group conversations, and reading reflective journal entries, the participants shared episodes of confidence, fear, success, and failure with me. While each participant’s lived experiences varied quite drastically from the others, within these experiences of living and learning, there were common threads that bound the stories each of them together. Chapter five of this report will examine the stories presented in previous chapter. The discussion will begin by taking a look at these common themes that are present in each of the participants’ stories. Then, the discussion will turn toward the research questions identified several times throughout this research report. This chapter will then conclude with a discussion on the implications this study has in the fields of teacher education and adolescent literacy.

## Identifying Themes

**Table 5.1 Evidence of themes revealed in the data presentation**

	Fear of the Unknown	Living in Two Worlds
Holly	<i>“Beyond the content, I believe I have a lot to learn about classroom management. I think just trying to get a handle on classroom management”</i>	<i>“When I work with students it is something that is always in the back of my mind. I feel like as a young person, as a young female even, trying to get up in front of the students and wanting to be taken seriously, you fell like you have to overcompensate for your age.”</i>
Amy	<i>“I have completed my beginning classes on discipline and all of that stuff, but that’s kind of scary to me.”</i>	<i>“When meeting with her outside of class, I got to know her on more of a friendship level. It wasn’t so much a teacher/student relationship. Which, I wasn’t expecting when it came to Katie. She opened up more about her family and her grades and stuff like that when it was just she and I in the seminar class.”</i>
Rose	<i>“Do I think I could do a lot of it, and do it well? Do I think I could get up there and fill a class period and teach a lesson? Sure, I think I can. But I have never had to.... I haven’t been tested.”</i>	<i>“It is not about being their friend. I don’t think I ever had to leave a non-authoritarian role. It was more of a... well, I think I am like that with my own children, that is best way I can describe it, I don’t stand up here and they are down there. I get down on their level.”</i>

In the construction of the stories presented in a research project that uses narrative inquiry, the researcher carefully examines all of the data sets that have been collected during the inquiry period and methodically builds a narrative representative of what the research participants provide. If the research participants give a great deal of attention to, or places a great deal of importance on, one particular topic or lived experience, I believe it is the responsibility of the narrative inquirer to include those elements in the truthful reconstruction of the participant's narrative. In this study, the research questions and theoretical framework designated for this study, as well as the words provided by the research participants, guided the researcher in constructing the narratives displayed in chapter four.

During the restorying process, two themes repeatedly presented themselves in the raw data each participant provided throughout the inquiry period. As each participant's story revealed these themes, I felt it was necessary to not only include their comments as they related to these themes in the reconstructed narratives, featured in chapter four of this report. In doing so, I also felt that these themes, and the comments that support them, should be present in the discussion of this study. As table 5.1 indicates, the recurring themes were related to the participants' fear of the unknown as it pertains to the requirements of being a school teacher and the struggle each participant faces in living between two worlds. Table 5.1 further illustrates how these themes are represented in the data presentation.

It is important to note that a theme could only be identified in the discussion of this research report if there was evidence of the theme across all three participants' narratives. While I am certain there are several themes that could be discussed if each narrative was presented separate of the other two narratives, it is the inclusion of all three, and the subtle differences that exist among them, that will provide the basis for an intriguing discussion. For when all three narratives are read together, the connections and variations present in each voice paint a complete picture that presents an opportunity for the researcher, and the readers of this report, to develop a clearer understanding of the lived experiences shared by the research participants.

### **Fear of the Unknown**

Uncertainty. Fear. In the previous chapter, three very bright, and very different, women shared their personal experiences in preparing to be school teachers. While each is operating at a different life stage, there is a common characteristic in the voices of each pre-service teacher. In

the narratives of chapter four the bright and sunny optimism that characterizes each participant's expectations of her future career is filtered by the gathering clouds of the unknown challenges the job has to offer. Although each is confident about different areas of the teaching profession (i.e.: lesson preparation, classroom management, and content area knowledge) there is at least one aspect or requirement of the profession that makes each participant in the study feel alienated and uncertain.

Now, it is important to note that this finding is not groundbreaking in the field of teacher education. It has been understood for the better part of the last forty years that fear and uncertainty is manifested in one form or another throughout the experiences of pre-service teachers. Fuller (1969) conducted a study in which the concerns of 41 pre-service teachers were investigated in part of a larger study to "examine intensively the developing concerns of small groups of prospective teachers" (p. 208). In the findings related to the group of pre-service teachers who had yet completed student-teaching, Fuller (1969) states,

These students rarely had specific concerns related to teaching itself. The teaching-related concerns they did express were usually amorphous and vague: anticipation or apprehension. Most often they didn't know what to be concerned about. They thought of teaching in terms of their own experiences as pupils and as college students. What concerns they did spontaneously express about their coming student teaching were based mostly on hearsay: discipline problems, getting a good grade or wangling an assignment to a favored supervisor. (p. 219)

And, while it may seem that this study found the same results, I would contend that the results in this study actually contribute a great deal to the ongoing conversation in the field of teacher education in regards to this enduring topic.

Most notably, the 41 participants in Fuller's 1969 study had yet to acquire "contact as teachers with pupils" (p. 219). This being the case, it is interesting to see that after forty years, and advancements in teacher education to include more field experience for teacher candidates, similar fears related to classroom management and overall performance are at the forefront of pre-service teachers' minds. As the data indicate, while each of the primary participants claimed to be confident in their knowledge of the content area, Amy and Holly both stated that they are less confident in other areas of teaching. In examining her own preparedness for student teaching, Holly said,

*Beyond the content, I believe I have a lot to learn about classroom management. I think just trying to get a handle on classroom management—watching to see how one student can be a distraction can really put the class off course. No matter how much they are interested in learning and the classroom dynamics are going well, one student that is a continual disruption can really harm the ability of other students to learn.*

While echoing these concerns, Amy said,

*Looking ahead, I am pretty organized, so lesson plans aren't too scary for me, but I am sure that will change. Classroom management, however... I have completed my beginning classes on discipline and all of that stuff, but that's kind of scary to me. I don't know how I am going to handle myself.*

Uncertainty often precludes a major change in one's life. Let's face it. These young people are about to take on all of the rights and responsibilities of a secondary school teacher. Upon moving into a new career, uncertainty often leads to fear—fear of the unknown. As Rose described her uncertainties about becoming a teacher, she believed it was the uncertainty of success that haunts her the most.

*Do I think I could do a lot of it, and do it well? Do I think I could get up there and fill a class period and teach a lesson? Sure, I think I can. But I have never had to. I have done bits and pieces here and there. I think there are several things that I can do pretty well. I don't have the experience and I haven't been tested.*

Each of the participants in this study readily admits that each possesses high performance standards for themselves. None of the three participants expects to fail. They have enjoyed a great deal of success as students, and they expect those traditions of success to continue as they move on to accept another role in the classroom. With that new role comes a new set of responsibilities, and Holly, Amy, and Rose realize there is more at stake as they transition into student-teaching and on to their first classroom.

Further, as they look forward to their new careers in education, each candidate admits that she has not had nearly enough experience working with students in order to effectively teach on their first day of their student teaching semester. For example, Rose indicated that she doesn't believe she has been tested to the extent that would better prepare her for the requirements of becoming a teacher. And, even though Amy and Holly feel confident in preparing lessons for high school English classes, each has shared that they are less than

confident in her ability to manage student misbehavior. The experiences Rose, Holly and Amy have collected during her program of study at Flint Hills State University have provided some useful information. However, more surprising, or alarming, to Rose, Amy, and Holly, is the level of skills demonstrated by the high school students each was paired with during the inquiry period of the study. Being that these high school students represent real students who struggle in areas of reading and writing, there is an unsettling fear that each may not be prepared to help those students who might be classified as reluctant readers. And, these fears, frustrations, and uncertainties are further investigated in the following sections of this chapter.

As we will see in the following discussions, Holly, Amy, and Rose are not paralyzed by their uncertainty and fear. Each has seized every opportunity to learn how to become a successful teacher. In the experiences illustrated in this study, along with many others in their respective pasts, the participants address these personal fears and uncertainties by engaging in what Gee (1990) refers to as “active social practice.” And, as suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2001), by looking inward to their own understandings and utilizing what they have learned, the participants are making the best of previous learning opportunities to prepare for the future.

### **Living in Two Worlds**

As discussed previously, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) explain a pre-service teacher’s journey is wrought with a number of common pitfalls. One pitfall in particular that seems relevant to this discussion is that of the “two-worlds” pitfall. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) described the two-worlds pitfall as a point in a pre-service teacher’s experience when he or she notices major differences between what he or she has learned in college and what he or she experiences in the field. Pre-service teachers often fall into this pitfall when they see that efficiency often takes the place of quality in a real-world classroom. Upon falling into this pitfall, the pre-service candidate may become critical of the practices employed by the real-world as they may seem inferior to the practices and theories of instruction discussed in the college classroom. Throughout the narrative presentation of data in chapter four of this research report, the recipients were careful not to seem critical of the teaching practices employed by their mentor teachers at Davis High School. However, Amy and Rose describe an instance in which they critique at least one aspect of their field experience.

In Amy's story, Amy attempts to resolve a conflict between what she has learned in her methods classes compared to what she sees in the field. While attending classes at Flint Hills State University, Amy has come to understand the importance of student-centered learning. From her experience at Davis High School during this study, Amy was paired with a very reluctant student and became very concerned that Katie's interests were all but absent from the curriculum. Through the course of her interactions with Katie, Amy learned that Katie was interested in sports. She also learned that Katie's teachers often avoided Katie's interests when choosing reading material for the class. In her analysis of her interview with Katie, Amy says,

*Katie is very sports-oriented, and that is fine. I kind of wish, I don't know if her teachers are doing it, or maybe they have so many students in the class that they can't fit their curriculum for a group of students who have common interests. I mean there has got to be more than one student who likes sports as much as she does. So, maybe if you integrated stuff that they are interested in, into a novel or just touched on something, I think that kind of opened my eyes to what they want to see in the classroom beyond what is taught.*

Through this experience with Katie, Amy has learned some valuable lessons about what she might do when she is in front of a class preparing lessons for students who, like Katie, share a particular interest that seems isolated from the content typically discussed in class.

Amy took several opportunities to resolve their conflicts between the two-worlds internally as she progressed through the early field experience at Davis High School. When looking into Rose's story, we see something quite different. While transporting between the two-worlds, Rose found that she could serve as a resource while completing her field experience at Davis High School. As illustrated in her story, Rose helped a classroom teacher and an instructional paraprofessional identify a need that was not being met during classroom instruction. In her account, Rose described a case in which valuable instructional resources were perhaps being misused.

*I think the things that surprised me were... well, we had a moment in that we had two students in the English class who were special education students. We had a para in the room and I saw that she wasn't working with any particular student. She called me into the hall one day and said, "I have a few questions." I thought that was interesting for her to say that. So, she pulled me into the hall and she wanted to know why she was in the*

*classroom. She told me that she was supposed to be working with one particular student and he was passing and he hates her to be there. He has a high "B" in the class and he doesn't really need the support in the class. There is this other girl in the class and the para didn't know if she was identified as special needs or not. I was helping her quite a bit and that is what prompted this conversation.*

For reasons that were not identified in Rose's story, the paraprofessional assigned to the same classroom as Rose sought Rose's opinion on what the paraprofessional considered to be a mismanagement of resources.

When the question was posed to Rose regarding this particular concern, Rose was able to respond quickly and professionally. She began by asking a few basic questions.

*So, I asked if she had an IEP. The para's first question to me was, "What's an IEP?" So, that surprised me too.... I asked if the student she was supposed to be working with had an IEP that called for para support. I then explained that if his IEP called for support, that is why she was in the classroom. I asked her to go to the resource room to ask about these two particular students. Sure enough, the girl had an IEP and the para brought it in for us to look at. I showed it to the teacher and explained that it was required by law for her to make the accommodations listed on the form. It was a big mess. Finally, the para received permission to work with the other student.*

As we can see, Rose quickly jumped into action and provided some valuable information to a district employee who desperately needed guidance. Because she was able to apply what she had learned about commonly held regulations regarding special education, the classroom teacher, the paraprofessional, and the student in question benefited from her assistance. As a result of her actions, Rose believes,

*If I hadn't been there to have that conversation, I don't think it would have happened at all. The para didn't feel comfortable talking with teacher. I am not sure why, I didn't ask.... One lesson I learned from this experience is to be in constant communication with the support people in your classroom. For one, make sure that person is doing something. Put them to work. They are getting paid to be there. Put them to work and make sure your students are getting their support.*

By bringing her knowledge and experience to the field and taking action, Rose was able to transcend from one world to the next when it appeared necessary to do so.



In these instances, the pre-service undergraduate is in the midst of utilizing her experience to negotiate a difference between what they know to be true and what is actually happening in the field. By putting these pieces together in a successful manner these pre-service teachers are moving toward successfully transitioning from the role of student to the role of teacher. However, the question remains, why was Rose more likely to take action in her field experience at Davis High School? Consider for a moment the discussion in chapter two of this research report that focused on the idea of discourse communities. Using the six defining criteria from Swales (1990) I demonstrated how a particular subgroup (i.e.: secondary language arts teachers) could be considered a social group which builds and maintains a discourse community with its own rules and boundaries. This discourse community of secondary language arts teachers is a secondary discourse for the three research participants of this study.

Consider for a moment the discussion in chapter two of this research report concerning discourse communities. As Gee (1990) and Swales (1990) indicate, there is a developmental period each professional must go through in order to fully acquire the skills necessary to become a member of a discourse community. The primary participants in this study are in the process of acquiring those skills to become a member of the community of language arts teachers as evidenced by their participation in the teacher preparatory program at Flint Hills State University. The experiences and learning opportunities set up by the college of education has provided the participants with some of the tools necessary to begin this transition. The research participants indicated in their narratives that they have received a great deal of training in lesson planning and each has attended several classes that focus on literature and writing. However, Holly, Amy, and Rose also point out that they don't have enough experience in front of a real classroom. It is perhaps this lack of experience, the absence of being tested, that makes the two-worlds pitfall difficult to negotiate. This early field experience at Davis High School provided an environment for Holly, Rose, and Amy to spread their wings and develop the understandings of how a real classroom works and to learn how real students think.

As we saw in the examples provided above, Amy and Rose may have in fact experienced a moment or two in the two-worlds pitfall. However, by applying the skills they have learned through personal experience and the skills they have developed throughout their coursework at Flint Hills State, we now see each is attempting to negotiate the differences between several discourses. These negotiations take many forms from participant to participant. But, there are

several examples throughout the presentation of the data that suggest the participants are taking an active role in making the transition. In this way, Rose's experience is quite different. Because Rose has nearly eleven years older than Holly and Amy, perhaps she is more comfortable facing these conflicts directly and taking immediate action in the field. Throughout the inquiry period, Holly and Amy offered reflections as to how they might address an issue down the road in their own classroom. These reflections, though very valuable in the development of professional teachers, were provided after the fact. Rose, on the other hand, as we will see throughout this chapter, relied extensively on her life experiences, particularly the experience she has as a mother, to quickly adapt while completing the requirements of the early field experience. At the same time, Amy assumed a passive and reflective stance throughout her field experience.

While each participant attempted to negotiate the obstacles in becoming an active member in her new community of professional teachers, different obstacles presented themselves for each participant. For Holly, the youngest of the three participants, there is evidence that she has recognized that she may need to address specific elements of her appearance to successfully work as a teacher.

*When I work with students it is something that is always in the back of my mind. I feel like as a young person, as a young female even, trying to get up in front of the students and wanting to be taken seriously, you feel like you have to overcompensate for your age. And so you think, 'I need to be more professional and not joke around as much as I normally would.' I still wonder how I should act in these situations. I think with more practice in the classroom I will be able to be more comfortable with my role as a teacher.*

Holly provides the most apparent illustration of the conflict between a primary and secondary discourse among the three participants. Holly is aware that she is relatively close in age to her future students and is concerned about developing the persona of a well-respected professional while maintaining an empathetic relationship with her students. After all, Holly's life experiences are not that far removed from those of her future students. And, while Holly has decided to focus on elements of dress and conduct in order to present a certain personality or character in front of her classroom, the conflict to maintain her own identity is present in her words above.

During the inquiry period, Holly had an encounter with Dante that illustrates the ways in which many young people struggle to separate themselves as teachers—leaving behind the life of a student. In this particular situation, Dante recognizes that Holly doodles quite frequently in her notebook. When confronted by Dante on the subject, Holly seemed caught of guard and said, “I draw in class... I find that is how I pay attention. That’s how I remember the information, when I doodle during the lecture. You know, just like any other student, I guess.” As she shared this information with Dante, there was a moment there where they both shared a common experience. They were both students.

While reflecting on this interchange, Holly said, “It’s funny, the first thing that flashed into my mind was, ‘Oh, I guess he knows my first name now.’ That was funny because I feel like I am continually trying to find that balance between being a professional and being able to relate to the students on their level.” And, Holly recognizes the difficulty in maintaining a dual identity as a working professional. While she would like to establish a common thread with her students, she realizes that she must establish a professional persona in order to be taken seriously as a teacher. In her search to find a balance between these two identities, Holly said, “The more I work with students, the more comfortable I feel dealing with these situations—being a teacher, being myself, and begin able to laugh about trying to be both.”

Amy approached the relationship between her role as a teacher and the students in her room differently. In her own account of her experience, Amy concedes that in order to connect with Katie she had to consider blurring the boundaries of her role as a teacher.

*When meeting with her outside of class, I got to know her on more of a friendship level. It wasn’t so much a teacher/student relationship. Which, I wasn’t expecting when it came to Katie. She opened up more about her family and her grades and stuff like that when it was just she and I in the seminar class.*

In this instance, Amy believed that the best way to connect with a very reluctant student was to bridge the divide that typically exists between teachers and students while maintaining professionalism during her field experience. As a result, Amy was able to learn a great deal about Katie while meeting her on a level that Katie thought was safe and non-threatening. While making this effort to help Katie with her school work, Amy became aware of the conflicting roles of teacher and student and attempted to resolve the conflict between these two roles in order to help Katie.

The opportunity to work closely with high school students gave Amy and Holly a chance to examine the distance between themselves as emerging teachers and the students under their charge. As the data indicate, this was the first instance in their experience as pre-service teachers that Amy and Holly were required to work directly with one particular student. So, this initial examination of how Holly and Amy negotiated this experience could provide insight in how pre-service teachers are prepared to relate interpersonally with students. In Holly's and Amy's narratives we see that each notices an established separation between students and teachers. Each illustrates her understanding of this separation differently in her story, but each ultimately acknowledges the existence of this separation. Consider for a moment the discussion in chapter two regarding the two approaches to teacher education. Cochran-Smith (2004) indicates that the lesson plan approach captures most of a pre-service teacher's training at the college of education. This is because it is believed by most that writing and executing lesson plans efficiently will be most beneficial to the teacher candidate as he or she completes student teaching, the culminating event in a teacher preparatory program. This ultimately prepares undergraduates to understand that they will be in front of classroom, presenting scripted lessons to a large group of students. This understanding perhaps contributes to the separation Holly and Amy recognized and further felt as though they needed to address.

Holly and Amy attempted to negotiate this separation differently. Where Holly tried to separate the demands of her new role into two different identities, Amy's approach was less defined. In each case, the pre-service teacher described an attempt to relate to the high school student in such a way that seemed less authoritarian. The data collected in this study show that from the perspectives of these three participants, the interpersonal dynamic associated with teaching is all but absent from the teaching preparatory program at Flint Hills State. And, by being asked to work directly with one high school student for the purposes of completing the assignments of a secondary instructional methods course, Holly, Rose, and Amy were given an opportunity, albeit their first opportunity as pre-service teachers, to address the interpersonal demands of being a teacher. As a result, both Holly and Amy found the experience helpful in the development of their professional practice. While Amy learned a lot by working with a student who was "way different" than her, Holly was able learn a lot about herself while completing the field experience at Davis High School. In providing a conclusion to her narrative, Holly said, "The interviews, one-on-one work sessions, tapings, and reflections have been incredibly useful

in helping me understand Dante and understand my personal growth as a professional.”

As Holly and Amy reflected on their experience, it was quite different from the experience Rose had working one-on-one with James. From within the observational illustrations of Rose’s story, Rose demonstrated a more relaxed approach when working with James. Rose also addressed the interpersonal dynamic in her narrative when she said,

*It is not about being their friend. I don’t think I ever had to leave a non-authoritarian role. It was more of a... well, I think I am like that with my own children, that is best way I can describe it, I don’t stand up here and they are down there. I get down on their level. You can remain in authority while on their level and know who is in control. I mean, that is me, everyday. They know what to expect and what they are going to get from me. But, they also know that I am aright there and I am interested in what they are doing at their level. They don’t have to meet me or my expectations as I am standing above them, pointing my finger. That is not my way.*

Again, we see Rose relied on her experience as a mother to address the requirements of role of a teacher. Unlike Holly and Amy, Rose has extensive experience in relating with school-aged children and draws on that experience to do her job. While Rose negotiates these conflicts with an observable amount of ease, this is not to say that her story is without conflict.

Throughout her story, Rose described a conflict that existed between being committed to her primary discourse community and the secondary discourse communities in her life. During her college experience at Flint Hills State University, Rose has had to negotiate the requirements of two discourse communities, that of a mother and that of a college student. Because so much of her time and energy is devoted to her family, Rose’s education has always been secondary in her life.

*Becoming a teacher has been a long time coming for me. I am just ready to be done with college. It’s been so broken up for me.... Overall, my college career has been pretty lackluster. I have a good GPA, it’s not great. I had to run a house, because I have a family, after I came back so I had more responsibilities. Even now some things just have to give, which is tough because I am perfectionist at heart so the “A” is what you get. Nothing else is acceptable.... However, that is not a reality for me anymore....*

While trying to come to grips with her new set of priorities, Rose easily recognizes the differences between her experiences and those of her peers.

*Most college students go to college. They have other priorities too in terms of hanging out and partying and whatever. It is just a different perspective. I have other challenges. My challenges are family life. I think I work just as hard, but sometimes I have to let something slide. College to has always been a lower priority. I mean, I can do it. I can do it pretty well, and do the best I can. But with kids, you never know what the day will bring. So, like I said, it has been a long time coming for me. I am ready to move on.*

Rose continued to explain how she has tried to balance the demands of the two different discourse communities. While her family required the majority of her energy and time, she was able to devote enough attention to her schoolwork in order to not only survive, but succeed. And, while more traditional students approach the opportunity to teach with dreams filled with optimism and hope, Rose approaches the opportunity differently.

*What I am most looking forward to as a teacher? That is something I haven't thought about. That is mostly because my head isn't always there. I definitely see myself graduating and getting a job and doing all of that. I just don't sit around and dream about it.*

Rose's perspective is one that continues to seem quite intriguing within the frame of this study. Holly and Amy are concerned about classroom management and their professional image. Rose, on the other hand is perhaps more relaxed in these areas because she is a mother and has managed her own children for quite some time. Additionally, Rose has successfully negotiated multiple discourses and has utilized her experiences to survive when switching from community to community. As indicated in her comments above, Rose obviously sees the differences between the communities present in this study as she attempts to place herself within the continuum of experience as she compares herself to other pre-service teachers. Though she realizes there is a great deal for her to learn in becoming a teacher, she realizes that her path toward a new career in education has been very different compared to her classmates. In this instance, Rose may be demonstrating a higher level of discourse acquisition in that she recognizes the major differences that exist between herself and the rest of the community of pre-service teachers. This is one aspect of discourse communities that has yet to be studied. As it pertains to teacher education, a study that more closely examines the levels of discourse acquisition could contribute to the greater conversation on how a community of pre-service teachers can be better served by the college of education.

In this discussion of the two-worlds pitfall, the data presented several different instances in which pre-service teachers struggle through the transition of becoming a working professional. As Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) indicate in their study, the pre-service teachers arrive at this pitfall when the inexperienced pre-service teacher notices differences between what he or she is told to expect to see and experience in the field is quite different from what is actually seen and practiced during those early field experiences. Utilizing an understanding of discourse community, this research project expanded the conversation of the two-world pitfall to discuss how the three pre-service teachers in this study negotiated the differences they saw among themselves and the challenges they faced in relating interpersonally to high school students. While these themes and issues were not originally central to the research questions, these findings will frame a discussion that provides answers to the research questions for this study as well as a discussion that follows on the implications this study has on teacher education.

### **Addressing the Research Questions**

This study set out to examine how pre-service teachers develop their expectations of high school students in regards to literacy. The subsidiary questions for this study further breakdown the idea of literacy into categories that include, reading, writing, and attitude toward the subject matter. Aside from simply asking the pre-service teacher how she developed her understandings of literacy and what she might expect from her future students, the research project was designed to observe the participants in active social practice. The multiple data sets collected during the inquiry period of this research project illustrate several instances where the pre-service teachers analyze the work of a high school student and make a judgement of this work based on their expectations that have been formed. From these instances in the data we can begin to understand how these expectations are formed and the effect they may have on the pre-service teacher's performance during student teaching and beyond.

#### ***How do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers develop their expectations of high school students' literacies?***

In addressing the primary research question of this study, the data indicate that Rose, Amy, and Holly have begun to develop an understanding as to what secondary students should be able to do in terms of reading and writing. And, as their stories indicate, these understandings come from similar sources in each of their storied experiences. At some point during the inquiry

period, be it through personal interviews or focus group discussions, Holly, Amy, and Rose each identified an influential teacher who introduced literacy to them in such a way that was memorable. For each participant, this introductory experience was a foundational experience that later served as a path to becoming a teacher.

For example, Holly remembers an engaging honors English teacher who brought the literature to life in the classroom.

*I also remember how energetic she was in front of the classroom. The class was reading Beowulf, and, well, she was quite small, only about 4'-11", and I can remember her playing the part of Grendel. So, here was this little woman trying to be a big monster in this small classroom full of high school seniors. It was really funny, but memorable. She always had a way of showing us how the literature could come alive. She was very well respected by her students and that made it okay for us to like literature, to buy into her class.*

Amy also gave considerable credit to her high school honors teacher Mrs. Wilson as being an influential person in her life that led her toward majoring in English education. Like Holly, Amy was an honors student and always enrolled in honors English classes. And, while she found the work in these higher-level settings more challenging, she often found herself completing the assignments earlier than most in her class. However, Mrs. Wilson challenged Amy and encouraged her to take the extra time to learn more about the concepts they were covering in class. Amy said that Mrs. Wilson, "made me push myself just a little harder. I remember we read all of these books in her class and that is when I fell in love with reading. That is what led me toward English."

For Amy and Holly, two high-achieving students, the honors track at their respective high schools provided them opportunities to expand their knowledge of the language arts. However, in addition to furthering their skills in areas of reading and writing, each also had an enlightening experience that changed their understanding of literacy. It is these experiences that Amy and Holly attribute to their interest in becoming English teachers as well. These pivotal figures in Amy's and Holly's lives passed on a living legacy that now embodies the basis of their future teaching practice.

Rose also mentioned the work of an influential teacher in her life, but her story was different compared to those of Amy and Holly. As Rose explained in her story, she had some



rough experiences as a child, moving quite often from town to town as the child of single mother. Rose explained she had a bad attitude as she entered junior high as an outsider. And, although she was intelligent, she did not apply herself to her full potential. She recalled a moment in which this very influential teacher confronted her about her bad attitude.

*I had some rough experiences from fourth through sixth grade with my mom moving around and that is just a hard time to move. Especially when moving to a small town where everyone had been there since they were babies. So, I was shy at that time and I didn't really know anybody. Sixth grade was a bad year for me. When I got to junior high, which is what they called it, I met this influential teacher who was very unconventional. He pretty much told me that I was better than that. He really pushed me to better in a very nice way that also scared the crap out of me. He challenged me, and he kind of brought me out of my shell that year. It made a big difference because when I got to high school I was kind of ready to take on the whole world.*

While Rose's experience was not directly related to reading and writing, Rose credits this influential teacher with guiding her toward a path of success. And, as it has been mentioned above, Holly, Amy, and Rose are very successful students. Each has enjoyed a great deal of success at all levels of education. These memorable instances with former instructors further strengthened their understanding and desire to become language arts teachers themselves. While these initial experiences were foundational for each of the participants, their expectations into the areas of reading, writing, and literacy were formed through other experiences as well.

Take for instance Holly's assessment of some of her classmates' writing ability that she observed upon beginning her coursework at Flint Hills State. As Holly is a good writer, and is recognized as such by her peers, she has been asked on several occasions to edit the written work of others. This experience has given Holly the opportunity to assess the work of those who represent all levels of ability at Flint Hills State. As a result, Holly said,

*I think there are too many students who graduate from high school who are unable to read critically and really analyze the text they are reading. Writing is a huge obstacle for some as well. I have edited a lot of papers for my friends here at Flint Hills State and I am shocked at their level of writing. Focusing on communication skills will be critical, I believe, to the future success of my students.*

Being that Holly has always excelled in the language arts, as evidenced by her participation in honors English classes in high school, she was shocked by the abilities of other college students. This experience has led Holly to believe that too many students graduate from high school “unable to read critically and really analyze the text they are reading.” Further, the level of writing demonstrated by her classmates shocked Holly to the point she believed that a task she found easy to complete (i.e. writing) can be “a huge obstacle for some.” These experiences in college have led Holly to conclude that there is a need for high school English teachers to focus on the basics to help students prepare for college.

Rose also provides several life experiences that contributed to her understanding of literacy. As a high school student she was hired by a family to tutor a middle school student who, like Rose, had some difficulty in school during the middle years. In her story, Rose said, *She was a challenge. When we started I would go to her house and she would sit there. It was a good experience because I got to know her. We would talk. I was a junior at the time, but we had enough in common that I could be her friend to a certain point and learn what was going on. I explained to her that we could make this very painful or we could just get this done. I told her that I was going to be there every day. Two years later they moved on, they were a military family, and her mother called my mom and said, you know, what a difference that had made for her. Her grades went from D's and F's to A's and B's. You know I just worked with her, showing her how it worked.*

At an early age, Rose was given an opportunity to be an instructor. The particular student mentioned in this part of Rose’s narrative was a young woman who was failing math and English. And, while Rose would readily admit that she was no expert in some of the subjects in which the student required tutoring, she understood from her own experience with an influential teacher that patience and persistence are necessary when guiding young people toward success.

Rose has also developed expectations in regards to literacy from her own children. As Rose said in her story, her oldest son is about to enter middle school. From watching her own son grow up and enter secondary levels of education, she has witnessed first-hand how a student develops the skills necessary to negotiate the demands of school and an active social life. In her account of what she has observed from her son, she says,

*He gets really overwhelmed even though he doesn't have a lot, and it is just that growing thing where you want to go and play and do your own thing. But, you have this other*

*thing over her to do too. It is about time management where you do a little here and little there and get it done. Then, you can go play. The good grade is not the only payoff.*

*There is accomplishment, your parents' approval, you know it just makes life a lot easier.*

Rose's experiences related to motherhood have provided her with knowledge that is unique to the other two participants in this study. Being that Rose has had extensive contact with her own children, she has a clearer understanding of how to diagnose and address literacy challenges of young people.

As the data collected in this study indicate, pre-service language arts teachers tend to draw heavily on their own experiences in developing the expectations they have toward the literacy practices of high school students. Because the participants in this study have enjoyed a good deal of success in school, especially in the language arts, each participant has high expectations set for their future students. The narrative data collected in this study further indicate that extensive experience with the real students allows the teacher candidate to further develop their expectations in regards to the literacy practices of students.

### ***What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of reading?***

As it has been described in great length in chapter two of this report, there is a growing interest in adolescent literacy as a result of heightened testing practices enacted by public school districts which are fueled by federal funding. An understanding of literacy and its implications on the lives of adolescents is of great importance to those who are entering the field of language arts education. From their own personal experiences and training at Flint Hills State University, Holly, Amy, and Rose have developed their own definitions of literacy and how one demonstrates that he or she is literate. In general, all three participants in the study believe that for one to be literate, he or she must be able to demonstrate some level of comprehension of what he or she is reading. The participants did not venture much further beyond this concept when they were asked to define "literacy". And, while each had some difficulty defining the term in their narratives, each attempted to identify levels of literacy and make judgments regarding literacy while in the field.

When observing an English class and a seminar class at Davis High School, Amy noted that she saw two very different environments. Within the English class she was placed, Amy observed an environment that had, from her point of view, many actively literate students.

*In my field experience at Davis High School, I would say the teacher in the English class I am placed with is very good about reading with the students. She will read aloud or students will read aloud to the class and they will answer questions. Based on the class discussion, I can see that every student understands what has been read to them. And, they can understand what is going with the text.*

While observing this class, Amy was able to practice utilizing observational skills to monitor student progress as the class read through a common text. And, while she believed the students were engaged with the reading assignment in the setting described above, she shared something quite differently in the seminar class she was assigned.

*When I work in my seminar class, and we do what is called “Mad Minutes”, it is a simple paragraph of text, they are just so confused. So, I don’t think they are very literate. I think they can understand what is going on, but they can’t figure it out.*

Amy also noticed that when students in the seminar class were encouraged to read material representative of their particular interests (i.e.: cars, sports, or fashion) students were more receptive to reading during their free time. From these two very different experiences, Amy began to develop of judgment for future practice.

*If these seminar students were my responsibility, I would be more than willing to work them before and after class if they needed it.... I am trying to introduce different magazines and graphic novels to them. Or, just anything like magazines, that will spark their interests. To me, if they can get through that, that is a building block. So, not only trying to interest them in something that they are required to read, but something that they can read on the outside on their own time is good.*

By trying to reach the students in the seminar class in which she was working, Amy was able to find some of those “building blocks”. As the discussion on adolescent literacy begins to expand into new areas of media, the point of view shared by Amy in this instance is perhaps most promising because she has demonstrated the willingness to include all types of reading material in order to engage the students in a reading activity that would help Amy diagnose concerns in the students’ reading ability.

For example, while reading with Katie from a sports magazine, Amy was able to identify some areas of concern in Katie's reading ability. In giving her own assessment of Katie's reading skills, Amy said,

*She was very reserved. I don't think she likes to read aloud. To me, she didn't read that bad. And those words she got stuck on, they weren't common everyday words. I think there might be some students out there who wouldn't know them either. When she came to a word she didn't know, she would skip it. Or, she would just say the first syllable and pretend that I wasn't listening. I would repeat the word and she would just kind of look up at me and she would say the word again. So, I thought she was trying to be sneaky to see if I was really paying attention to what she was reading.*

In Amy's experience, she noticed students were not particularly interested in the reading material that was made available to them in the seminar class within which she was placed. In order to assess Katie's reading ability, Amy found that Katie was more likely to read material that discussed her particular interests. From this encounter, Amy was able to make strides in determining the issues Katie was having in regards to reading.

All three participants found great success in choosing reading material that their high school student found interesting to read aloud with them. All three participants approached these reading opportunities differently. And, once again, we find that each managed these experiences differently. While Rose and Amy were more likely to correct their students' miscues while reading aloud, Holly found herself conflicted in this regard. As she read with Dante, Holly made several notable observations about Dante's reading ability. In particular, she was quite unsure how to handle Dante's miscues as they read together.

*There were several instances where Dante mispronounced a word, he didn't catch it, and I didn't correct him. I struggled internally where I should correct all of these mistakes as well. I didn't want him to feel uncomfortable taking risks and trying to pronounce words only to be constantly corrected, but I also realize how important it is for him to know how to pronounce the words. If words are mispronounced, this can have a negative impact on comprehension.*

And, while Holly struggled to determine where and when she needed to take a more firm hand in guiding young Dante through these types of joint reading activities, she was operating with the understanding that she didn't want to seem too overbearing in order to keep Dante's

confidence intact. From Holly's point of view, if Dante had a bit more confidence all the way around, he may in fact see more success in school.

*I think he needs to build his confidence up a bit more. Throughout our interchanges, he seemed hesitant to answer question because he wanted to have the right answer. He'd say something and get kind of embarrassed and say, 'I don't know.' So, I think that helping him build his confidence, and helping him develop his communication skills, would go a long way.*

It is quite apparent throughout Holly's story that Dante does in fact demonstrate a lack of confidence, and it is interesting that Holly focused on this characteristic when summing up how she might help Dante if he were one of her students in the future. As a rather confident person who has accomplished a lot as student in both academic and social settings, Holly obviously sees confidence as a major contributor to success and would like Dante to successful too.

While Amy and Holly worked with struggling readers, Rose found the student she was working with, James, was actually a very good reader. Through her conversations with James, she learned that at the core of a seemingly apathetic freshman there was an engaged reader who enjoyed reading complex, well-developed novels. To investigate James' reading interests further, Rose found a copy of a popular young adult novel James identified as one of his favorites and the two read aloud from the text in order for Rose to observe James' reading ability.

As she read with James, Rose took several opportunities to stop and talk about what was happening in the story. These breaks in the action proved to Rose that James could speak quite intelligently about the text. While these observations were positive, Rose became quite frustrated. In an earlier observation, James was less than enthusiastic to read. In this instance, Rose observed,

*In seminar class, the students took turns reading an assigned article. When James took his turn he read barely above a murmur and did not attempt to pronounce words he found questionable. He simply skipped over the words he thought he did not know. I stayed next to his seat, so that I could listen closely to his reading. Although it seemed like James was struggling, his reading was quite fluent. It seemed, to me, that he lacked confidence rather than reading or speaking abilities.*

Based on this experience with James, Rose didn't know what to think would happen if she asked James to read a section of *New Moon*, a book that James said was one of his favorites, with her. After sharing this book with James, Rose was convinced that James was in fact a good reader.

*He could read really well. He handled it all very well. He has all of the abilities; he has all of the skills. He's at grade level at least. I think being literate means being able to read, comprehend, contextualize and relate it to what you are reading to something greater than what is on the page. I think he is doing that.*

The narratives of each participant provided several examples of what each participant expects from high school students in terms of reading. Their expectations are present in their observations and judgments that were made while participating in early field experiences at Davis High School. During their interactions with reluctant readers, Holly, Amy, and Rose applied their definitions of literacy and were given a memorable learning opportunity to see how those definitions held up in the real world. Their expectations in terms of reading are also present in the suggestions each offered in their narratives in regards to how they would help a similar student if presented with the opportunity to do so in their future practice.

### ***What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of writing?***

In her explanation of the events, Holly was quite excited to read what Dante claimed was one of his favorite pieces of original writing that he had created during his junior year of high school. However, her excitement was quickly quelled when she read through the paper. Holly expected to see an example of academic writing structured in the tradition of the five-paragraph essay. Instead, Holly saw a loosely structured paragraph with many unaddressed spelling and word-choice errors. This dashed expectation caused a minor conflict in Holly's attempt to assess Dante's writing ability. In an effort to resolve this conflict, Holly suggests that she might be able to make a better determination on Dante's writing if she had a better understanding of what the teacher was expecting from Dante on the particular assignment he was completing when he wrote his essay.

Throughout the telling of their experiences at Davis High School, Holly, Amy, and Rose also provided a perspective on what they expect of high school students in terms of writing.

First, from Holly's story, we see a well-defined explanation of what she saw in Dante's writing sample that he provided for her analysis. After reading through Dante's paper, Holly said,

*I did think he had strong ideas in there and he was interested in the topic. I mean you could sense that voice and that passion when you read it. But, I would have liked to have seen what the assignment actually was, because it turned to be just one big paragraph instead of being structured like an actual paper. I was surprised to see a lot of personal pronouns and word confusion—a lot of things that could have been caught with editing. But, I think he needed some more instruction on how to write well and on the traits of writing. So, I think he is definitely not at the level he should be at in writing. However, he has a willingness to learn and an interest in writing. I can't explain why he is so far behind, but I think Dante has a lot of room to grow.*

From this description of Dante's paper we can see that Holly expected to see an essay that was structured like "an actual paper." Instead, Holly noticed that Dante's essay was simply one long paragraph that had "a lot of things that could have been caught with editing." From this brief assessment of his writing, Holly believes that Dante is not demonstrating a writing ability that is appropriate for his grade level and believes that he "has a lot of room to grow."

In Amy's story, we learn that she was not surprised at all by the cold reception she received from Katie, a high school student she tutored during the inquiry period, when the topic of writing was approached. While working with Katie, Amy attempted to bring several worthwhile activities to the tutoring sessions. However, when writing was involved in these enrichment activities, Katie was less than enthusiastic about the idea of completing a writing activity. However, as Amy shared in her account, she was not surprised by this reaction from Katie.

*I was not surprised by Katie's reaction when I said the next section of questions was about writing. She slouched down in her chair, rolled her eyes and said, 'When are we going to talk about something important?' I was unsure how to answer that question to be honest. I looked at her and said, 'Why do you say that writing isn't important?' She turned her head and rolled her eyes at me once more. This was very disheartening for a future English teacher.*

While Amy believes writing is a critical skill for young people to acquire, as evidenced in her definition of literacy mentioned above, she shares how disheartening it felt to learn that Katie did



not see the importance of learning how to improve her writing abilities. However, as she said the section above, after working closely with Katie for a number of days, Amy was not surprised by Katie's lack of interest in writing. In her concluding comments, it is apparent, that Katie feels as though something was missing in from this experience with Katie.

Amy's story ends with an anticlimactic close to their final tutoring session. Each participant simply picks up what she brought to the table and walks away in silence with perhaps too much left unsaid. In her comments preceding the close of their time together, Amy reflects momentarily on the entire experience in saying,

*But, I think I learned the most from Katie. I chose to work with her because she is completely different from myself and every other student I have ever worked with. I only wish I would have had more of an opportunity to work with her on writing. That is something we just could not come to terms on.*

So, while there was a great deal Amy learned from this experience with Katie, the disheartened feelings Amy felt toward Katie's lack of interest in writing were obviously unsettled at the close of the inquiry period.

### ***What do undergraduate pre-service language arts teachers expect of high school students in terms of attitude toward the subject matter?***

During the inquiry period of this research study, the primary research participants reported that they noticed a wide range of attitudes toward the language arts. As it has been stated above, Amy, Holly, and Rose found that in some instances, the high school student with whom they were paired often shared a great deal of disdain for at least one aspect of the language arts. For example, we remember Amy's encounter with Katie when the time arrived to chat about the writing process. In her story, Amy said,

*I was not surprised by Katie's reaction when I said the next section of questions was about writing. She slouched down in her chair, rolled her eyes and said, "When are we going to talk about something important?" I was unsure how to answer that question to be honest. I looked at her and said, "Why do you say that writing isn't important?" She turned her head and rolled her eyes at me once more. This was very disheartening for a future English teacher.*

While she wasn't surprised, Amy was certainly disheartened by Katie's response. And, to a certain degree, I believe it is often the expectation of pre-service teachers that high school students may not be completely thrilled about writing. However, when the optimistic passion for the language arts is met with an overwhelming apathetic attitude, one can feel drained and disenchanting.

Another intriguing case came from Rose's story. Rose spent most of her time at Davis High School working with a student named James. Rose noticed almost immediately that James was quite apathetic during their initial meetings.

*Overall, James displays quite an apathetic attitude toward school and home life. He bobs his head a lot and tries not to appear interested. He was adamant that he did not care about school. I think he wants to seem uninterested and cool and throw me for a loop.*

As James continued to demonstrate an attitude that said, "I could care less," Rose patiently waited on James to come around. Through their conversations, however, Rose began to see flashes of intelligence in James. After some time, Rose became mildly frustrated by James' complete disregard for all things related to his academics. By all accounts, James was going to fail his four core classes unless something serious changed in his life.

Then, James demonstrated an unexpected enthusiasm toward reading when Rose and James read from one of James' favorite books. This change in James' attitude was not only encouraging but also frustrating for Rose. Because Rose has been one who always does what is necessary to "get the A," she couldn't understand why a student with the skills necessary to be successful chooses to simply fail. At the height of her frustration, Rose said, "The mom in me wants to come out, but I'm trying to stay objective." And, as Rose's story indicates, she was able to maintain objectivity in order to help James identify a plan for improvement in his studies.

As the inquiry period for this study came to a close, James and Rose met for one final time. In that meeting, Rose asked James some difficult questions about his present situation as a high school student. James was failing all of his classes; he would need to enroll in summer courses in order to make up some of the coursework he had ignored throughout the school year. However, that would only be the beginning in what will certainly be nothing less than an up-hill battle for James if he planned on graduating high school. Rose decided to ask James how he felt about his present academic standing. In her account Rose describes that final meeting by saying,

*At the conclusion of our time together, I think James was already seeing things differently as we walked through it. I just asked him questions and he was able to articulate that. I just set the framework from him to answer some questions that would make him look at this summer, into next year and on into the future, and how that would separate him from his family, his friends, and to see what direction he was going. He could see that; I did not have to spell that out for him.*

As a successful student, Rose certainly knows what it takes to succeed in high school. Her experiences as a tutor and a mother have provided her with skills necessary to effectively communicate with adolescents. And, in this instance it paid off for both James and Rose.

Almost immediately, James indicated that he could care less about school and succeeding as a student. Further, James provided little evidence to Rose that this attitude would change which led Rose to expect little more from James. However, because Rose was persistent in her search to find what could help James find success. In her search she found he had an interest in a particular series of young adult novels. From there, Rose indicated that she believed James was beginning to “see things differently.” And, in that moment, it would seem that Rose and James began to see a number of things differently. James identified two or three ways he could directly change in his life to become a better student. Rose was able to help a student see a glimpse of his full potential, just as her own potential was revealed to her at a young age. In her concluding thoughts on this particular experience, Rose said.

*I hope that conversation leaves some sort of lasting impression. Whether that will make a difference right away, I don't know. The reality is that he is still flunking everything. He will not pass any of his classes even if he tried at this point. He knows he will have to complete summer school; that is a long road for someone his age. I know in my life there were certain events that marked a turning point. Maybe the same will happen for him. He has walked through the process, but he is running a very high risk of failing.*

While the road may be long for James, Rose was able to show him the way in which he could take to perhaps achieve success before it is too late for him.

In many ways, Rose's life seems similar to James'. Rose, like James, entered the middle years with the attitude that she could care less about school. From her story, we see that Rose could have easily failed all of her classes and ended up dropping out of school before she graduated. Her life took on a different turn when a teacher was able to show Rose a new

perspective on learning. Similarly, while helping James with his homework during a set of tutoring sessions, Rose was able to show James a new perspective as well. Rose was able to see, first-hand, that James could read quite well. As a result, she knew that he would be able to see how he could improve his situation. She said, “I just asked him questions and he was able to articulate that. I just set the framework from him to answer some questions that would make him look at this summer, into next year and on into the future.” As Rose’s story indicated, James seemed to find a new lease on life when the possibilities of the future were made available to him.

### **Implications of These Findings**

So far in this chapter, I have explained how the three narratives have exposed common themes. And, I have used those common themes to frame a discussion that addressed the primary and subsidiary research questions of the study. The following sections will now address the implications this study has on the areas of teacher education and adolescent literacy. By including the following sections in this chapter, my hope is that others will read this study and identify topics for future research. The following sections are therefore an opportunity to discuss the possibilities that exist beyond the bounds of this study.

#### ***Implications for Adolescent Literacy***

While standardized reading tests, as they are administered in public secondary schools, measure only a small set of skills, there are a number of literacy practices that adolescents engage in on a regular basis outside of the confines of a typical school day. However, these assessments are a reality in every public school setting, no matter the grade level. Therein lies a challenge placed on novice language arts teachers to not only address the skills that are tested, but to also recognize there are literacy skills that are important beyond the tested standards and indicators. In the presentation of the data there are a couple of instances in which the participants recognize this expansion and apply their understanding in the field.

As described above, Amy attempted to bring in new texts that would serve as “building blocks” that could “spark their interests” so that a conversation about reading could begin. Upon reflecting on her experience in working with the seminar students at Davis High School, Amy suggested that she would have liked to introduce different magazines and graphic novels into the class. And, Amy provides a clue as to how she arrived at this suggestion while working with

Katie during seminar hour. In her story she said, “From talking with her, I found that Katie absolutely hates to read or to even be involved with her junior English course. The world ‘reading’ translates to Katie as ‘boring’ . . . . Katie can not remember the first book she ever read. She just shrugs her shoulders and said, ‘I guess *Sports Illustrated*.’” Now, from this example we might assume that because the students in her seminar class, like Katie, were drawn to image based media, such as magazines, Amy thought graphic novels would be another “building block” she could utilize. Beyond building a connection with her students through providing alternative forms of media, Amy also understands that there are certain expectations placed on her. In her narrative, Amy said,

*I don't know if I like No Child Left Behind, but I think it makes teachers responsible. I kind of wish they would have had it when I was in high school. I had some of those teachers who just sit behind the desk. It kind of makes them more responsible for what they teach. It kind of makes them more aware of their students. So, I am kind of in favor of it because if you see a student who is slacking it's on me to help that student. Not necessarily due to the law, but it's just in me to help them do well. So, I am in favor of it because it just opens your eyes a little bit.*

As Amy indicated, there are laws that now hold teachers accountable. But, in her opinion, the law shouldn't matter. Amy believes it is internally motivating to help those students who might need extra attention to meet the standards placed before them. In the previous decade research on standardized tests was conducted with a field of practicing teachers who were trying to conform to the new regulations of No Child Left Behind. In the next decade, the it would be interesting to see how novice teachers now enter the field with the No Child Left Behind law in full effect. The next generation of language arts teachers was educated in a system that was regulated by No Child Left Behind. They are now charged to teach within those regulations.

Holly and Amy will be entering the field of public education well within five or six years of graduating from high school. While their age may present a series of challenges early on in their careers, as Holly indicated in her narrative, their age may in fact help them address the growing demands on high school students in terms of reading. For example, while she was trying to define the two different identities that she assumes in her life, Holly said that she tends to dress differently and act differently when in front of the classroom. And, she said that she purposefully assumes a more professional identity in her manner of speech as well in order to

establish respect and notoriety. Amy goes to these lengths because she is so close in age to the high school students she is trying to teach. However, Holly also stated that she believes her age can be her greatest strength in developing connections with her students. She said,

*Being young, I can relate to the student so much more, at least in a different way. I was just there. I know how it is to be growing up in this time. I know what it means to be in school and what it means to be a student. Because I am close to their age, I understand the world as it is and I understand what it means to grow up in the world as it is right now and that is helpful I think.*

Based on what Holly provided in her statement above, I would like to suggest that we are quickly arriving at a point where novice teachers are in fact more in tune with the complex literacies that exist beyond the secondary classroom. As natural consumers of new media, these young people who are now becoming working professionals can bring a great deal of their own understanding to the classroom. As Holly indicated above, because she is relatively close in age to the students she hopes to teach in the near future, she believes she has a native understanding of the demands the world places on young adults.

This is not to say that non-traditional undergraduates like Rose will be completely out of touch with the literacy demands of secondary students when entering the profession. As it has been indicated in several instances above, Rose draws extensively on her experiences as a mother in developing her role as a classroom teacher. Being that Rose has watched her own children grow and participate in a world that celebrates these ever expanding literacies that were described in chapter two of this report, it is therefore reasonable to state that Rose will enter the profession with a clear understanding of the world in which her children, and future students, participate.

For instance, consider the point Rose made when referencing the many interests her son, who will soon be attending middle school, has in addition to his studies. In her own narrative, Rose said,

*I have a son that is about to go into middle school, which is frightening, but he is the same way right now. He gets really overwhelmed even though he doesn't have a lot, and it is just that growing thing where you want to go and play and do your own thing. But, you have this other thing over her to do too. It is about time management where you do a little here and little there and get it done. Then, you can go play.*

While she understands that her son may want to play video games or pursue other activities that don't involve his scholastic responsibilities, Rose, as indicated in the quote above, has tried to instill the drive to do well in school into her son. However, the fact that she understands the complexity of an adolescent's life beyond school is what will help Rose meet the needs of the students in her classroom.

### ***Implications for Teacher Education***

Among the ideological paradigms of teacher education there exists a lesson plan centered stance and a transformative inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith 2004). The first ensures that teacher candidates are able to effectively plan and execute lesson plans. The latter focuses on developing critical thought and experience to help teachers successfully address the concerns in the classroom. These two paradigms were certainly present in the experiences Holly, Amy, and Rose. While each is grateful for the time and dedication to excellence that the education instructors at Flint Hills State University have instilled in each of them throughout their programs of study, each is critical in their own way of the amount of practical experience each has received as part of their training. One of the most enduring questions in teacher education is one that deals with how and when pre-service teachers should begin engaging in field experiences. According to Holly, it should have earlier and more often.

*My favorite part is being in the schools; learning first hand what being a teacher is all about. Obviously, I wish we could have some of our experiences on learning how to teach earlier in the program. I think in some respects we learn too late. Most people don't typically get into their teaching methods courses until their junior and senior year. I wish we had some of that earlier. I think it would be helpful to let people decide if a career in education is for them.*

From her point of view, Holly believes she has learned a great deal about what it means to be a teacher while participating in field experiences, and she would like future teacher candidates at Flint Hills State to have a more in-depth experience. While these experiences have been positive for Holly, Rose does not share the same opinion. In her account, Rose claims, "I think in terms what we learn here at Flint Hills State in our classes and in our field experiences we aren't very prepared at all. That is just from my experience which has been fragmented." Because Rose represents a non-traditional student's point of view, it would be easy to dismiss

her comments on this topic. However, as she continued to qualify her answer, it becomes clear that her interpretation of the teacher training program's efforts is shared with students from all life stages. In her narrative, Rose provides an explanation of what happened during an early field experience in which she wrote and presented a lesson to a middle school class with a group of her peers. Rose said,

*My introductory block of education classes was taken during summer school and that was horrible. They throw you in there as a very inexperienced pre-service teacher and it makes you wonder why on earth you would ever want to be a teacher. Again, they throw you in front of a class of students who don't want to be in summer school, but they have to be in summer school or they won't pass. And, to think you are going to teach them anything... you don't have the experience. So, it was slightly intimidating. And, I didn't share that experience all by myself. As you are standing up there with your group, and you have to tell the student something, we were like, 'This sucks.' Well, sort of, you know the students were sitting in their desks, chipping their black fingernail polish and falling asleep. What are you going to do? There is nothing we have been taught that prepares us to do that. But on the flipside, in terms of my life experience, I felt like I am better prepared.*

Rose gives almost no credit to the teacher training programs at Flint Hills State. However, she believes that her life experience has prepared her very well for the demands of becoming a classroom teacher. The data throughout the entire study have continually illustrated the vast differences that exist between the participants who are traditional undergraduates and Rose, a non-traditional undergraduate. The narratives formed in this study paint two very different pictures. The experiences of Holly and Amy are comparable. Through each stage of this research project, they shared similar experiences and often responded in the same way to the challenges that presented themselves while in the field. Rose's experiences and responses contrasted greatly from those of Holly and Amy. And it is for this reason that I believe the researchers in the field of teacher education should take a closer look at how non-traditional students are prepared to enter the field of secondary education. This may mean that a mixed methods approach to teacher education could be considered.

As it was presented in the narratives in chapter four, the pre-service teachers in the study attended a number of classes on how to prepare and present lesson plans. These courses were



complemented with a few field experiences where the pre-service teachers executed a lesson plan or two in a small group of their peers. From the participants' perspective, planning and successfully presenting the lesson seemed to take priority over the interests and concerns of the students in the classroom. For a moment, let's assume that the experiences shared by the participants in this study are relatively accurate. The first question I would like to investigate is why the college of education has continued to place such an importance on the lesson plan. I suppose the easy answer lies in the intentions of accreditation bodies like NCATE, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. If the pedagogical expectations established by the accreditation agencies were focused primarily on only a few sets of skills that included the preparation and execution of lesson plans, I believe colleges of education would put a high priority on those skills.

In looking at the dichotomy of teacher education as presented by Cochran-Smith (2004), the lesson plan approach to teacher development has remained dominant when compared to more transformative approaches to teacher education. However, if we consider the most recent news released by NCATE (2009) it would seem that a shift is beginning to occur in the way in which colleges of education will be able to demonstrate progress in their programs. In a press release dated June, 9, 2009, NCATE announced that the nearly 700 partner institutions will be able to utilize multiple tracks toward accreditation. The press release explained a Continuous Improvement track and a Transformative Initiative track. According to the press release published on NCATE's website, the Continuous Improvement track essentially "raises the target level of performance beyond the 'acceptable' level" (NCATE, 2009) as colleges demonstrate continual renewal of their expectations and the performance of their graduates. The second path, the Transformative Initiative track, "encourages institutions to build the base of evidence in the field about what works in teacher preparation and help the P-12 schools they serve address major challenges, from raising student achievement to retaining teachers" (NCATE, 2009).

J. G. Cibulka, the President of NCATE, believes that this change in how colleges of education are awarded accreditation will,  
help close the gap between theory and practice, and assure that teacher education program candidates are able to help diverse students be successful learners. In the

past, accreditation wrapped clinical experience around coursework. This approach reverses the priority, encouraging institutions to place teacher candidates in year-long training programs and wrap coursework around clinical practice. (NCATE, 2009)

These exciting changes made by the largest accrediting body in teacher education certainly lend themselves to addressing the needs of people like Rose, and the endless number of non-traditional undergraduates who are returning to college in order to acquire a teaching license. More importantly, however, it would seem that NCATE is turning the established format of teacher education on its head. As indicated in Cibulka's statement above, teacher education accreditation has placed coursework at the center of the teacher training, thereby surrounding the coursework with field experience. This shift in accreditation will move field experience to the center of teacher education accreditation and allow the coursework completed at the college of education to compliment, not contradict, the field experiences.

As this study has shown, pre-service teachers can learn a great deal about themselves and about the types of students they may encounter in the future. Consider for a moment the discussion on the interpersonal element of teaching that was addressed near the beginning of this chapter. Holly indicated directly in her narrative that she wished she had more opportunities in her training to work directly with individual students. Amy also believed that her experience working with Katie was valuable because she had never encountered a student like Katie in her previous field experiences. The very idea that that these two pre-service teachers were able to learn so much from these encounters with high school students, the very students they hope to teach one day after graduating from college, seems to indicate that these types of field experiences are helpful in guiding pre-service teachers to a better understanding of what they can expect from their future students.

If NCATE, a major accrediting body in teacher education, is placing a greater importance on field experience, it seems to reason that Flint Hills State, along with other colleges of education around the country should take a closer look at the types of field

experiences they are providing pre-service teachers. The findings of this study indicate that pre-service teachers are able to develop skills related to the interpersonal elements of teaching during field experiences that allow them the time to work directly with one student. Though this model seems contrary to the lesson plan field experience, where the pre-service teacher focuses primarily on writing and conducting lessons in front of a large group of students, the findings of this study indicate that the three pre-service teachers in this study found the experience to be quite helpful in learning how to communicate directly with students on a one to one basis—a skill that will prove to be very valuable when each is given her first classroom.

If the solution to providing pre-service teachers valuable, yet varied, field experiences seems simple, it is. Cibulka seems to indicate that teacher education has made what was once simple, complex. In Rose's narrative, we read of an experience where Rose, along with others in her class, were asked to write and present a lesson during summer school. The response she remembered receiving from the middle school students in the class where Rose and her classmates presented their lesson was lukewarm at best. And, as Rose recounted the details of that experience, she remembered that she did not have a positive learning opportunity. Why? The answer is simple; because the pre-service teachers writing the lesson did not know a single detail about the middle school students they were asked to teach.

By providing an opportunity for pre-service teachers to learn from real secondary students, I believe the quality of their lesson plans would improve because they would have a better handle on how their audience might react to certain activities or subject matters. It would be impossible for novice teachers to assume this information correctly without first-hand knowledge or experience. Again, as the narratives from Holly and Amy indicated, there is a limit to the range and scope of personal understanding pre-service teachers use to prepare for field experiences. By providing pre-service teachers the opportunity to work directly with students early in their training program, the pre-service teacher will approach lesson planning with a broader understanding of how his or her efforts may fare in front of a large group of students.

### *For Future Research*

In considering ideas for future research, I believe there are strands present throughout this research report that could easily expand into the work of countless researchers from this point forward. However, to focus these ideas into manageable terms, I would like to focus on three areas that continually presented themselves throughout the discussions contained chapter five of this report. In doing so, it is not my intent to limit the future adventures of educational researchers who follow me. I am only offering a sketched roadmap for those willing to take the first steps in their own journey.

The common themes in this study dealt primarily with the concerns of the participants in terms of making a major transition in their lives. These fears and uncertainties were tied to several aspects of the teaching profession, but one element in particular, the interpersonal element, as it pertains to communicating with students, seems to be absent from the experiences of the three pre-service teacher participants of this study. A broader study, perhaps one that included more participants from a wider range of institutions, that investigated the way in which colleges of education address and develop these interpersonal communication skills would further benefit this discussion.

Secondly, throughout several instances in this study, it was observed that the Rose's experiences as a non-traditional student varied greatly from those of Amy and Holly. While there may be a well-established record of research that studies the plight of non-traditional undergraduate students, I believe there might be more to discuss in this line of thought as it pertains to non-traditional undergraduates who are seeking licensure to teach in a secondary school. With the popularity of alternative licensure programs now capturing the attentions of colleges of education across the United States, I sense that this is one area that could serve as an interesting field for future study. It would be particularly beneficial to this discussion in there were more research documenting the alternative methods utilized by colleges of education that both recognize and benefit from the life experiences these non-traditional students bring with them as they return to college to receive licensure.

Finally, within the field of discursive studies, there is a need for more investigation into the discourse communities that exist within secondary public schools. Research in this particular area of discursive studies that better defines these types of communities that exist among the

faculty of public schools could assist teacher educators in developing transformative programs that better prepare pre-service teachers to take on the role of a professional teacher.

## **Conclusion**

Just as my career in education began with a story, so too have the careers of the three participants in this research report. As the narrative lives of Holly, Amy, and Rose unfolded throughout this research report, it is clear that one will have to face many daunting challenges on their journey to become a professional teacher. The struggles these three participants faced throughout the inquiry period were both internal and external. And, as they attempted to negotiate the challenges they faced, they learned a great deal about themselves and about the types of students they will encounter as student-teachers and as teachers themselves one day.

Rose, Amy, and Holly are reflective people who recognize that they have a great deal to learn about being a teacher. They also know they will face many challenges along the way. But, as the stories within this project have indicated several times over, each has identified her own way to deal with those challenges when they arrive. As they develop her expectations and understandings of students, they, in turn, will develop better strategies to address the concerns of their students. If this project has said anything, it is that experience is the best teacher when preparing novice teachers for the demands of the real world that exists beyond college.

With varied experiences, the participants in this study indicated that they could not possibly make their transition into the profession without the help of seasoned veterans, knowledgeable supervisors, and encouraging mentors who could show them how to best apply their personal experiences. As the trend in teacher education takes on a field experience centered approach to preparing tomorrow's teachers, it is now the duty of teacher educators at all levels to provide the guidance necessary for all pre-service teachers, no matter their age or life stage, toward the path of success.

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## Appendix A - IRB Approval Notification and Application



University Research  
Compliance Office  
203 Fairchild Hall  
Lower Manhattan  
Manhattan, KS 66506-1100  
785-532-0224  
Fax: 785-532-0270  
<http://urco.ksu.edu>

TO: F. Todd Goodson  
Secondary Education  
349 Blumont

Proposal Number: 4824

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair  
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: November 25, 2008

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Examining Undergraduates' Analysis of High School Students' Literacy."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."**

APPROVAL DATE: November 25, 2008

EXPIRATION DATE: November 25, 2009

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "continuing review" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. **If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.**

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

- There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.  
 There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCCO.

<b>FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:</b> IRB Protocol # _____	Application Received: _____
Routed: _____	Training Complete: _____

**Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB)**  
 Application for Approval Form  
 Last revised on March 2007

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:**

- **Title of Project:** (if applicable, use the exact title listed in the grant/contract application)  
 Examining Undergraduates' Analysis of High School Students' Literacy
  
- **Type of Application:**  
 New, Addendum/Modification,
  
- **Principal Investigator:** (must be a KSU faculty member)
 

<b>Name:</b>	F. Todd Goodson	<b>Degree/Title:</b>	Ph.D.
<b>Department:</b>	Secondary Education	<b>Campus Phone:</b>	532-5898
<b>Campus Address:</b>	Bluemont Hall	<b>Fax #:</b>	532-7304
<b>E-mail</b>	tgoodson@ksu.edu		
  
- **Contact Name/Email/Phone for Questions/Problems with Form:** Principal Investigator
  
- **Does this project involve any collaborators not part of the faculty/staff at KSU?** (projects with non-KSU collaborators may require additional coordination and approvals):  
 No
  
- **Project Classification** (Is this project part of one of the following?):  
 Faculty Research (Dissertation)
  
- **Please attach a copy of the Consent Form:**  
 Copy attached
  
- **Funding Source:** Internal External (identify source and attach a copy of the sponsor's grant application or contract as submitted to the funding agency)  
 Not applicable
  
- **Based upon criteria found in 45 CFR 46 – and the overview of projects that may qualify for exemption explained at <http://www.ksu.edu/research/comply/irb/about/exempt.html>, I believe that my project using human subjects should be determined by the IRB to be exempt from IRB review:**  
 NO

Last revised on March 2007



Yes (If yes, please complete application **including** Section XII. C. 'Exempt Projects'; remember that only the IRB has the authority to determine that a project is exempt from IRB review)

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu)

## Human Subjects Research Protocol Application Form

The KSU IRB is required by law to ensure that all research involving human subjects is adequately reviewed for specific information and is approved prior to inception of any proposed activity. Consequently, it is important that you answer all questions accurately. If you need help or have questions about how to complete this application, please call the Research Compliance Office at 532-3224, or e-mail us at [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu).

Please provide the requested information in the shaded text boxes. The shaded text boxes are designed to accommodate responses within the body of the application. As you type your answers, the text boxes will expand as needed. After completion, print the form and send the original and one photocopy to the Institutional Review Board, Room 203, Fairchild Hall.

Principal Investigator:	F. Todd Goodson
Project Title:	Examining Undergraduates' Analysis of High School Students' Literacy
Date:	July 30, 2008

**NON-TECHNICAL SYNOPSIS** (brief narrative description of proposal easily understood by nonscientists):

The present study seeks to examine undergraduates' thinking processes as they gain familiarity with the reading and writing skills of high school students. Undergraduate students involved in the study will be students enrolled in the section of EDSEC 500/520 for prospective English/Language Arts teachers in secondary schools. This proposal seeks consent to utilize materials students generate as part of their participation in the course and treat those materials as data. Additionally, the students who choose to participate in the study will be interviewed at several points during the semester.

**I. BACKGROUND** (concise narrative review of the literature and basis for the study):

Teacher educators are continuously looking for ways to infuse teacher reflection into the teacher education process (Carter, 2007; Varga, Koszo, Mayer & Sleurs, 2007; Squire 2003). Within in the teaching community this reflection is often referred to as teacher research (Chandler-Olcott, 2002; Rock & Levin, 2002; Falk, 2004; Capobianco, Horowitz, Canuel-Browne, & Trimarchi, 2004). One critical aspect of acquiring this aspect of reflection at the secondary level is by identifying the literacy levels of individual students (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Stevens & Bean, 2007; Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). Though reflective practice is considered one of the more important characteristics of effective teachers, reflective practices are not often taught in undergraduate teacher training programs (Myers, 2003).

**II. PROJECT/STUDY DESCRIPTION** (please provide a concise narrative description of the proposed activity in terms that will allow the IRB or other interested parties to clearly understand what it is that you propose to do that involves human subjects. This description must be in enough detail so that IRB members can make an informed decision about proposal).

As part of EDSEC 500/520 students are required by the program to engage in field experiences in local schools. The section of EDSEC 500/520 for English/Language Arts requires students, as part of this field experience, to conduct a case study of an individual high school student. This is an existing requirement serving purely pedagogical means. This proposal seeks authorization to examine the projects submitted by students as data for research purposes. Further, this research initiative would go beyond the teaching processes by conducting interviews with the students in EDSEC 500/520 (who agree to participate in the further examination of the data collected).

**III. OBJECTIVE** (briefly state the objective of the research – what you hope to learn from the study):

The objective of this study is to investigate the thought processes of pre-service teachers as they engage in the research and reflection process/creating detailed case studies of high school students.

**IV. DESIGN AND PROCEDURES** (succinctly outline formal plan for study):

A. Location of study: Junction City High School

B. Variables to be studied:	Reflective thinking process of pre-service teachers as they develop expectations for students' literacy skills
C. Data collection methods: (surveys, instruments, etc – PLEASE ATTACH)	Observations, focus group transcripts, interviews, student (both undergraduate and high school) work samples
D. List any factors that might lead to a subject dropping out or withdrawing from a study. These might include, but are not limited to emotional or physical stress, pain, inconvenience, etc.:	The primary concerns are likely to be time constraints. Also, as the students will be enrolled in a university course during the study, this could lead to the perception that participation (or lack thereof) could affect their course grades. This will be mitigated in two ways. First, the students will receive assurances this will not be the case. Second, the actual research will be gathered by a GTA not involved in the assignment of course grades.
E. List all biological samples taken: (if any)	N/A
F. Debriefing procedures for participants:	Separate debriefing sessions for the undergraduate students to be offered at the conclusion of the study.

V. **RESEARCH SUBJECTS:**

A. Source:	--Undergraduate students enrolled in EDSEC 500/520: Teaching Methods in Secondary English/Language Arts
B. Number:	--10-15 undergraduate students
C. Characteristics: (list any unique qualifiers desirable for research subject participation)	--All students enrolled in EDSEC 500 /520 will be invited to participate.
D. Recruitment procedures: (Explain how do you plan to recruit your subjects? Attach any fliers, posters, etc. used in recruitment. If you plan to use any inducements, ie. cash, gifts, prizes, etc., please list them here.)	

VI. **RISK – PROTECTION – BENEFITS:** The answers for the three questions below are central to human subjects research. You must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to research participants, protection strategies, and anticipated benefits to participants or others.

A. <b>Risks for Subjects:</b> (Identify any reasonably foreseeable physical, psychological, or social risks for participants. State that there are "no known risks" if appropriate.)	No known risks
B. <b>Minimizing Risk:</b> (Describe specific measures used to minimize or protect subjects from anticipated risks.)	N/A
C. <b>Benefits:</b> (Describe any reasonably expected benefits for research participants, a class of participants, or to society as a whole.)	--The activities of the grant will extend somewhat the activities undergraduate students engage in as part of the field experience requirement for the teaching methods course. As such, it is possible the effect of those experiences could be enhanced.

In your opinion, does the research involve **more than minimal risk** to subjects? ("Minimal risk" means that "the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

No

**VII. CONFIDENTIALITY:** Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that an individual has disclosed to you in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Consequently, it is your responsibility to protect information that you gather from human research subjects in a way that is consistent with your agreement with the volunteer and with their expectations. If possible, it is best if research subjects' identity and linkage to information or data remains unknown.

Explain how you are going to protect confidentiality of research subjects and/or data or records. Include plans for maintaining records after completion.

**Participants will be assign code names, and only the code names will be used when data is transcribed. The data will be kept locked securely and maintained.**

**VIII. INFORMED CONSENT:** Informed consent is a critical component of human subjects research – it is your responsibility to make sure that any potential subject knows exactly what the project that you are planning is about, and what his/her potential role is. (There may be projects where some forms of "deception" of the subject is necessary for the execution of the study, but it must be carefully justified to and approved by the IRB). A schematic for determining when a waiver or alteration of informed consent may be considered by the IRB is found at <http://www.ksu.edu/research/comply/irb/images/slide1.jpg> and at <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#46.116>. Even if your proposed activity does qualify for a waiver of informed consent, you must still provide potential participants with basic information that informs them of their rights as subjects, i.e. explanation that the project is research and the purpose of the research, length of study, study procedures, debriefing issues to include anticipated benefits, study and administrative contact information, confidentiality strategy, and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty, etc. Even if your potential subjects are completely anonymous, you are obliged to provide them (and the IRB) with basic information about your project. See informed consent example on the URCO website at <http://www.ksu.edu/research/comply/irb/app.html>). It is a federal requirement to maintain informed consent forms for 3 years after the study completion.

Yes	No	Answer the following questions about the informed consent procedures.
x		a. Are you using a written informed consent form? If "yes," include a copy with this application. If "no" see b.  Yes
	x	b. In accordance with guidance in 45 CFR 46, I am requesting a waiver or alteration of informed consent elements (See Section VII above). If "yes," provide a basis and/or justification for your request.  No
	x	c. Are you using the online Consent Form Template provided by the URCO? If "no," does your Informed Consent document has all the minimum required elements of informed consent found in the Consent Form Template? (Please explain)  Yes
	x	d. Are your research subjects anonymous? If they are anonymous, you will not have access to any information that will allow you to determine the identity of the research subjects in your study, or to link research data to a specific individual in any way. Anonymity is a powerful protection for potential research subjects. (An anonymous subject is one whose identity is unknown even to the researcher, or the data or information collected cannot be linked in any way to a specific person).

	No
x	e. Are subjects debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research? Debriefing refers to a mechanism for informing the research subjects of the results or conclusions, after the data is collected and analyzed, and the study is over. (If "no" explain why.)
	Yes

\* It is a requirement that you maintain all signed copies of informed consent documents for at least 3 years following the completion of your study. These documents must be available for examination and review by federal compliance officials.

**IX. PROJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- |            |           |  |
|------------|-----------|--|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Does the project involve any of the following?</b>  |
|            | No        | a. Deception of subjects   |
|            | No        | b. Shock or other forms of punishment  |
|            | No        | c. Sexually explicit materials or questions about sexual orientation, sexual experience or sexual abuse            |
|            | No        | d. Handling of money or other valuable commodities   |
|            | No        | e. Extraction or use of blood, other bodily fluids, or tissues   |
|            | No        | f. Questions about any kind of illegal or illicit activity   |
|            | No        | g. Purposeful creation of anxiety  |
|            | No        | h. Any procedure that might be viewed as invasion of privacy   |
|            | No        | i. Physical exercise or stress   |
|            | No        | j. Administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects  |
|            | No        | k. Any procedure that might place subjects at risk   |
|            | No        | l. Any form of potential abuse; i.e., psychological, physical, sexual  |
|            | Yes       | m. Is there potential for the data from this project to be published in a journal, presented at a conference, etc? |
|            | Yes       | n. Use of surveys or questionnaires for data collection  |
|            |           | <b>IF YES, PLEASE ATTACH!!</b>   |

**X. SUBJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- |            |           |   |
|------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Does the research involve subjects from any of the following categories?</b> |
|            | Yes       | a. Under 18 years of age (these subjects require parental or guardian consent)  |
|            | No        | b. Over 65 years of age   |
|            | No        | c. Physically or mentally disabled  |
|            | No        | d. Economically or educationally disadvantaged                                  |
|            | No        | e. Unable to provide their own legal informed consent                           |
|            | No        | f. Pregnant females as target population  |
|            | No        | g. Victims  |

- No h Subjects in institutions (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses)
- Yes i. Are research subjects in this activity students recruited from university classes or volunteer pools? If so, do you have a reasonable alternative(s) to participation as a research subject in your project, i.e., another activity such as writing or reading, that would serve to protect students from unfair pressure or coercion to participate in this project? If you answered this question "Yes," explain any alternatives options for class credit for potential human subject volunteers in your study.  
Those who choose not to participate will complete the required assignments, but their reflections and comments will not be considered as data in this study. See comments above regrading this matter.
- Yes j. Are research subjects **audio** taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?  
The audio tapes will be backed up and stored in locked cabinets.
- Yes k. Are research subjects **video** taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?  
The videotapes will be backed up and stored in a locked cabinet.

**XI. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** Concerns have been growing that financial interests in research may threaten the safety and rights of human research subjects. Financial interests are not in them selves prohibited and may well be appropriate and legitimate. Not all financial interests cause Conflict of Interest (COI) or harm to human subjects. However, to the extent that financial interests may affect the welfare of human subjects in research, IRB's, institutions, and investigators must consider what actions regarding financial interests may be necessary to protect human subjects. Please answer the following questions:

- Yes No
- No a. Do you or the institution have any proprietary interest in a potential product of this research, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, or licensing agreements?
- No b. Do you have an equity interest in the research sponsor (publicly held or a non-publicly held company)?
- No c. Do you receive significant payments of other sorts, eg., grants, equipment, retainers for consultation and/or honoraria from the sponsor of this research?
- No d. Do you receive payment per participant or incentive payments?
- No e. If you answered yes on any of the above questions, please provide adequate explanatory information so the IRB can assess any potential COI indicated above.

**XII. PROJECT COLLABORATORS:**

**A. KSU Collaborators – list anyone affiliated with KSU who is collecting or analyzing data:** (list all collaborators on the project, including co-principal investigators, undergraduate and graduate students)

Name:	Department:	Campus Phone:
Matthew Skillen	Secondary Education	532-3597
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**B. Non-KSU Collaborators:** (List all collaborators on your human subjects research project not affiliated with KSU in the spaces below. KSU has negotiated an Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP),

the federal office responsible for oversight of research involving human subjects. When research involving human subjects includes collaborators who are not employees or agents of KSU the activities of those unaffiliated individuals may be covered under the KSU Assurance only in accordance with a formal, written agreement of commitment to relevant human subject protection policies and IRB oversight. The Unaffiliated Investigators Agreement can be found and downloaded at (<http://www.ksu.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/invagree.pdf>). The URCO must have a copy of the Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement on file for each non-KSU collaborator who is not covered by their own IRB and assurance with OHRP. Consequently, it is critical that you identify non-KSU collaborators, and initiate any coordination and/or approval process early, to minimize delays caused by administrative requirements.)

Name:	Organization:	Phone:

**Does your non-KSU collaborator's organization have an Assurance with OHRP?** (for Federalwide Assurance and Multiple Project Assurance (MPA) listings of other institutions, please reference the OHRP website under Assurance Information at: <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm> ).

No

Yes If yes, Collaborator's FWA or MPA #  N/A

**Is your non-KSU collaborator's IRB reviewing this proposal?**

No

Yes If yes, IRB approval #  N/A

C. **Exempt Projects:** 45 CFR 46 identifies six categories of research involving human subjects that may be exempt from IRB review. The categories for exemption are listed on the KSU research involving human subjects home page at <http://www.ksu.edu/research/comply/irb/about/exempt.html>. If you believe that your project qualifies for exemption, please indicate which exemption category applies (1-6). Please remember that only the IRB can make the final determination whether a project is exempt from IRB review, or not.

Exemption Category: \_\_\_\_\_

XIII. **CLINICAL TRIAL** No  
(If so, please give product.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Post Approval Monitoring:** The URCO has a Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) program to help assure that activities are performed in accordance with provisions or procedures approved by the IRB. Accordingly, the URCO staff will arrange a PAM visit as appropriate; to assess compliance with approved activities.

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu)

**INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**  
(Print this page separately because it requires a signature by the PI.)

PI. Name: F. Todd Goodson

Title of Project: Examining Undergraduates' Analysis of High School Students' Literacy

**XII. ASSURANCES:** As the Principal Investigator on this protocol, I provide assurances for the following:

**A. Research Involving Human Subjects:** This project will be performed in the manner described in this proposal, and in accordance with the Federalwide Assurance FWA00000865 approved for Kansas State University available at <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm#FWA>, applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. Any proposed deviation or modification from the procedures detailed herein must be submitted to the IRB, and be approved by the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) prior to implementation.

**B. Training:** I assure that all personnel working with human subjects described in this protocol are technically competent for the role described for them, and have completed the required IRB training modules found at: <http://www.ksu.edu/research/comply/irb/training/index.html>. I understand that no proposals will receive final IRB approval until the URCO has documentation of completion of training by all appropriate personnel.

**C. Extramural Funding:** If funded by an extramural source, I assure that this application accurately reflects all procedures involving human subjects as described in the grant/contract proposal to the funding agency. I also assure that I will notify the IRB/URCO, the KSU PreAward Services, and the funding/contract entity if there are modifications or changes made to the protocol after the initial submission to the funding agency.

**D. Study Duration:** I understand that it is the responsibility of the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) to perform continuing reviews of human subjects research as necessary. I also understand that as continuing reviews are conducted, it is my responsibility to provide timely and accurate review or update information when requested, to include notification of the IRB/URCO when my study is changed or completed.

**E. Conflict of Interest:** I assure that I have accurately described (in this application) any potential Conflict of Interest that my collaborators, the University, or I may have in association with this proposed research activity.

**F. Adverse Event Reporting:** I assure that I will promptly report to the IRB / URCO any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others that involve the protocol as approved.

**G. Accuracy:** I assure that the information herein provided to the Committee for Human Subjects Research is to the best of my knowledge complete and accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal Investigator Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)



**"Examining Undergraduate's Analysis of High School Students' Literacy"  
Informed Consent**

**What we are Studying**

The goal of every teacher educator is to help develop reflective teacher candidates who care deeply about improving their practice. In reflecting upon their practice, many professional educators often complete some form of teacher research. Teacher researchers in the field of language arts often focus upon are the literacy levels of those enrolled in his or her classes. In analyzing the literacy levels and abilities of their students, language arts teachers use a set of self-determined values. And, it is theorized that these expectations are formed well before a teacher takes his or her first job in public education. This study has set out to investigate the values and expectations that undergraduate preservice teachers have developed and how they apply these expectations in a field experience.

**Participation: What to Expect**

Throughout the semester in EDSEC 500/540, each student will participate in a number of arranged field experiences at Junction City High School (JCHS). From these experiences, each undergraduate student will compose written reflections and debrief with the researcher in a focus group setting upon what they have learned from working with the high school students at JCHS. Additionally, each enrolled undergraduate will complete a case study using the information he or she collects from the high school student at JCHS that he or she has worked with throughout the course of the four field experiences.

Those who choose to participate in this study will be required to do nothing more beyond the requirements of this course. However, their written reflections, comments made during the debriefing sessions, and the case study they complete will be analyzed for the study described above.

Choosing not to participate will have no ill-effect on your grade for this course.

**Privacy**

Every effort will be made to maintain each participant's privacy. If you choose to participate, your name will never appear in a manuscript or formal analysis. Every focus group recording will be stored in a locked cabinet and an alias will be assigned to each participant in transcribed data.

**Right of Refusal**

If at any time throughout the inquiry period you feel as though you would like to be removed from the study, you may do so by contacting the researcher directly. All records and data collected from you will be disregarded from the study.

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact:

Dr. F. Todd Goodson, Faculty Researcher  
359 Bluemont Hall  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66505  
(785)532-5898

Rick Scheidt, IRB Committee Chair  
203 Fairchild Hall  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66508  
(785) 532-3224

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name

**"Examining Undergraduate's Analysis of High School Students' Literacy"  
Secondary Subject Informed Consent**

**What we are Studying**

The goal of every teacher educator is to help develop reflective teacher candidates who care deeply about improving their practice. In reflecting upon their practice, many professional educators often complete some form of teacher research. Teacher researchers in the field of language arts often focus upon are the literacy levels of those enrolled in his or her classes. In analyzing the literacy levels and abilities of their students, language arts teachers use a set of self-determined values. And, it is theorized that these expectations are formed well before a teacher takes his or her first job in public education. This study has set out to investigate the values and expectations that undergraduate preservice teachers have developed and how they apply these expectations in a field experience.

**Participation: What to Expect**

As part of their established program of study, undergraduates majoring in English Education enroll in EDSEC 500 Secondary Teaching Methods in English, Journalism, and Speech/Theatre. Throughout the semester in EDSEC 500, each college undergraduate student will participate in a number of arranged field experiences at Junction City High School (JCHS). While at JCHS, the undergraduate students will mentor and tutor JCHS high school students during Seminar period. From these experiences, each undergraduate student will compose written reflections and debrief with the researcher in a focus group setting upon what they have learned from working with the high school students at JCHS. Additionally, each enrolled undergraduate will complete a case study using the information he or she collects from the high school student at JCHS that he or she has worked with throughout the course of the four field experiences.

**Privacy**

Every effort will be made to maintain each participant's privacy. If you choose to participate, your name will never appear in a manuscript or formal analysis. Every focus group recording will be stored in a locked cabinet and an alias will be assigned to each participant in transcribed data.

**Right of Refusal**

If at any time throughout the inquiry period you feel as though you would like to be removed from the study, you may do so by contacting the researcher directly. All records and data collected from you will be disregarded from the study.

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact:

Dr. F. Todd Goodson, Faculty Researcher  
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(785)532-5898

Rick Scheidt, IRB Committee Chair  
203 Fairchild Hall  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66506  
(785) 532-3224

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

Printed name

Date

Parent Signature

Parent Name

## **Debriefing Meeting Tentative Outline**

Discuss the collected data.

Discuss general themes gleaned from the data.

Discuss the results and implications of the study.

Questions and closing comments

## Appendix B - Individual Interview Protocol

Research Question: How do pre-service teachers develop their expectations of high school students' literacies?

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Questions:

1. What stands out to you as one of the best experiences so far in your teaching career?
2. What initially inspired you to become a teacher?
3. Why did you choose language arts as your primary field of study in your teacher training?
4. Tell me about your greatest accomplishment as a student.
5. Tell me about a setback you have experienced as a student.
6. How have these experiences prepared you to become a teacher?
7. Who, in your experience, stands out as a model you would like to emulate in your own practice? Why is he or she a model to you?
8. In your own words, what does *literacy* mean?
9. In your opinion, what should high schools students be able to read?
10. Do you believe you are equipped to help a struggling reader?
11. What do you wish you had more training on at this point in your education?

## **Appendix C - Focus Group Interview Protocol**

Research Question: How do pre-service teachers develop their expectations of high school students' literacies?

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewees:

Questions:

What about your field experience during this course will help you as a practicing teacher?

Tell me about one thing that surprised you during your field experience.

When working with the high school students, did you base your instructional strategies on prior experiences, or did you attempt to apply methods discussed one of your college classes?

Did your high school student provide you with any surprising information about him or herself?

Do you believe this experience will be applicable to your development as a practicing teacher?

Do you believe your work with the high school student made an impact in his or her development as a reader or writer?

What would do differently if encounter a similar student in the future?

## Appendix D - Case Study Guide: Section I

### Session One: The Back Story

Today we want to learn as much as we can about the student's background. We want to get to know this student as a human being. As you conduct the interview, collect as much information as you can about the student, his or her life inside and outside of school. The questions below should be use as a guide for the interview.

Tell me about your family.

Where did you live before you lived here?

How many different schools have you attended?

Which school was your favorite? Why?

Which school was your least favorite? Why?

What courses are you enrolled in?

Which academy are you in? Why?

Did you get to pick the academy you are in?

How much homework is typically assigned by your teachers?

Do you typically turn in all of your homework? Why?

Are you doing as well as you think you could do in school?

Do you think you are a good student?

Tell me about your favorite teacher. Why is he/she your favorite?

If you had to spend the next week learning something, what would you like to learn about?

What do you like to do in your spare time with your friends?

Do you have any hobbies?

What would like to do after high school?

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? 20 years?

## Appendix E - Limited Case Study Guide: Section II

### Session Two: The Reading Biography

Today we are going to compile the student's reading history. The questioning scheme is set up to collect as much information as possible about what the student's experiences with reading. The questions below are to be used as guide to conduct the interview. Gather as much information as you can.

- What does the word "reading" mean to you?
- Do you like to read? Why or why not?
- Do you like to read in groups? Why?
- Do you like to have others read aloud to you? Why?
- What was the first book you ever read by yourself?
- Have you read anything interesting lately? What was it?
- How much time do you spend reading each week?
- How often do you visit your school's library?
- Do you ever check books out from the library?
- About how many books do you own?
- What types of reading materials do you find boring?
- Use the attached grid and ask the student to place a check mark by the genres or topics he or she likes to read about.
- Do you read the newspaper?
- What sections of the newspaper do read most often?
- What magazines do you like to read?
- About how many hours of television do you watch each day?
- What is your favorite show on TV?
- Name the two best movies you have ever seen.
- Who are your favorite celebrities.
- Why are they your favorite?

Reading Inventory adapted from:  
Hildebrandt, D. (2001). But there's nothing good to read (in the library media center).  
*Media Spectrum: The Journal for Library Media Specialists in Michigan*.  
Fall 2001, p. 34-37.

## **Appendix F - Limited Case Study: Section III**

### **Session Three: The Writing Biography**

Today you will collect as much information as you can about the student's attitude toward writing. The questions below are to be used as guide during the conversation with your student. Collect as much data as you can.

Do you like to draw? What are some of your favorite objects to draw?

Do you draw during class?

When you are asked by one of your teachers to write a paper, describe for me how you complete the assignment. What are the steps in the process you use to complete a writing assignment?

Who typically edits your writing before you turn it in?

Do you edit other students' writing before they turn their work in?

Do you enjoy writing? Why or why not?

Do you typically find it easy or difficult to start writing? Why do you feel this way?

Is there a particular style of writing you like to use?

Have you ever attempted to write poetry or song lyrics? Did you like it?

Have you ever thought about writing a short story or a novel?

Would you rather write with by hand with a pen or a pencil, or would you rather write using a computer? Why?

Can you think of a particular piece of writing that you are proud of? Tell me about it.

Is there a particular topic that you enjoy writing about?

Why do you enjoy writing about it?

Do you have a favorite author? Who is it?

Has anyone ever published a piece of your writing? Tell me about it.

Have you ever had to write a script for a play or a skit in class? What was it?