

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LITERACY COACHING:  
A CASE STUDY OF KINDERGARTEN, FIRST, AND SECOND GRADE  
BALANCED LITERACY INSTRUCTION

by

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B.S., University of Kansas, 1969  
M. S., University of Oklahoma, 1974

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

2008

## **Abstract**

To become lifelong readers, young children require instruction from teachers who integrate their knowledge of the reading process and expert instructional skills to support students' progress in reading and writing. These teachers are entitled to support from professional development to assist their implementing instructional approaches, which lead to student achievement.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe the impact of a year long balanced literacy professional development on 13 K-2 teachers and their students. The study focuses on the potential impact of ongoing professional development and literacy coaching. Participants engaged in study sessions to expand their understanding of literacy learning processes, to read recent reading research, and to implement guided reading instruction. Three of the participants allowed me to act as their literacy coach in their K-2 classrooms.

Results of this study suggest that participating teachers made changes in instructional practices, which aligned with balanced literacy practices. The three teachers who worked with me as their literacy coach expressed positive impacts from the opportunities to collaborate in their classrooms with a coach. Results of the study reflect differences in teachers' responses to professional development and to literacy coaching. Even with trusting relationships, not all teachers became reflective or analytical.

The findings of this study confirm and support the literature and research that show the literacy goals of all children can be met through a balanced literacy approach to instruction

which is designed and guided by focused and sustained professional development to deepen teachers' understandings.

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I thank all the students in my life. You move me to be the teacher you deserve.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the people who inspire me to be the best I can be in whatever I choose to attempt.

This is dedicated to my grandfathers, George Christy and Fred Puckett.

This is dedicated to my parents, Dale and Margaret Ann Puckett.

This is dedicated to our children and grandchildren.

This is dedicated to my husband, Ron.

## **Preface**

The degree to which I can create relationships which facilitate the growth of others is a measure of the growth I have achieved in myself.

Carl Rogers (1961)



## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

In many ways, this research project reflects a collage of teaching and learning experiences from my life. In first grade, I sat in a circle with my teacher and seven other members of Group One anticipating the page I was appointed to read to learn more about Spot and Sally (Gray, Artley, & Arbuthnot, 1951). On Friday the first week in my teaching career, I choked back tears of helplessness as thirty, beautiful, eager faces watched me. My classroom had no textbooks, no paper, no pencils, but there was a meager school library. *Tikki Tikki Tembo* (Mosel, 1968) with its great opportunities for hearing and playing with book language helped us begin learning to read, while Mother Goose, jump rope chants, and lyrics to children's songs substituted for published reading materials. Over the years in first grade classrooms, I sifted and sorted through numerous reading programs. Being part of a pilot program for the Sullivan Reading program ("An Evaluation of the Sullivan Reading Program," 1969) was unforgettable: "Pat the fat cat, Nat." For my teaching and for my students, we always progressed more successfully in literacy learning when we used our language and our experiences as the framework for reading and writing. However, there were two or three students in my classrooms who didn't easily learn to process text. Already in first grade, they were lagging behind their peers and too often sent off to remedial and special education programs.

From my professional reading, I learned about Marie Clay, a New Zealand professor interested in children's literacy development and her early literacy intervention program, Reading Recovery® (1993). Reading Recovery is a short-term intervention designed to support classroom instruction for the lowest-achieving children in the first grade who are struggling with learning to read and write (Schmitt, Askew, Fountas, Lyons, & Pinnell, 2005). Clay's (1996)

theory of the construction of an inner control of literacy behaviors compelled me to engage in training as a Reading Recovery teacher for those lowest-achieving first grade students in my school district. My Reading Recovery training empowered me to work more successfully with all children and to intervene with explicit instruction when I observed the literacy learning going astray. The teaching of children, the initial training, and the ongoing professional development of Reading Recovery impacted my knowledge and skills in understanding how to teach all children to read and write. Children who are struggling to learn to read and write deserve teachers who can make every effort possible to ensure their success.

To become lifelong readers, young children require instruction from teachers who integrate their knowledge of the reading process and expert instructional skills to support students' progress in reading and writing. Teachers deserve professional development to assist their implementing instructional approaches, which lead to student achievement. This case study examines the impact of participation in a yearlong professional development project on teaching and learning in the classrooms of three teachers.

The International Reading Association's (2000) *Excellent Reading Teachers: A* position statement of the International Reading Association declares that effective reading teachers are knowledgeable in ways to teach students to read and to understand how to analyze reading difficulties in order to meet individual needs. They understand how to scaffold students' learning while employing a variety of techniques, methods, and strategies. Effective teachers also have attributes of good teaching in general, such as effective teaching pedagogy, classroom management, assessment techniques, and knowledge of developmental spans of children, as well as access to and understanding of current research (Swan, 2003).

If there is to be a literate society, there must be teachers who know how to teach reading. "The quality of classroom instruction in the primary grades is the single best weapon against reading failure" (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998, p. 343). Teachers in schools that work well are involved in their own professional learning, and administrators in these schools provide the resources to nurture that learning (Langer, 2004). Darling-Hammond (2005) acknowledges that education systems in the United States produce some exciting innovations, but those innovations are not systemic approaches to the development of teacher knowledge and skill. She writes that many European and Asian nations that are considered peers and competitors of the United States provide resources for teachers to extend their expertise and for students' achievement to grow. She recommends building a policy infrastructure in the United States that will focus on effectively on improving the quality of teaching.

In an article discussing effective professional development, Thompson and Zeuli (1999) state that many education institutions recognize teachers need to make changes in deeply held beliefs, knowledge, and habits of practice. To support teachers making those changes, high-quality sources of professional development are needed (Bean, Eichelberger, Swan, & Tucker (1999). In *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* , a synthesis of knowledge about the effectiveness of early reading instruction and interventions, Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) emphasize "providing teachers with information about new instructional strategies does not necessarily result in changes in existing teaching behaviors" (p. 292).

The implementation of new teaching practices is more likely to succeed when teachers have support systems in place: administrative support, coaches, feedback, and time to plan, reflect, and assess their methods of teaching the new practice. Opportunities for planning and self-reflection are central to effective teaching. Initiatives, which offer time for colleague

collaboration, establish supportive communities of learners (Darling-Hammond, 1998). These opportunities help teachers examine, refine, and strengthen their knowledge and skills in reading instruction, which enable them to monitor and to self-regulate their instructional practices (Linek, Sampson, Raine, Klakamp, & Smith, 2006).

In a review on teacher change and implementation of new classroom practices, evidence indicates that collegial talk plays an important role as teachers attempt to make changes (Courtland, 1992). She finds projects that successfully support teacher change provide opportunities for reflection, opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, and time for sharing. Courtland also writes that professional development that focuses on teachers' current and emerging concerns, practice and theory, and teachers' stories of change assist implementation.

Implementing evidenced-based teaching practices is a priority of the No Child Left Behind legislation (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 [NCLB], 2002). No Child Left Behind is education reform designed to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps between regular education students, special needs students, minority students, and students from differing socio-economic backgrounds. With passage of NCLB, the United States Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which was the principal federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Evidence-based reading instruction promoted by NCLB means that a particular program of instructional practices has a record of success (International Reading Association, 2002).

NCLB is grounded in evidence provided by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). In 1997 a collaborative effort of the NICHD and the United States Department of Education created the National Reading Panel (NRP) to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the

effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read (NICHD, 2000). This panel took into account the work of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). NRP concluded that learning to read and instruction in reading are complex. In addition, the NRP determined that learning to read requires a combination of skills, including text reading comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and vocabulary (NICHD, 2002).

*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998) grew from a national concern that young citizens of the United States needed extensive literacy skills to compete in a growing technological workplace. The United State Department of Education and the National Academy of Sciences sponsored this major report on national literacy (Cowen 2003). The authors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* compiled successful teaching methods for children in preschool through Grade 3 (Pearson, 1999). Using this information, the NRP acknowledged high quality professional development as a critical part of effective instruction. Citing findings from the NRP, the United States Congress designed NCLB as education reform to improve student achievement through the implementation of effective instruction and to increase teacher accountability for student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, the report from the National Reading Panel, and the NCLB legislation all deal with concerns about early literacy instruction and how to improve it (Morrow, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2003).

The probability that a child who is a poor reader in the first grade will remain a poor reader at the end of the fourth grade is 88% (Juel, 1988). The work of Barr and Parrett (1995) stresses that all children need to learn to read successfully before the end of third grade. Cunningham and Stanovich's study (1998) links delayed development of reading skills to

difficulty acquiring vocabulary in reading. In the same study, Cunningham and Stanovich connect delayed reading acquisition to altered attitudes and motivation to read and missed opportunities to develop comprehension strategies. If children fall behind in early reading skills, they have fewer opportunities to practice reading (Torgesen, 2004). Recent evidence from the Torgesen, Rashotte, and Alexander study (2001) suggests that these lost practice opportunities make it extremely difficult for children who remain poor readers during the first three years of elementary school to ever acquire average levels of reading fluency. Children who are poor readers at the end of first grade almost never acquire average-level reading skills by the end of elementary school (Torgesen, 2004).

Connie Juel (1988) noted from her research on literacy development in children through fourth grade that a cycle for failure is evident:

Children who did not develop good word-recognition skill in first grade began to dislike reading and read considerably less than good readers, both in and out of school. They thus lost the avenue to develop vocabulary, concepts, ideas, and so on that is fostered by wide reading. This in turn may have contributed to the steadily widening gulf between the good and poor readers in reading comprehension and written stories (p. 445).

From an ongoing longitudinal study, Snow shares evidence of the positive effect of high-quality literacy and language instruction in early elementary school, especially for the most disadvantaged children (Snow, Dickinson, & Tabors, 2005). She maintains that literacy is a "prerequisite to the acquisition of new information and the formulation of new ideas" (p. 11). Snow writes that children who struggle with literacy tasks are unable to show their understanding of the content. From this study, she concludes that it is possible to find indicators for children's literacy success from their early home and school experiences.

This cycle illustrates what Stanovich (1986) calls the “Matthew Effect”. Stanovich creates an analogy from a Gospel according to St. Matthew, which infers: The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. Stanovich’s analogy describes the fact that without intervention, some students rapidly develop and build upon strong literacy foundations, and other less capable students lag behind their peers.

An investigation of balanced literacy instruction led to Snow and her colleagues (1998) to write in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*: “the focus of attention has shifted from the researchers’ theories and data back to the teacher, alone in her classroom with a heterogeneous group of children all awaiting their passports to literacy” (p. vi). Those “awaiting” children and their literacy teachers have been the subjects of many literacy research studies looking for what Spiegel (1998) calls the “silver bullet” in literacy instruction. Spiegel writes that state legislatures and school boards also search for the "silver bullet, *the answer to literacy education for all children* " (p. 114). Spiegel (1998) states that balanced literacy approaches meet the needs of most children because the approach is not restricted to one way of developing literacy and provides for children and teachers the best opportunities for success. David Pearson (1999) interprets the research findings in *Preventing Reading Difficulties* as support for a balanced approach to literacy. He writes, “Decoding is but one piece in a puzzle that can be completed only when the alphabetic code is interlocked with reading, writing, and comprehension foci” (p. 244).

Balanced literacy instruction is explained by Walker (2004) as “instruction that provides the proportion of skills, strategies, guided reading, and social interaction that supports learning” (p. 384). In *Apprenticeship in Literacy* (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998), a balanced reading program is described as a range of literacy activities, carefully selected materials for

each activity, and a responsive teacher who knows how to structure literacy interactions that move children to higher level of understanding. Spiegel (1998) defines a balanced approach to literacy development as a “decisions-making approach through which the teacher makes thoughtful choices each day about the best way to help each child become a better reading and writer” (p. 116).

After examining six major reading research studies in the United States from 1967 to 2000, Cowen (2003) synthesizes a definition of balanced literacy instruction:

A balanced reading approach is research-based, assessment-based, comprehensive, integrated, and dynamic, in that it empowers teachers and specialists to respond to the individual assessed literacy needs of children as they relate to their appropriate instructional and developmental levels of decoding, vocabulary, reading, comprehension, motivation, and socio-cultural acquisition, with the purpose of learning to read for meaning, understanding, and joy. (p. 10)

Pearson and Raphael (1999) discuss maintaining a balance between mandated, prescriptive skills instruction and the teaching of skills as teachable moments in texts and tasks. Au (2003) considers the balance between the mainstream language arts curriculum and the literacy needs of all children and argues that literacy instruction is more likely to be effective for all children when it is integrated into language-based instruction.

Balanced literacy instruction requires teachers to plan lessons based on systematic study of student needs, to think deeply about the on-the-run teaching decisions in the classroom, and to reflect on lessons in a purposeful and student-centered manner. To implement balanced literacy instruction, teacher learning is long-term, experientially based and dependent upon interactions with more capable others and colleagues. A balanced literacy learning environment



is replicated in the classrooms with students who are engage in authentic tasks, interact with more capable others, and participate in a community of learners (Stein & D'Amico, 2002).

Dixie Spiegel (1998) details three characteristics of a balanced approach to reading instruction that should form the foundation on which all beginning reading programs are developed. The approach:

- is built on research,
- views teachers as informed decision makers and therefore is flexible, and
- is built on a comprehensive view of literacy to meet the needs of all children.

To develop students' reading and writing through a balanced literacy approach, teachers must thoroughly examine their ideas about what it means to know and understand text, the kinds of tasks with which their students should be engaged, and how their roles in the classroom must change (Stein & D'Amico, 2002). For children to become successful readers and writers, their teachers must be knowledgeable about the literacy process and provide them with constructive reading and writing opportunities that guarantee their literacy acquisition (Dorn et al., 1998). To provide effective literacy instruction for students, teachers must participate in on-going professional development that helps them develop knowledge and skills directly applicable to the programs they implement daily in their classrooms. Sparks (2002) agrees that professional development needs to be embedded in the school day and sustained over time. Professional development experiences need to include opportunities for practice, research, and more practice.

To implement and sustain professional development programs, many schools employ literacy coaches (Bean, 2004). These coaches work with teachers to help with implementation efforts, to provide guidance and feedback that enables them to become more effective teachers.

The International Reading Association (2004) describes a reading coach as a staff member who provides ongoing consistent support for implementation and instruction components in a non-threatening and non-evaluative manner (p.2). Guidance for NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) classifies coaching as one of the "practices and strategies for professional development that should be evident in an effective reading program" (p.7). While working with teachers, coaches try to extend theoretical understandings of the literacy process and to improve student achievement by modeling and demonstrating instructional strategies that make differences in student gains. Coaching offers long-term follow-up, long-term consistency, and a sense of trust, which results in teachers transferring enhanced knowledge and skills into their classroom practices to the benefit of students' learning (Russo, 2004).

In *Stirring the Waters*, (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999) a collection of essays describing the influence of Marie Clay educational theories, the authors explain:

Good first teaching is not what happens when you adopt a particular reading program, no matter how good it is. Good first teaching means several years of high-quality instruction, intervention and extra support for those who need it and a range of supports such as quality material and professional development that that will help teachers to do their jobs better. (p. 184)

To implement a balanced literacy approach in instruction, attention focuses on teaching. Darling-Hammond (1996) reminds us that the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future concludes the teaching profession needs to be restructured in two directions: toward increasing teachers' knowledge to meet the demands of their roles and toward redesigning schools to support quality teaching and learning. The commission's plan aims at ensuring that all schools have teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable all children to learn. "If

a caring, qualified teacher for every child is the most important ingredient in educational reform, then it should no longer be the factor most frequently overlooked" (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 194).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In one Midwestern public school district, the first grade teachers used the Four-Blocks® Literacy Model originally designed by Cunningham, Hall, and Defee (1991). Jan Bowling (pseudonym), elementary curriculum director for this unified school district, explained that the decision to follow the Four-Blocks model came from administrative recommendations made about four years ago (Personal communication, March 8, 2006). District leaders wanted to have a more consistent, structured instructional model in primary classrooms throughout the eight elementary schools in the district. To begin implementation, district personnel presented the approach to any teacher who wanted to participate. Participation was not required. Furthermore, the district did not offer any follow-up professional development in workshop sessions, in classroom demonstrations, or by coaching.

The Four-Blocks® literacy model was developed in a first-grade classroom to facilitate a shift from traditional ability-grouped instruction (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005). Cunningham and her colleagues believed balance in literacy instruction came from equal, daily implementation four key components: guided reading, self-selected reading, writing, and working with words (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005). Implementation of the Four-Blocks model requires that two basic principles must be followed. The first is 30 to 40 minutes must be set aside for each instructional component to insure that sufficient and "equal time to each block, which provides each child with the same opportunities to become literate, regardless of which approach is most compatible with their individual learning personalities"(Cunningham, Hall, &

Cunningham, 2000, p. 18). In *Guided Reading the Four Blocks Way* (Cunningham et al., 2000), the authors state, "Doing the Four-Blocks every day...is a simple matter of making a schedule and sticking to it" (p. 18). The second basic principle of the framework focuses on the importance of multilevel instruction. The authors state that multilevel instruction is possible through mixed ability grouping while adhering to the time structure of the framework and in self-selected reading the student chooses (Cunningham et al., 2000).

In this school district, the Four Blocks model was used with the district-wide reading adoption, Harcourt Collections (Farr, Strickland, & Beck, 2001). The Harcourt basal series was adopted six years ago by a vote of classroom teachers. The organization of the teaching material attracted the teachers and easily adapted to classroom instruction according to the curriculum director (Personal communication, March 8, 2006). Representatives of the publishing company provided professional development for the implementation of the series upon request by individual elementary schools.

In response to the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000), Harcourt Collections included the five essential elements of reading: comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. Harcourt represented its program as research-based, balanced, and comprehensive. The teachers' manuals contained sequential lessons which include teaching to the five essential elements, oral language experiences, varieties of literature at different instructional levels and genres, opportunities for writing in different context, and formal and informal assessment forms (Farr et al., 2001).

During the last four years of implementing the Four Blocks Model, the curriculum director noticed instructional gaps in K-2 classrooms. From her observations of classroom practices, Jan Bowling determined that a long-term professional development plan to establish

consistent literacy instruction across grades K-2 was needed (Personal communication, March 8, 2006). Some instructional issues, which were observed as needs were: classroom organization and management, small group instruction, assessment of students' needs and providing instruction for all children. She stated that the professional development topics offered by the district in recent years had been a "smorgasboard".

Allington and Cunningham (1996) discuss how any school wide literacy program will fail without ongoing professional development. Killion (2002) writes in *What Works in Elementary School: Results-Based Staff Development*, "Staff development that is coherent and sustained over time, focusing on student learning, engaging students, incorporating higher-order thinking, and building a learning- community produces greater results for educators and students" (p. 16). Effective professional development involves active learning for the teachers in order to create coherence to enhance knowledge and skills (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman,& Kwang, 2001).

A literacy project focusing on teachers' understanding and skills in literacy instruction and student learning would help to bring cohesion to the primary classrooms in the district, through the implementation of balanced literacy instruction. By actively engaging teachers in a professional book study, examining the framework for balanced literacy, and making connections to classroom practices with scaffolding from professional development and literacy coaching, it is hoped that positive impacts appear in teaching and learning in kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to observe and to describe changes in teachers' knowledge of the literacy process, literacy instruction, and student learning in one kindergarten

classroom, one first grade classroom, and one second grade classroom. In the study, I facilitated the district-wide balanced literacy professional development sessions for K-2 teachers who volunteered to participate. This professional development began with ten daily sessions of three hour durations for two weeks in June 2006 and continued to meet eight times throughout the school year. I also served as literacy coach to facilitate a shift to balanced literacy instruction in one kindergarten, one first grade classroom, and one second grade classroom during the 2006-2007 school year. This study also documented and described the impact of facilitating the professional development and acting as literacy coach upon my understandings and skills. As literacy coach, I provided sustained, on-site professional development modeling of instructional strategies, provided feedback to teachers, examined student work, analyzed data, and helped to create interventions for low-performing students. In the role of literacy coach, my stated purpose aligned with IRA's (2004) definition of a reading coach who provides additional support needed for teachers to implement various programs of practices.

Coaching involves guided participation, while classroom teachers observe the interactions between the coach and the students (Dorn et al., 1998). The opportunity to coach provided focused professional development, which aligned teacher learning to student learning embedded in daily practices (Killion, 2002). Teachers were prepared to try out the balanced literacy approach through a professional book study and a spiral of learning that includes demonstration, inquiry, reflection, and experimentation (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Fountas and Pinnell (1996) state that evidence from their research and their experience convinces them that the most effective ways to improve instruction is to develop teachers' conceptual understandings about the reading and writing processes. "And the most effective way to improve teachers' knowledge base, analytical skills, and expertise is through one-to-one coaching that is informed

and based on students' behaviors" (Rogers & Pinnell, 2002, p. 93). Garmston and Wellman (1999) note that there is growing support for coaching teachers in their practice as a powerful means to increase their knowledge and to improve their practice.

A literacy coach needs to be a reading specialist who has advanced knowledge and experience in literacy teaching (IRA, 2000). *In Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998), the authors acknowledge the importance of reading specialists in developing coherent, inclusive reading programs that meet the needs of all students. In response to a national survey (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2002), over 90% of reading specialists in the United States indicate that they are involved with instructing students on a daily basis and that they spend time daily serving as a resource to teachers. To enable reading specialists to be effective, they must have leadership experience empowered with communications skills (Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003).

To achieve the purpose of facilitating positive changes in teaching and learning, professional development and literacy coaching worked to scaffold teachers as they reflected on their own teaching and learning, transferring their knowledge and skills to improve student literacy. This study endeavored to work in a culture of learning where teachers were comfortable taking risks and becoming members of a supportive community focused on providing the best instruction for all students.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions form the basis of my research.

**What is the impact of a year long balanced literacy professional development plan on K-2 teachers and students?**

- 1. How does participation in the professional development impact K-2 teachers' understandings about literacy learning processes?**
- 2. How does participation in the professional development influence K-2 classroom instruction?**
- 3. How does teachers' participation in the professional development influence K-2 students' literacy learning?**
- 4. How do my roles as professional development facilitator and literacy coach influence my understandings of those positions?**

This research was a case study conducted in one kindergarten classroom, one first grade classroom and one second grade classroom during the 2006-2007 academic year. The focus described the response to professional development, as the three teachers implemented balanced literacy instruction. The questions considered the development of professional development for balanced literacy instruction and its influence upon teaching and learning. Evidence of the impact of teaching and learning was observed through:

- improved content knowledge in teaching reading;
- ability to design and implement lessons that reflect balanced literacy;
- ability to administer, interpret, and use authentic assessment results to meet the needs of all children;
- ability to organize and manage the classroom in ways that facilitate literacy growth for all children; and
- improved literacy learning among the kindergarten, first and second grade student



## **Limitations**

Qualitative research uses purposeful sampling. Creswell (2002) writes that in purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. To choose those individual or sites, researchers look for "information rich" opportunities (Creswell, 2002). The opportunity to work with three practicing kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers in actual classrooms provided an "information rich" context. The elementary curriculum director of the school district, Jan Bowling, recruited the kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers to participate in my research. These teachers agreed to participate and offered "information rich" opportunities to study the impact of the professional development. This may have been a limitation of my research. Allington (2006) warns that bias may be an issue when teachers volunteer for a study because they are eager to learn the content. He suggests that research such as mine presents a "best-case scenario - which is how the intervention works when teachers volunteer to try it" (p. 27).

A second limitation may have been related to the timeframe set by the academic year. The first time I was in the participants' classrooms was the beginning of the data collection and the 2006-2007 school year. Observing the teachers' literacy instruction prior to the balanced literacy professional development might have optimized the evidence for change in literacy instruction.

A third bias was my training and experience in meaning-centered literacy teaching and learning. To conduct this research, I had to maintain awareness of the balance between meaning-based and skills-based instruction. Krathwohl (1998) reminded me that my bias could be reduced through good training and regular supervisor checks for bias.

A fourth limitation of my study may be found in the attempt of another researcher in replicating the study. The experiences and areas of interest of each researcher influence the methodology and findings of the study. Variability with each researcher can be expected.

The last limitation relied upon me to reinforce and uphold the importance of theory development, modeling, low-risk practice, and support to increase the professional development's power. If the professional development plan was presented only as training for carrying out an instructional model, then the professional development will be compromised (Killion, 2003). To minimize the event of the balanced literacy professional development becoming just a training program without teachers investing effort and practice, I tried to present the content in a well-developed, logical manner, which enabled teachers to develop deep understanding. They had to integrate the information into their classrooms needs and experience low-risk practice with feedback from me for assistance if they requested it.

### **Definition of Terms**

For this study, *professional development* refers to activities designed by school leaders to improve and extend the knowledge and skills of educational professionals (United States Department of Education, 2001). This definition is extracted from 2001 NCLB legislation. It includes the condition that professional development is an integral part of a broad school-wide education plan which is high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and teacher performance. The influence of the conclusions of the authors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998) is obvious in the NCLB definition of professional development: "Ongoing support from colleagues and specialist, as well as regular opportunities for self-examination and reflections are critical components of the career-long development of excellent teachers" (p. 10).

Allington (2006) offers a simplified definition of professional development: "...expanding what teachers know" (p. 142).

*Balanced literacy* in this study refers to an instructional approach, which is research-based, guided by assessed needs, integrated across the curriculum, and flexible so that teachers can respond to the individual needs of each child in decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension in a socio-cultural setting with the purpose of empowering children to develop into lifelong readers. In the balanced literacy classroom, all the essentials noted in the above definition must be addressed, and the teacher must meet the demands of the society represented in the classroom. The definition reflects balance between reading and writing, between teacher-directed and student-centered activities, and between skill-based and meaning-based approaches to literacy instruction (Frey, Lee, Tollefson, Pass, & Massengill, 2005). A balanced literacy approach requires that teachers plan lessons based on systematic study of all student needs, think about moment-by-moment decisions in the classroom, and reflect on lessons in a productive and student-centered way (Stein & D'Amico, 2002).

The term *literacy coach* refers to my role in the case study. A literacy coach provides support to the teacher during the school day by modeling instructional strategies, providing feedback to teachers, examining student work, analyzing data, and helping to create interventions to struggling students. In a position statement, the International Reading Association (2004) describes a reading coach:

Coaching provides ongoing consistent support for implementation and instruction components. It is nonthreatening and supportive - not evaluative. It gives a sense of how good professional development is. It also affords the opportunity to see it work with students (p.2).

Lyons (2002) writes that coaching encourages a sense of cooperative partnership, which allows teachers to willingly extend their understanding by interacting with the thoughts and ideas of colleagues. That concept enriches the definition of coaching by including an interdependent relationship between the coach and teachers.

## **Summary**

Balanced literacy instruction presents an approach, based on current research in literacy learning and teaching, professional development, and literacy coaching that can provide opportunities for children to become life-long readers. When teachers implement a balanced literacy approach to literacy instruction, students learn at their appropriate instructional and developmental levels of decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension in a non-threatening environment.

This study has potential to build and refine knowledge of teachers of K-2 students in literacy learning. Teachers may request more professional development in the learning theories supporting balanced literacy, about the role of observation in assessing children's literacy learning, and about the significance of teachers as decision makers in designing effective literacy lessons. The greatest potential from this study is increased literacy achievement linked to improved classroom instruction for all students. This significance may be important in informing teacher education and staff development programs.

The findings of this study should confirm and support the literature and research that shows the literacy goals of all children can be met through a balanced literacy approach to instruction, which is designed and guided by focused and sustained professional development to deepen teachers' knowledge and skill.

## **CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

To meet literacy goals of all children through balanced literacy teaching, teachers must have opportunities to participate in high-quality, job-embedded professional development (Swan, 2003). There is considerable information about professional development for effective literacy teaching and learning. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a thorough review of relevant literature and research on professional development for effective teaching and learning in balanced literacy. This chapter is organized into the following sections: (1) balanced literacy approaches to literacy learning and research-based evidence for balanced classroom instruction, (2) theoretical issues of professional development for teaching and learning, (3) professional development for balanced literacy teaching and learning, and (4) coaching to assist teachers and to support the change to balanced literacy instruction.

### **Balanced Literacy**

The term balanced literacy originated in California (Honig, 1996). As a response to low reading scores on national assessments, the state implemented new curriculum named "balanced reading instruction". It focused on presenting skills-based teaching and meaning-based teaching during separate literacy blocks. The focus of the curriculum was the systematic and explicit teaching of phonics as a foundation for comprehension, as well as presenting literature-based experiences (Asselin, 1999).

Balanced literacy is often viewed in a comprehensive and complex way. It is a philosophical orientation that assumes reading and writing achievement are developed through instruction and support in multiple environments using various approaches that differ by levels

of teacher support and child control (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Balanced literacy programs include community, home, and library involvement as well as structured classroom plans and the use of activities such as read alouds, guided reading, shared reading, and independent reading and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Educational researchers in reading argue that a successful balanced literacy programs must combine a balance of teacher-directed instruction (including teacher modeling of skills, strategies, and processes) and student-centered activities (Snow et al., 1998). In addition, recent research indicates that essential components of literacy should reflect principles of effective learning and teaching (Pearson, 1999). Well-implemented balanced literacy programs must include elements of community, authenticity, integration, optimism, modeling, student control, and connectedness (Frey et al., 2005). To reach that goal, researchers suggest that teachers should:

- a) emphasize reading, writing, and literature by providing long, uninterrupted periods of successful reading every day;
- b) create a positive, reinforcing, cooperative environment in the classroom;
- c) set high but realistic expectations for all students; and
- d) integrate reading and writing thoroughly across the curriculum (Pressley & Allington, 1998).

There has been confusion and disagreement for years regarding the best way to teach children to read. The term "reading wars" is part of the debate on reading acquisition: the use of phonics (skills-based) versus whole language, meaning-based approaches (Snow et al., 1998). Those involved in the debate uphold the importance of promoting optimal literacy instruction for all children but cannot agree on the complex issues of teaching reading (Cowen, 2003).

The skills-based approach to reading was highly influenced by Chall (1967) who concluded there are "consistent and substantial advantages to programs that included systematic phonics". In skills-based instruction, phonics skills are taught in isolation with the expectation that once sound-letter relationships are learned, meaning will follow (Johnson, 1999). Emphasis is placed on intensive phonics instruction that is highly sequenced. Children learn letter-sound relationships by sounding out words. They learn letter sounds, consonant blends, and long and short vowels. This approach uses reading programs that offer stories with controlled vocabulary made of letter-sound relationships and words with which children are already familiar. Writing instruction follows the same procedure. Children are asked to write only after having achieved mastery in basic spelling skills or when a correct model is provided for them to copy (Johnson, 1999).

In contrast, the meaning-based approach to reading is supported by Goodman (2005) who asserts that readers rely more on the structure and meaning of language rather than on the graphic information from the text. He believes that literacy development parallels language development. Another advocate for a meaning-based approach to reading is Constance Weaver (2002) who writes, "reading means constructing meaning, and using everything you know in order to do it". Weaver's statement is reflected in seven theoretical principles of literacy learning upheld by Marie Clay (1991):

1. Reading is a complex problem-solving process.
2. Children construct their own understandings.
3. Children come to literacy with varying knowledge.
4. Reading and writing are reciprocal and interrelated processes.
5. Learning to read involves a process of reading and writing continuous text.

6. Learning to read involves a continuous process of changes over time.
7. Children take different paths to literacy learning.

The meaning-based approach to reading emphasizes comprehension and meaning in texts. Children focus on the whole word, sentences, paragraphs, and entire books to get meaning through context. With the meaning-based approach, there is stress on the importance of children reading high-quality children's literature and using language in ways that relate to their lives, such as daily journals, trade books, and personal writing. Word recognition is taught in the context of reading and writing. Comprehension is the focus over skills. Through immersion in reading, children learn phonics and they learn to decode words by context (Johnson, 1999).

In the United States, six major studies of reading research about beginning reading were conducted from the 1960's through 2000. A discussion of those studies intends to show how a balance of phonics (skills-based) and meaning-based approaches to reading can emerge to establish common goals and to identify essential elements of a balanced reading program for instruction.

Bond and Dykstra (1967) conducted the first national study on beginning reading instruction: *Cooperative Research Program in First-Grade Reading Instruction*. Their study found that a strong phonics emphasis was more valuable than a basal-driven, meaning or sight-word approach to early reading instruction, but very successful classrooms used an integrated approach, which combined systemic phonics with reading for meaning and writing. Its experimental research approach compared various reading methodologies. Their study was often credited for the beginning of emergent literacy research, staff development programs in literacy, and the recurring theme that there was "no one best approach" to reading instruction (Cowen, 2003).



In contrast to Bond and Dykstra's first grade studies, Chall's (1967) *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* reviewed relevant research from 1900 to 1965 to find coinciding evidence that phonics was an essential approach to successful reading acquisition. Chall found that the emphasis on a systematic code approach was more effective than using a basal reading series, which focused on reading for meaning. In her research, Chall (1980) wrote, "the existing evidence seems to indicate that each state of reading requires a different balance of skills" (p. 58). She also found that learning the alphabetic code, combined with good teaching and the use of appropriate level reading materials, led to successful reading achievement (Cowen, 2003).

*Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) used a methods-comparison-research design and found support for the Bond and Dykstra (1967) and the Chall (1967) reports. Their study gave insight into the need for providing more attention to students' comprehension as part of a balanced reading approach, including more time for students to read meaningful text and quality children's literature. *Becoming a Nation of Readers* stressed the reciprocal impact that writing had in influencing reading and also stressed how learning conventional spelling and phonics contributed to better reading achievement (Anderson et al., 1985). This was one of the first reports to indicate that phonics instruction needed be taught simply and early, ending by second grade for most children, and this study was the first to emphasize helping at-risk children learn how to read (Cowen, 2003).

Adams (1990) released *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print*. This study about basic processes and instructional practices in word and letter identification in early reading built on several bodies of research involving phonemic awareness, invented spelling, orthographic knowledge, the importance of concepts about print, and the processes involved in

learning to read and write (Adams, 1990). This study did not indicate that one reading approach was better than another, but it did stress the value of teaching phonograms using a phonics approach with onset and rime. It also confirmed that letter-recognition skills and phonemic awareness were necessary early coding skills for beginning reading success (Cowen, 2003).

Snow, Burns, and Griffin's (1998) *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* provided a synthesis of available research on the best practices in teaching reading to children in preschool through grade 3. The purpose of this study was to help prevent reading problems from developing in young children, while at the same time to identify methods of instruction that might work best for at-risk children and for other children demonstrating problems learning how to read (Snow et al., 1998). The finding and conclusions, however, indicated that there are few approaches that are more effective with high-risk readers when compared to approaches with low-risk readers. This research concluded that excellent instruction was the best intervention for all children. The study asserted that teaching reading required solid skills instruction embedded in enjoyable reading and writing experiences with whole texts to facilitate the construction of meaning (Johnson, 1999).

In 1997, the United States Congress commissioned a report of evidence-based assessment of scientific reading research reading: *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read* (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). This panel analyzed the findings of the Snow, Burn, and Griffin (1998). It concluded that alphabetic, fluency, and comprehension are central to learning to read. The panel also includes teacher education and computer technology as critical to beginning reading instruction (Cowen, 2003).

Conclusions drawn from these studies show that there was significant agreement on several components of literacy learning which supports a balanced approach to teaching reading. One area of agreement was the positive impact of early phonics instruction and its part in a balanced approach to reading (Cowen, 2003). The question of how much phonics instruction was necessary continued as part of the debate. Spiegel (1998) promoted "instruction that avoids limiting teachers in their choices of methodologies and materials due to a singular reliance on any one program or set of instructional practices that claims to be the best approach for all learners" (p. 118). All of the studies determined that phonics cannot be taught separately from reading meaningful text. Each study noted the importance of children's opportunities to read and write often and independently in the classroom, and each study supported moderation and balance in instruction (Cowen, 2003).

The reading research studies indicated that a balanced approach to reading instruction should combine phonics instruction with the whole language approach to demonstrate skills and meaning and to meet the reading needs of individual children (Johnson, 1999). A balanced approach is built on sound research from a broad spectrum, which takes into account all the evidence, not just evidence that supports a particular bias (Spiegel, 1999). Research shows that almost every instructional approach works for some children, but research also shows that no approach works for every child (Pflaum, Walberg, Karegianes, & Rasher, 1980).

A balanced approach is built on a comprehensive understanding of literacy, which attends to word identification, phonics, comprehension, reading for enjoyment, and writing. All those components are necessary elements of a balanced approach to literacy learning (Spiegel, 1999). In addition to being comprehensive, a balanced approach must be flexible in order to work with all children. The teachers must have the knowledge and the flexibility to recognize

what the children know and need to know in teachable moments, and the teachers must have multiple strategies for those moments (Spiegel, 1999). The flexibility of a balanced approach derives from the understanding that there is no one best method of instruction for all children.

The role of teachers aligns with this concept of flexibility. Morrow, Gambrell, and Pressley (2003) write that literacy teachers are not simply whole-language or skills teachers. They adjust those roles according to the needs of the children because of conscious, intentional decisions about the individual students.

In *Reading Instruction That Works: The Case for Balanced Teaching*, Pressley (2002), states that good teachers "balance elements of whole language (e.g., immersion in authentic literature and writing experiences) and systematic skills instruction" (p. 229). Pressley concludes that reading involves skills development, and it requires practice in the application of those skills during authentic reading and writing tasks that are appropriately challenging to students. Pressley (2002) believes that academic achievement is most likely when instruction matches the students' competencies.

The instruction is matched to a child's competency when the child is able to be successful with the appropriate amount of support. When that occurs, the teacher is instructing in the child's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The zone of proximal development in learning is observed in the child's level of competence for a task, skill, or concept. It is observed in behavior in which a child works today with some assistance on a learning goal in order to perform that same goal independently tomorrow (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). According to Vygotsky, instruction is also a matter of balance: children must be constantly challenged but at the same time given enough support to be successful (Wren, 2006). In balanced literacy

instruction, the concept of zone of proximal development can be observed in the balance of teacher decision-making and student-centered teaching.

The definitions of balanced reading of current literacy scholars affirm the importance of acknowledging students' zones of proximal development. In *Apprenticeship in Literacy* (Dorn et al., 1998), the definition of a balanced reading program includes a responsive teacher who knows how to structure literacy interactions that move children to higher levels of understanding. Dorn and her colleagues also write that teachers provide students with constructive reading and writing opportunities that guarantee literacy acquisition. Stein and D'Amico (2002) state that balanced literacy learning takes place with interaction with more capable others. Another example of the zone of proximal development in the definition of a balanced approach to literacy comes from Spiegel (1998) who defines the approach as a "decisions-making approach through which the teacher makes thoughtful choices each day about the best way to help each child become a better reader and writer" (p. 116).

In order to work within a child's zone of proximal development, the teacher must assess his/her literacy levels in reading and writing. Because the zone of proximal development is constantly changing in students acquiring literacy, assessment must be ongoing. Tasks that the child needs assistance with today may be easy tomorrow, so the instruction must adjust as indicated by on going assessment (Wren, 2006).

Assessment is integral to a framework for balanced literacy. It begins with what children know and that provides evidence for what they can do. The primary purpose of assessment is to gather data to inform instruction which is aligned with students' levels of competencies (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Assessment allows teachers to see the results of their instruction and to construct over time theories about students' learning. Fountas and Pinnell

(1996) write that one of the most important purposes of assessment is to help build theory, which is the foundation of instructional decisions.

In *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children*, Fountas and Pinnell (1996) state that the components of a balanced literacy framework are linked by oral language and by topic of focus or content. In every component of the framework, children use language to learn, and teachers use language to extend children's learning. Fountas and Pinnell write that the content of the teaching creates an "overarching web of meaning that helps children connect the various reading and writing activities in a purposeful way" (p. 25).

The elements of a balanced literacy program are not fixed but integrated. Each element requires differing levels of support from the teacher and respects the levels of independence of the students (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The framework developed by Fountas and Pinnell is a flexible organizational tool to engage children in a variety of literacy experiences while helping teachers refine their teaching. The value of each component depends on the organization and the effectiveness of teaching within it (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The elements of a balanced literacy program are:

1. Reading Aloud: The teacher reads aloud to the whole class or small groups. A carefully selected body of children's literature is used; the collection contains a variety of genres and represents our diverse society. Favorite texts, selected for special features, are reread many times.
2. Shared Reading: Using an enlarged text that all children can see, the teacher involves children in reading together following a pointer. The process includes:
  - Rereading big books, poems, songs
  - Rereading retellings

- Rereading alternative texts
- Rereading the products of interactive writing

3. Guided Reading: The teacher works with a small group who has similar reading processes. The teacher selects and introduces new books and supports children reading the whole text to themselves, making teaching points during and after the reading.

4. Independent Reading: Children read on their own or with partners from a wide range of materials. Some reading is from a special collection at their reading level.

5. Shared Writing: Teacher and children work together to compose messages and stories; teacher supports process as scribe.

6. Interactive Writing: As in shared writing, teacher and children compose messages and stories that are written using a "shared pen" technique that involves children in the writing.

7. Guided Writing or Writing Workshop: Children engage in writing a variety of texts. Teacher guides the process and provides instruction through minilessons and conferences.

8. Independent Writing: Children write their own pieces, including (in addition to stories and informational pieces) retellings, labeling, speech balloons, lists, etc. (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

This literacy framework is a conceptual tool for planning and organizing teaching. It includes four kinds of reading and four kinds of writing, connected through extensions and themes and applied through teachers' observed evidence of children's progress (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). In using the framework, teachers must consider a variety of factors:

- The strength, needs, and experiences of the students;
- The nature of materials they have and can acquire;
- The requirements of the curriculum; and

- Their own experience, background, and level of confidence (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Using the framework presented by Fountas and Pinnell (1996), teachers can scaffold students as they develop skills and practice their application during reading and writing tasks that are appropriately challenging. The opportunity to do this provides more systematic instruction of skills during involvement with literature and writing (Pressley, 2002).

When students are skilled in reading and writing and their motivation is maintained through appropriately challenging literacy experiences, they read and write more. Pressley (2002) writes:

Lack of skills, which is a danger of whole language has high potential to undermine long-term motivation for literacy. Lack of exposure to interesting reading and writing experiences, which can happen in skills-emphasis classrooms, also can undermine motivation for literacy experiences, since children, like everyone else, thrive on interesting experiences and are turned off by boredom. (p. 355)

Balances between reading and writing, between teacher-directed and student-centered activities, and between skills-based and meaning-based approaches in literacy instruction are seen in evidence from reading research as the best ways to develop literacy in students. The balances provide students with motivation to master the skills they need to be successful in reading and writing. The same balances provide opportunities to practice those skills by reading interesting books and writing about topics that are relevant to them and to their learning. The principles of a balanced approach to literacy call for teachers who are knowledgeable about language acquisition, literacy processes, instructional approaches, material, metacognitive strategies, motivational techniques, curriculum design, assessment, and developmentally



appropriate practices (Williams, 1999). Balanced literacy instruction calls for teachers to be reflective, and to use their knowledge of appropriate practice in helping all students succeed (Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsey, 1997). The teacher is the key to the success of a balanced program.

### **Professional Development for Teaching and Learning**

Before the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics launched the satellite Sputnik in 1957, decisions about teaching in the United States were made by administrators and teachers at the district and building levels. Textbooks determined curriculum. After Sputnik, urgent demands for improved student achievement grew, and national curriculum groups developed. Staff development activities began in the mid-1960's (Hall & Hord, 1987).

At that time, professional development consisted of series of one-time events that occurred intermittently during the school year. The professional development sessions gave little or no attention to classroom concerns beyond initial training after purchasing related curriculum materials (Hall & Hord, 1987). Betty-Dillon Peterson (1994), one of the founding members of the National Staff Development council, states:

Twenty-five years ago few people saw much need for the continuing education of educators beyond initial certification. Minimal efforts were devoted to upgrading staff through teachers' convictions or brief 'training' institutes. Almost no attention was paid to continuous administrative development. Only a handful of school districts identified personnel as having responsibility for continuous staff training.

(p. 3)

Since Sputnik professional development has experienced dramatic changes. Fred Wood (1994) identifies seven changes that have significantly impacted the quality and effectiveness of professional development:

1. Professional development has moved from an isolated in-service event to a systematic long-term process.
2. The focus of professional development efforts has moved from district-wide change to improved practice at the school level.
3. It is now recognized that the design of professional development programs must be based on research related to adult learning.
4. Professional development has moved from having in-service planned by a few district administrators to involving teachers and principals in planning and delivering their own programs.
5. It is now recognized that teachers are not the only professionals who need to be involved in programs of continuous improvement.
6. Professional development has moved from operating independently within a district or school to operating in relationship to other systems operating within schools.
7. Research is now used as the basis for the design, selection, delivery, and evaluation of professional development programs.

In an interview with James Stigler, a professor of psychology at the University of California-Los Angeles, Willis (2002) sums up Stigler's current beliefs and trends in professional development. He states that professional development needs to be targeted and directly related to teachers' practice. It needs to be site-based, so it helps teachers help students master the curriculum at higher levels. Stigler presents three challenges to the improvement of professional development practices:

1. Establish a knowledge base for the teaching profession, which enables teachers to share what they have learned from experience in order to accumulate professional knowledge.

2. Create context, which allow for collaborative work that can be sustained.
3. Give teachers opportunities to learn how to participate actively in the process of professional development.

Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) writes "Teachers who know a lot about teaching and learning and who work in environments that allow them to know students well are the critical elements of successful learning" (p. 8). Dennis Sparks (2002) reflects that thought in his book, *Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals*. He states that quality teaching makes a difference in students' learning. He maintains that it is the professional development of teachers that is a central factor in determining the quality of teaching. He offers that teacher expertise is one of the most important variables affecting student achievement. Sparks hold that quality teaching requires the design and implementation of the most powerful forms of professional development. That design must have active teacher learning, collective participation, and coherence. Those elements derive from teacher study groups, teacher collaboratives, networks, mentoring, internships, and resource centers.

Sparks (2002) identifies these characteristics of high-quality professional development:

- Focus on deepening teacher's content knowledge and pedagogical skills;
- Opportunities for practice, research, and reflection;
- Teachers' work related to professional development embedded in the school day
- Sustainment over time of professional development project; and
- Established sense of collegiality and collaboration among teachers and between teachers and principals in solving important problems related to teaching and learning.

Wood and McQuarrie (1999) explore the concept of embedding professional development in teachers' workday. They define job-embedded learning as "the result of teachers sharing what they have learned from their teaching experiences, reflecting on specific work experiences to uncover new understanding, and listening to colleagues share best practices they have discovered while trying out new programs or planning and implementing a project" (p. 10). They continue to explain that job-embedded learning is learning by doing, reflecting on the experience, and then generating and sharing new insights and learning.

The belief of sustained, on-going professional development is acknowledged by the Learning First Alliance, an organization of twelve leading United States education associations. In *Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide* (2000), a publication of the Learning First Alliance, job-embedded professional development receives recommendations to enable teachers time to reflect with others who are working on similar goals. The Alliance further states that professional development could easily include an average of three hours per week or 80 to 100 hours per year in study, collaboration, observation of master teachers, and research.

In *Learning Along the Way: Professional Development by and for Teachers*, Sweeney (2003) describes effective professional development as cyclical, ongoing, and divided into three phases: vision building, implementation, and sustainment. She states that by providing models of good instruction, a common vision and discourse emerges around teaching and learning. Staff developers help teachers define effective instruction and how it looks in the classrooms, and with those images, teachers are able to create visions for their own instruction. Vision building begins with observations and includes collaborative planning sessions, study groups, and book clubs.

The second phase of effective professional development occurs once a shared instructional vision is intact (Sweeney, 2003). Implementation includes more in-class coaching, observations in other classrooms or schools, and continued study of educational research. The focus of the implementation phase is different because there is a shared understanding of why the changes are important, making this a time for guided practice.

The third phase of effective professional development, sustainment, happens because the faculty has developed into a learning community after three to five years. The teachers in such a learning community see themselves as learners who work collaboratively to better meet the needs of their students (Sweeney, 2003).

The value of ongoing professional development is expressed in *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work* by Darling-Hammond (1997). She writes that one successful strategy for professional development is sustained and intensive training that is supported by modeling, coaching, and problem solving around specific problems of practice. She believes that professional development needs to be built into the schedule and tied to ongoing innovations so that teachers learn by doing as they collectively construct new practices.

Ideas on continuing professional development are explored by Emily Rodgers and Gay Su Pinnell (2002) in *Learning From Teaching In Literacy Education: New Perspectives on Professional Development*. They write that by participating in high-quality continuing professional development, teachers are able to implement best practices. Those continuing professional development programs are long-term and provide systematic follow-up for sustainability.

In collaboration, Lyons and Pinnell (2001) write in *Systems for Change in Literacy Education: A Guide to Professional Development*:

Professional development requires both short -term and long-term support. Long-term systemic efforts are most valued. To be most effective, professional development must be a broad-based, an ongoing system with interrelated components, including demonstrations, discussion, and in-class coaching. (p. 182)

Continued professional development is discussed by Morrow (2005) when she states that excellent teachers are not only well-prepared but continue to participate in professional development during their careers. She gives three requirements for effective professional development and for change to occur:

1. Teachers need to be reflective practitioners by engaging in a continuous process of questioning, planning, trying out, and evaluating their own and their students' learning.
2. Teachers need to work toward establishing a professional community in which they rely on the collective expertise and mutual support of colleagues to inform their day-to-day judgments.
3. Teachers need opportunities to learn about research-based strategies and pedagogy.

In a policy statement, the American Education Research Association (AERA) (2005) addresses professional development as means to improve learning opportunities for teachers, which increase student achievement. It notes that professional development can influence teachers' classroom practices significantly and lead to improved student achievement "when it focuses on (1) how students learn particular subject matter; (2) instructional practices that are specifically related to the subject matter and how students understand it; and (3) strengthening teachers' knowledge of specific subject matter content" (p. 4). The statement from AERA adds that the more time teacher spend on professional development, the more significantly they change their practices.

Writing about professional development, Walpole and McKenna (2004) describe professional development as a balancing act between the development of knowledge and the development of instructional skills. Traditionally, professional development has been aimed at knowledge or skills. Walpole and McKenna note that often "experts" are hired to deliver knowledge in a content area, but typically this "expert" has not understanding or information on curriculum or instructional practices. On the other hand, schools bring in representatives of a publishing company to describe the use of a model or set of curriculum materials. Smylie (1996) challenged these approaches to professional development. He urged professional development to focus on long-term strategies that allow teachers to work together to engage in problem solving on the daily work of teacher and students. This problem solving builds knowledge and skills.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) identified five models for professional development:

1. The individually guided model engages teachers in a process for designing and implementing a personal program.
2. The observation and feedback model provides teachers with data about their own practice, which they can use for improvement.
3. The curriculum development/improvement model identifies a specific problem and then engages a group of teachers in addressing it through curriculum design and implementation,
4. The training model identifies a target behavior or goal and then provides instruction and support to address the goal.
5. The inquiry model involves teachers in the selection of an area of interest and the design of a system to investigate it.

Only the training model has been investigated enough to give evidence that it is effective in changing teacher behaviors and student outcomes (Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

In addition to ongoing professional development embedded within the teaching day, Darling-Hammond (1998) writes that skillful teaching within schools that support teachers' continuous learning is necessary. She believes that teachers need:

- To understand subject matter deeply and flexibly, so that they can help students see how ideas connect across fields and everyday life. Accessing what students know and believe about a topic helps the teachers in instructing new ideas.
- To know how to support growth in the domains of cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development. Often teachers must know how to teach in ways that connect with students' differences in culture, family experiences, developed intelligences, and approaches to learning.
- To be flexible with different teaching strategies to accomplish various goals and to evaluate students' learning.
- To know about curriculum resources and technologies to connect students with information and knowledge that allows them to explore ideas, acquire and synthesize information, and frame and solve problems.
- To know about collaboration with other teachers and among students so that more powerful shared learning can occur.
- To be able to analyze and reflect on their practice, to assess the effects of their teaching, and to refine and improve their instruction.

As Darling-Hammond notes the significance of teacher knowledge in skilled instruction, Killian (1998) writes:



Teachers' content knowledge impacts students' learning. Teaching for understanding relies on teachers' ability to see complex subject matter from the perspectives of diverse students. Teachers' abilities to design questions, select instructional and assessment tasks, evaluate student learning, and make instructional, curricular, and assessment decisions depends on how well they understand the content they are teaching. Their content expertise depends on numerous factors: their undergraduate or graduate preparation in the content area, how they were taught the subject, and their conceptual understanding of the discipline. (p. 1)

Killion (1998) also states that teachers' content knowledge may be insufficient to prepare them to teach for understanding. Professional development can support such teachers if it requires them to become constructivist learners of their content areas, of their students' thinking and ways of approaching tasks, and of various pedagogical strategies to develop students' understandings

The goal of professional development must be change (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). In *Schools That Learn*, Senge (2000) writes that change must be nurtured and cannot be mandated from the top down by administrators. He states that the way to create profound, positive change is engaging teachers, principal, and parents in the creation of something new. Richardson (1998) agrees that teachers are an important pivot point for change. She writes that teachers undertake change voluntarily if they follow their sense of what their students need and what is working. Richardson (1998) writes "innovative changes in practices cannot be sustained over time unless teachers remain interested and excited about their own learning" (p. 5).

In a review of significant and worthwhile change in teaching, Richardson (1990) suggests beginning a change process in instruction with a "situated goal—a definition of a targeted practice that is located at the intersection of what the teachers bring in terms of practical knowledge and skills, and what research provides in terms of new theories, ideas, or methods" (p. 13). Involving teachers and what they know is crucial to the development of a professional support system. A belief that all teachers can learn and grow is as crucial as believing that many of their current practices are effective (Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Cobb (2005) calls attention to the shift in the conception and delivery of professional development since the NCLB legislation of 2001. Along with the standards movement and its clearly stated student learning goals, schools have to look at professional development that ensures teachers have the knowledge and skills to help all students reach the high stated standards and results (Guskey, 2005). Therefore, schools must look at teaching and learning from a systems perspective (Cobb, 2005). Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes (Senge, 1990). It provides a framework for seeing interrelationships and patterns of change not just single events happening in a linear way. In terms of professional development, systems thinking asks schools and districts to "think" beyond single-event inservice session (Cobb, 2005). With greater focus on results for teaching and learning, teachers and districts must think in terms of what is needed for the improvement of teacher practice that results in increased student achievement.

### **Professional Development for Literacy Teaching and Learning**

High-quality reading instruction is critical to students' success (Snow et al., 1998). The National Reading Panel (2000) concludes that it is essential for teachers to have knowledge in each of these pedagogical domains:

- A sophisticated understanding of how students learn to read;
- Knowledge of the difficulties experienced by some students and how to provide necessary support; and
- The ability to effectively implement a variety of multi-level instructional practices.

In an overview of professional development programs in reading, Hughes, Cash, Ahwee, and Klinger (2002) state that along with an essential base of knowledge, literacy teachers must also have skills in specific instructional areas (e.g., phonological awareness, word identification, fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary, study skills, and motivation). Many researchers agree that teachers do not acquire this knowledge or these skills during teacher preparation programs (Hughes et al., 2002). To become adept, teachers must be lifelong learners seeking to improve their teaching through participation in high-quality professional development.

When teachers receive high-quality professional development, which is directly focused on classroom curriculum and instruction, they tend to use research-based instructional practices, which are associated with higher reading achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Broaddus and Bloodgood (1999) find that teachers who integrate effective reading interventions into their curriculum better meet the needs of struggling readers.

With increased demands for literacy achievement from NCLB (2001), it is critical for teachers to use their expert understanding of literacy processes and to select appropriate instruction based on their knowledge of all students (Killion, 2003). The National Staff Development Council began an investigation to identify content-specific professional development that showed evidence student achievement improved, teachers' content knowledge deepened, and teachers' content-specific pedagogy expanded (Killion, 2002). In the twenty

literacy programs included in *What Works in Elementary School: Results-Based Staff Development* (Killion, 2003) , training is one of the main forms of professional development. Training is explained as a learning process focused on building awareness and knowledge and skill development. Joyce and Showers (1995) find that training is most effective if it includes presentation of theory, demonstration or modeling, low-risk practice, and ongoing support through coaching or study groups. Follow-up support helps teachers implement what they learned with their own students after the training ends.

Most of the literacy programs presented in *What Works* (Killion, 2003) offer theories and included demonstrations. The low-risk practice component in some of the literacy programs is often resisted by teachers who believe once they have seen a method, they are ready to implement it. The content of the literacy professional development programs examined by Killion fall along a continuum. At one end is content that focuses on implementing a particular literacy program. On the other end, the professional development content focuses on developing teachers' knowledge about literacy. Literacy teachers can better teach their students if they have deep understanding of literacy and literacy instruction. Killion (2003) states that if teachers are themselves active readers and writers, the students receive greater benefits from classroom instruction. She writes: "Helping teachers learn the theoretical framework and supporting research for the strategies they are acquiring and develop a conceptual and procedural understanding of how students learn to reading and write is the ultimate goal of literacy professional development" (p. x).

Killion (2003) gives the following recommendations for effective literacy professional development:

- Engage teachers in studying the theory and concepts underlying learning literacy so they develop deep understanding of reading and writing processes. By helping teachers understand the theories behind various instructional strategies, professional development providers empower teachers to choose and use the strategies most appropriate for their students. When teachers lack this deep understanding, they focus on implementing the strategy rather than on the student learning.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to be readers and writers. When teachers practice literacy skills themselves, they are more aware of how readers' and writers' minds work. This understanding helps them know how various learners approach reading and writing and helps them appreciate diverse learners. Opportunities for teachers include joining books study groups; discussing current, quality literature; writing and then receiving feedback from peers; analyzing literacy; or studying language.
- Include professional development for all areas of literacy. When teachers understand how to integrate the various aspects of literacy, their instruction and students' learning experiences will be richer.
- Ensure that teachers of poor and nonreaders have specialized professional development that addresses their students' age-appropriate needs. Teachers of struggling readers need specialized knowledge that frequently is not available in general professional learning sessions on literacy.
- Expand professional development processes beyond training so teachers have many opportunities to learn about, study, apply, and reflect on professional practices in literacy. Teachers will benefit from opportunities to examine student work, engage in action research, participate in scoring conferences, analyze student assessment data, participate

in study groups and literature circle, coach one another, receive expert coaching, engage in instructional dialogues, and provide training for other teachers.

- Focus the results of literacy professional development on increased student achievement. The professional learning experiences must change the teachers' knowledge and skills and their attitudes and behaviors. This usually happens over several years in a planned, coherent, and in-depth learning experience. Learning experiences designed to improve student achievement include training, coaching, ongoing study and collaboration, dialogue, examining practice, analyzing student work, and other learning processes.

Administrators and policy makers must ensure that teachers engage in professional development that supports excellent literacy teaching (Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary & Grogan, 2006). Attempts to develop excellent reading teachers have extended from teacher preparation classes to professional development for practicing classroom teachers (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000).

In 2000, the Ohio Department of Education developed a project to share core knowledge of literacy teaching to K-3 classroom teachers and to build capacity within school districts to sustain high-quality professional development. The curriculum for the project focused on developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for skilled literacy teaching (Kinnucan-Welsch et al., 2006). The project directors identified six principles of high-quality literacy professional development:

1. High-quality professional development directly connects to student learning goals that are clear and accepted by all. The classroom teachers drive the focus of the professional development.

2. Professional development involves active learning for all teachers. As teachers make connections from what they are learning in professional development to classroom practice, they deepen their knowledge structures and apply what they are learning in new situations. Teachers need to be flexible in the instructional moment.
3. Professional development is embedded in the context of work in schools and classrooms. It is embedded in instruction.
4. Professional development is continuous and ongoing.
5. Professional development is based on an ongoing and focused inquiry related to teacher learning, student learning, and what we know about good instruction. It should encourage and support teachers to become more reflective and metacognitive in their teaching.
6. Coherence needs to be evident in all aspects of the professional development system. It should be integrated with a comprehensive change process supported by funding, follow through from the district, and technical assistance. Coherence is ultimately seen in classroom implementation.

In a study conducted in Pennsylvania, K-3 teachers volunteered to participate for one year in professional development project which included a summer institute, Saturday workshops, and work at the school site with a professional development leader (Swan, 2003). Teachers received demonstrations and modeling of specific strategies as well as theoretical basis for the work. They also had opportunities to discuss collaboratively about the workshop topics. At their schools, a literacy coach visited the classrooms twice each month to model, observe, assist, and plan with teachers. Peer collaboration was an integral part of the professional development. The project was supported by district and building level administration. Teachers

took responsibility for documenting their efforts with notes, journals, and measurements of student achievement. At the conclusion of the project, the collected data indicated that the teachers had established supportive relationships among themselves as teachers and as communities of learners. The design of the project provided teachers with theory and research directly related to their classroom practices, which allowed for informed decision-making in instruction, reflection on their teaching, and increased collaboration.

In a study of a New York City district's literacy initiative, some strong parallels emerged between how the children learn to read and write and how teachers learn to teach (Stein & D'Amico, 2002). The theory and framework of balanced literacy shape this initiative with attention to integrating theory and practice. Within the professional development was supportive assistance from on-site staff developers to the teachers, which was similar to the supportive assistance provided to students through balanced literacy instruction. The professional development was embedded in the practice of teaching with the intention of encouraging teachers to view teaching as a learning laboratory with opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. The findings of this study showed parallels to children's learning:

- Children learned to read by reading. Teachers learned to teach by teaching.
- The best way to help children learn to read was to provide appropriately challenging texts with the right amount of assistance. The best way to help teachers learn to teach was through the appropriate kind and amount of assistance with collaborations with staff developers and more expert teachers.
- Children needed models to learn to read and write. Teachers needed models and demonstrations of expert teaching.



Throughout this discussion of professional development and professional development for literacy teaching and learning, several traits appeared across much of the literature (Sparks, 2002; Sweeney, 2003; Rodgers & Pinnell, 2002; Kinnucan-Welsch, 2006). They were:

- Professional development embedded in daily teaching which stimulates teacher reflection on current teaching practices, student achievement planning, and decision-making;
- Professional development designed to strengthen teacher knowledge of content and of expert teaching techniques;
- Professional development designed to encourage collaboration among teachers and to build learning communities among staffs; and
- Professional development, which provided experts, staff developers, and coaches to bring attention to research findings, content standards and professional practice.

The National Academy of Education (1999) recommends adopting the view that "teaching is a complex practice and the continuous learning of teaching across the teacher's career is an integral part of that perspective" (p. 8). In response to this recommendation, a culture needs to be nurtured in which teachers are comfortable to take risk and to update practices. Beliefs and practices in educational professionalism and lifelong learning must be established. By building a supportive community of learners with common goals for all teachers, schools have the opportunity to create changes leading to models of teacher inquiry, collaboration and collegiality which have positive outcomes for effective teaching and student achievement.

## **Literacy Coaching**

There is increasing awareness of the importance of literacy coaches in supporting coherent reading programs to meet the needs of all children (Snow et al., 1998). Literacy

coaches are not a new concept. In the 1960's, there was concern about students' low reading achievement and "remedial reading teachers" worked directly with struggling students (Bean, Swan, and Knaub, 2003). At that time, the special reading teachers pulled students out of the classrooms for additional instruction. Today those teachers work along-side classroom teachers to increase literacy learning. The former "remedial reading teacher" evolved into a reading coach who works directly with teachers to provide daily support in planning, modeling, and helping them understand assessment and instruction (Dole, 2004). In the No Child Left Behind (U.S Department of Education, 2002) legislation, reading coaches are viewed as viable and important professional development components for schools.

Research in literacy learning shows that the key to improved student learning is a competent teacher (Costa & Garmston, 1994). There is growing support that the most powerful way to increase teachers' knowledge and to improve instructional practice is through coaching (Darling-Hammond & MacLaughlin, 1995). Additional research has shown that coaching sustained over time and embedded into teachers' classroom work results in increased student achievement (Costa & Garmston, 1994).

The International Reading Association (2004) proposes a definition of reading coaches in a summary of coaching responsibilities:

Coaching provides ongoing consistent support for the implementation and instruction components. It is nonthreatening and supportive - not evaluative. It gives a sense of how good professional development is. It also affords the opportunity to see it work with students (p. 2).

To expand that definition, Cathy Roller (2004), director of research and policy for the International Reading Association, suggests that what defines literacy coaching is teacher-to-

teacher communications that happen during class and at other times. It is the in-class coaching that marks a literacy coach. A definition of coaching by Poglinco (2003) applies to literacy coaches: "a form of inquiry-based learning characterized by collaboration between individuals or groups of teachers and more accomplished peers" (p. 4).

Descriptions of reading coaches reflect the writing of Joyce and Showers (1996). They identify five kinds of professional development experiences, which are integrated and applied in coaching: (1) theory, (2) demonstration, (3) practice, (4) feedback, and (5) in-class coaching. These experiences are presented in and out of classrooms, in one-to-one teaching and to entire school staffs, and with peer coaching (IRA, 2004). Reading coaches work in many settings and engage in many activities, but it is the in-class coaching that defines the role of the reading coach.

In *The Reading Specialist: Leadership for the Classroom, School, and Community*, Bean (2004) defines the literacy coach as one with expertise who provides the guidance or feedback that enables someone else to become more proficient" (p 96). His/her job is to work with teachers in their schools and to help them ensure student literacy achievement. Sweeney (2003) uses the term "coach" to describe the support person who models teaching strategies in a classroom and then provides feedback when the classroom teacher begins using those strategies. "Coaches customize professional development to match each teacher's needs and interests while they help the school establish a common understanding across all teachers" (p. 50).

Views on the nature of literacy coaching are discussed by Toll (2007) in *Lenses on Literacy Coaching: Conceptualizations, Functions, and Outcomes*. She writes that the views are influenced by educator's beliefs about how students might succeed, how teachers might change, and what it takes to assist teachers. Toll believes there are five concepts of literacy coaching that

exist in education, which reflect assumptions about teachers, teacher professional growth, and learning that underlies perspectives on coaches. Those five concepts are:

1. Coach as a technician who possesses a body of skill and knowledge that give them authority. From this perspective, the work of literacy coaches is to convey their skills and knowledge to teachers in a way that enables the teachers to develop similar technical abilities. Teaching is presumed to rely on a set of skills and knowledge.
2. Coach as a service provider who only responds to those teachers who approach them and ask for help. This perspective may come from the background that many coaches have as reading specialists who did provide service to teachers.
3. Coach as a supervisor who works as an authority with school principals and other administrators. Such coaches stress to teachers that they must change practice significantly in a short period of time.
4. Coach as a professional developer who works to help teachers grow and change through professional development plans for the whole school or district.
5. Coach as a fresh alternative adds to the efforts of supervisors, traditional professional development providers, and reading specialists. From this perspective, the coach is assertive with processes for coaching while the teachers provide the content for coaching (p. 8-14).

Puig and Foelich (2007) define literacy coaches as co-learners who assist in shifting classroom teachers to better understand critical pedagogy and the need for change based on evidence. They write that shifts in teaching are grounded in the literacy coach's knowledge of literacy processing and founded on collegial trust. Puig and Froelich (2007) believe that literacy

coaches support colleagues in collaboratively forming questions as co-learners. "When we develop a self-reflective practice, we are more likely to see when our teaching is more or less effective and make any necessary changes" (p. 20). They write that effective and efficient coaching gathers information from three perspectives. "The most effective and efficient coaching sessions are those that we enter with participant observer experiences, non-participant observations, and artifacts" (p. 42).

Coaching for Puig and Froelich (2007) is approached as a continuum of professional development. It extends from modeling to self-selected action research, from dialogue to reflection, from inter-active coaching to intra-active coaching, from high levels to minimum levels of scaffolding, and from subject-centered to problem-centered. The points on the continuum for professional development are:

- Facilitate a workshop or session to improve instruction and student learning.
- Provide an observation lesson to improve instruction and student learning with feedback and collaborative input.
- Co-teach with colleague to improve instruction and student learning based on mutually agreed upon learning goals and success indicators.
- Confer, observe, and debrief to improve instruction and student learning.
- Facilitate a study group or literacy leadership team to investigate common interests topics to improve instruction and student learning.
- Facilitate action research to seek resources after reflection to improve instruction and student learning (Puig & Foelich, 2007).

Literacy coaches and teachers must have a common language and understandings

when they are collaborating over students' literacy issues. According to Puig and Froelich (2007), the quality of a coaching session is dependent on their knowledge of literacy as a process. From a cognitive perspective, a literacy processing system can be defined as a well-orchestrated internal network of interrelated information that works to construct meaning for a given text (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). It is a set of strategies that are initiated by a learner to gain meaning for a text. A literacy processing system develops through meaningful and relevant experiences over time. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) write that a well-developed reading processing system means reading quickly and unconsciously processing continuous print with understanding. They state that a writing system is different from a reading system in that we construct words designed to create understanding in the reader. Clay (2001) adds to the idea of literacy processing by stating that it is constructed by the learner during early learning and is strongly influenced by the practices of his/her teacher.

Cheryl Dozier (2006) writes that responsive literacy coaching creates and sustains purposeful change. She continues to write that the core of responsive literacy coaching is developing respectful, caring instructional relationships. In coaching relationships, Dozier wants teachers to see themselves as effective participants in the learning process, developing and articulating their ideas, and participating in collective thinking. Those relationships are built on the following:

- Understanding how teachers and children learn by locating the learners' zones of proximal development;
- Structuring and engaging in joint productive activities where coaches, teachers, and children interact to construct and co-construct knowledge;

- Examining language to consider the effect and consequences of language choices; and
- Building self-extending systems of understandings and strategies to generate further learning as literacy teachers.

In *Systems for Change in Literacy Education: A Guide to Professional Development*, Lyons and Pinnell (2001) use a variety of terms for support personnel who work with teachers in literacy instruction. They state "coaching is a way to help teachers become more analytic about their work" (p. 111). They continue by writing "Coaching supports the classroom teacher as she applies knowledge, develops skills, polishes technique, and deepens her understanding" (p. 237.) According to Lyons and Pinnell (2001) the term "literacy coach" describes a person who analyzes teaching through a sequence of actions that are useful in working with teachers. Literacy coach also describes a teacher who has the skills teachers need to analyze levels of learning for teachers and students.

Research in Reading Recovery® (2002), a first-grade literacy intervention for at-risk students, provides evidence that the most effective way to improve instruction is to develop teachers' knowledge base, analytical skills and expertise through one-to-one coaching that is informed and based on students' behavior (Lyons, 2002). From practice and experience, Reading Recovery trainers believe the key to teachers' growth, development, and improved practice is the ability to reflect on one's learning, to change practice based on that reflection, and to develop a theoretical frame of reference or set of understanding that takes into account one's experiences and the experiences of students. Lyons (2002) writes, "The greatest changes and gains in understanding and practice occur when the teacher is engaged in the reflective process with a more knowledgeable and experienced coach" (p. 93).

Studies of literacy coaching indicate teachers whose students show the greatest gains on informal and formal assessments have been coached by literacy coaches who have developed a set of interrelated coaching skills (Lyons & Pinnell, 1999). These coaches learn how to work effectively with teachers to bring about real, fundamental change in teaching. Effective coaches:

- analyze teacher and student interactions.
- call attention to critical parts of the lesson that have potential for shifting teachers' learning.
- engage teachers in constructive conversation.
- select powerful coaching points that will lead to deeper conceptual understanding and new learning.
- engage teachers in reflective process to improve their teaching.
- create a trusting relationship within which critical feedback is valued.
- establish a trusting environment.
- set a positive tone for conversation.
- create a stress-free context in which teachers feel comfortable sharing their ideas, struggles, and concerns (Lyons, 2002, p. 94).

Galm and Perry (2004) write that coaching is difficult and not for everyone. "Coaches must be comfortable with conflict, resistance, and multiple demands on their time. They must be able to work in a collaborative, non-confrontational way and operate as colleagues. As leaders, they must be willing to model reflective practice for teachers and be prepared to develop expertise in their new roles" (p. 4).

Since 1997, Boston Public Schools have been engaged in a plan for whole school change, which first addresses literacy (Boston Plan for Excellence, 2000). An essential



component of the plan was the creation of a targeted professional development plan that gave teachers what they needed to improve literacy instruction. Literacy coaches were a critical investment of the professional development plan. There were four levels of progress for the collaborative coaching and learning. At the first level teachers were aware of the elements of the coaching model: theory, classroom practice, feedback, reflection, and collaboration. They met with coaches to identify their instructional needs, and teacher teams met together for the purpose of building their knowledge and sharing instructional strategies in literacy. The next three levels changed only in the respect that the number of teachers participating in classroom demonstrations increased until all teachers engage in the activities. This professional development plan, Collaborative Coaching and Learning, worked to reduce professional isolation and to encourage a more collaborative culture. Since the beginning of this plan, the Boston Public Schools evaluated its success and expanded to include more district schools.

From Utah, Dole (2004) gave examples of her successful coaching with elementary teacher during a summer workshop. She found teaching demonstrations and modeling of lessons made significant impacts upon teachers. After an outside expert visited the district to present on the power of reading aloud in vocabulary development, Dole demonstrated within an actual classroom with other teachers observing. After the lesson the teachers worked collaboratively to create vocabulary lessons with read-aloud books. Over the following weeks, Dole (2004) observed the teachers in their own classrooms and supported their instruction and risk-taking. This built trust and allowed for constructive feedback. Dole used this example to demonstrate a typical activity with reading coaches.

In San Diego, school-based reading coaches worked in dual roles (Lapp, Fisher, Flood, & Frey, 2003). Over five years, the authors worked in three San Diego schools to design

and implement a university/school partnership that involved reading specialists in two roles: tutoring and professional development. As tutors, they helped struggling readers, and as professional development coaches, they provided information and modeled instructional strategies to help teachers expand their understanding of teaching literacy. In four years, all three San Diego schools improved the literacy achievement of the students with the assistance and support of each school's reading specialist.

Another literacy initiative empowered by literacy coaches was the Early Years Literacy Project in Toronto, Canada (Rolheiser, Fullan, & Edge, 2003). This project targeted the district's schools with the lowest literacy achievement in 1998. By 2001, significant improvements were noted. The literacy coaches were key to the intensive job-embedded approach to professional learning. They took part in professional learning, which enabled them to lead study groups and joint planning. The coaches attended training twice a month to study cognitive coaching, scheduling, assessment approaches.

When teachers and coaches work closely together in a coaching context, they become colleagues, engaging in collaborative problem solving and inquiry-oriented conversations. They rely and trust one another to provide support and skills they may need and can be shared with others (Lyons, 2002). Effective coaches learn to work along-side different teachers in different classrooms. Together they reflect, analyze, and interpret students' work, building personal and collective theories of literacy learning that enable all children to become competent readers and writer (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Coaching has potential to improve teachers' and students' learning. Research demonstrates that coaching is effective when teachers develop conceptual understandings of the

reading and writing process and how to engage students in strategic ways to learn how to learn (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

In *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Fullan (2001) writes, "Nothing has promised so much and has been so frustratingly wasteful as the thousands of workshops and conferences that led to no significant change in practice when teachers returned to their classrooms" (p. 6). Coaching has potential to be powerful in ways that isolated professional development cannot realize.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed current research in four areas: balanced literacy, professional development for teaching and learning, professional development for literacy teaching and learning, and literacy coaching. The focus of this research project is to observe and describe changes in teacher's knowledge of the literacy process, literacy instruction, and student learning in one kindergarten classroom, one first grade classroom, and one second grade classroom. Understanding the four areas is an important prerequisite for the planning, implementation and interpretation of this research.

## **CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the research methodology for the case study. This case study relied upon descriptive methods to observe and examine changes in literacy instruction through a year-long professional development project in balanced literacy instruction in kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms. This chapter begins with the rationale for choosing the case study tradition in this qualitative research. An overview of the research project follows descriptions of the study's setting and participants. In addition, the chapter explains the study's design, the data collection, the data analysis process, and standards of quality.

The purpose of this case study is to describe the impact of professional development for the implementation of balanced literacy instruction on three kindergarten, first, and second grade classroom teachers. The case study tradition is useful for investigating the impact of professional development on literacy teaching and learning. As Dyson and Genishi (2005) write, the aim of the case study is to see what events mean as they are socially enacted within a particular case. According to Yin (1994), case studies are the preferred method when events occur naturally.

Each of the three participants was active in a yearlong professional development group which the researcher led for kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers. The focus of study for this group was balanced literacy instruction, the framework and organization for its implementation in their classrooms. The group met for ten three hour sessions in June 2006 and continued to meet eight more times during the 2006 - 2007 school year.

## Setting

This midwestern school district had a total student enrollment of 5,467 during the 2006-2007 school year. Of the students 47.78% were male and 52.22% of the were female. In the district, there were 68.68% students who were considered economically advantaged, and 31.32% were considered to be economically disadvantaged. The ethnicity of all the students was 74.52% White, 5.80% Hispanic, 9.48% African American, and 10.21% identified as Other. The district achieved Annual Yearly Progress according to the criteria set by the Kansas State Department of Education (2007). Adequate Yearly Progress is required by the No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation. It refers to the growth rate in percentages of students who achieve the state's definition of academic proficiency.

At Hillside Elementary School during the 2006-2007 school year, there were 437 students. Of these students, 46.22% of them were females and 53.78% were males. From the school report card posted on the Kansas State Department of Education's (2007) website , 83.52% of the students were economically advantaged and 16.48% were economically disadvantaged. The school population was 73.68% White, 5.72% African-American, 5.26% Hispanic, and 15.33% Other. The building achieved annual yearly progress according to the criteria set by the Kansas State Department of Education (2007).

At Lakeview Elementary School during the 2006-2007 school year, there were 200 students. Of these students, 51.00% were females and 49.00% were males. From the school report card posted on the Kansas State Department of Education's website (2007), 54.50% of the students were economically advantaged, and 45.50% were economically disadvantaged. The school population was 70.50% White, 14.50% African-American, 11.50% Hispanic, and 3.50% Other. The building achieved Adequate Yearly Progress according to the criteria set by the Kansas State Department of Education (2007).

The setting of my research was considered typical (Creswell, 1998). The classrooms had not been noted to be unusual or unique. The setting was also convenient (Creswell, 1998) because Kansas State University works collaboratively with the school district and its elementary schools. Purposeful sampling guided the selection of the study's participants. They were voluntary teacher participants in the district's professional development for balanced literacy and were selected by the district elementary curriculum director, Jan Bowling. Validation of the participants' selection is found with Creswell (2002) who writes that in purposeful sampling, a researcher intentionally select individual and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon.

### **Participants**

This case study focused on one first grade teacher at Hillside Elementary School, one kindergarten teacher and one second grade teacher at Lakeview Elementary School. Each teacher participated in the district's balanced literacy professional development during the 2006-2007 school year. I acted as literacy coach in their classrooms to guide the balanced literacy implementation. In accordance with the requirements of the university's institutional review board, each teacher signed letters of consent for her participation in the study (See Appendix B. Using pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality protected the names of the teachers.

The kindergarten teacher had ten years teaching experience in third and fourth grades and in kindergarten. She had been at Lakeview Elementary for six years where she taught kindergarten. She held a Bachelor's of Science degree in Elementary Education and in Health Education. At Lakeview Elementary, the kindergarten teacher has team taught with the same partner.

The first grade teacher had two years teaching experience at Hillside Elementary School. For the 2006-2007 school year, she moved from a kindergarten classroom to first grade. She held an undergraduate degree and nine graduate hours toward a master's degree. She was recognized at her university as a Teacher of Promise, and in her first year of teaching in the classroom, she received a state Horizon Award as an exemplary teacher.

The second grade teacher at Lakeview Elementary had two and one-half years experience as an elementary para-educator and one year teaching experience in first grade. She taught second grade for the first time during the 2006-2007 school year. She held a bachelor's of science in Elementary Education with a concentration in Family Studies and Human Services. She was pursuing an English as a Second Language endorsement from the Kansas State Department of Education.

## **Design**

Identifying the case of my study was facilitated by knowing the boundaries around the setting and time frame: one kindergarten teacher and one second grade teacher at Lakeview Elementary and one first grade teacher at Hillside Elementary for the 2006-2007 school year. The overarching research question, "What is the impact of the year long balanced literacy professional development on kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms?" shaped the overall design of the study. Dyson & Genishi (2005) remind researchers that the initial question should not constrain the study and may need to be revised over time.

In addition to being the facilitator of the district's literacy professional development for K-2 teachers, I acted as literacy coach to support the shift to balanced literacy instruction in the three participant's classrooms. Part of the research study design involved my role within the case. "Who the researcher is or becomes in an educational setting is outlined in the study's

design, for the role she takes on influences what kinds of data she can gather" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 50). As the literacy coach, I assumed the role of a participant observer, an observational role adopted by researchers when they take part in activities in the setting they observe (Creswell, 2002). As they participate in activities, researchers record information. Dyson and Genishi (2005) write that when the researcher is a participant observer, data about herself must be included to support systematic ways of conducting research with careful detail.

All the participants in my research attended ten three-hour sessions in June 2006 and an all day workshop on August 10, 2006 which established the framework for balanced literacy instruction, for organizing and managing the balanced literacy classroom, and for assessment methods (Appendix J). Soon after the August 17, 2006, the first day of school for the district, I made initial visits to the participants' classrooms to gain acceptance as a coach for the teachers and as teacher for the students. Throughout the school year participating teachers attended eight professional development sessions to extend and refine their knowledge and understanding of balanced literacy. Table 3.1 shows the schedule of professional development sessions and their topics. I visited classrooms approximately 24 times to demonstrate lessons, observe teachers trying new strategies, assist with assessments, work with students, provide resources, and plan lessons with teachers. My participation as literacy coach continued until the close of the school year in May, 2007.



**Table 3.1 Balanced Literacy Professional Development Schedule**

| Date                  | Time           | Topic  |
|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| June 19-June 30, 2006 | 1:00-3:00 p.m. | Professional book club for K-2 classroom teachers:<br><i>What Really Matters to Struggling Readers</i> and <i>Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children</i> |
| August 10, 2006       | 8:30-3:30 p.m. | Link to book study;<br>Framework for Balanced Literacy Instruction;<br>Organizing and Managing the Classroom; Observation survey, Running Records and Assessment Walls |
| August 31, 2006       | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Reading components of Balanced Literacy; Using Assessment Walls; Running Record coding and analysis review   |
| October 5, 2006       | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Reciprocity of Reading and Writing; Writing components of Balanced Literacy; Running Record review   |
| November 2, 2006      | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Word Work; Technology and Early Literacy   |
| January 25, 2007      | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Professional book club:<br><i>Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades</i> ;<br>Phonemic Awareness and Phonics                               |
| March 1, 2007         | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Professional book club;<br>Fluency and Comprehension   |
| April 5, 2007         | 4:40-6:30 p.m. | Professional book club;<br>Vocabulary and Oral Language  |
| April 26, 2007        | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Organizing for the Future; evaluation  |

Creswell (1998) suggests that my data collection be "extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information" (p. 62). The teacher participants were asked to complete surveys and to maintain a reflection log three separate weeks throughout the school year. To assess growth in literacy achievement, data was collected from the students through informal and formal assessments and artifacts of their literacy work. From the beginning of the proposed study, I collected field notes as a foundation of the data. Interviews with teachers, anecdotal notes from classroom visits and observations, and videotaping of instruction supplemented the field notes. Yin (1989) recommends six types of information: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. With these varied types of data, a holistic analysis of the entire case can be accomplished to reveal the emergence of a detailed description (Creswell, 1998).

### **Data Collection**

The contexts of the case were the literacy instruction in one first grade classroom at Hillside Elementary School and in one kindergarten classroom and one second grade classroom at Lakeview Elementary School. The case was bounded by the 2006-2007 school year and the elementary school settings. Data for this study were collected within each classroom. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) refer to ongoing visits as "living among participants" (p. 342). The primary sources of data were generated from the teachers, the students, and the researcher.

| <u>Participant</u>  | <u>Students</u>  | <u>Researcher</u>   |
|---|--|---|
| <u>Teachers</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher reflection logs</li> <li>• Teacher survey</li> <li>• Teacher interviews</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation Survey</li> <li>• Artifacts</li> <li>• Informal observations</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fieldnotes</li> <li>• Classroom observations</li> <li>• Reflections</li> </ul> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional Development Evaluations</li> </ul> |  |  |
|--|--|--|

***Teacher Data***

I asked participating teachers to keep reflections logs. Keeping a log helps educators learn how to improve professional practice, to discover what is working and not working, uncover personal strengths, and identify areas where improvement is needed (Wood & McQuarrie, 1999). To encourage and to support teachers' reflections of their literacy teaching, they completed a two-part teaching log over a one-week period, three times during the school year (Appendix C). This two-part instrument contained open-ended (Part 1) and checklist (Part 2) components (Appendix C). Here the teachers were asked to precisely detail the activities, strategies, and content carried out during the literacy instruction for each day of the week. The teachers also recorded their reflections of how the lessons evolved. The data recorded on this instrument provided a strong source of information for evidence of the effects of professional development and literacy coaching. The second part of the log, a checklist, presented a comprehensive listing of the research-based practices addressed in the balanced literacy professional development sessions. Teachers checked off the practices used during the recording periods. The checklist was organized around the five essential components of reading as outlined in The Report of the National Reading Panel (2000).

To gain insight into the teacher participants' beliefs about reading and reading instruction, they each completed the DeFord Theoretical Orientation Reading Profile (TORP, DeFord, 1985) at the beginning and the end of the school year. This profile was designed to help determine teachers' theoretical orientation to reading instruction by providing twenty-eight belief statements for participants to make responses to using a Likert scale (DeFord, 1985). DeFord identified three clusters of theoretical orientations identified with her reading profile. One group

emphasized smaller than word level language units, with gradual movement toward word units and attention to comprehension. She labeled this orientation "phonics". The second group, "skills," emphasized building an adequate sight word vocabulary, instruction in sound/letter correspondence and word attack skills. The third group provided beginning readers with quality literature at the beginning of instruction emphasizing the development of sense of story/text as a framework for dealing with smaller units of language. Student writing and shared reading were integral to this "whole language" orientation. DeFord (1985) stated there were points of overlap in the instructional orientations and their practices. Phonics and skills orientations tended to share practices, as did skills and whole language orientations. There was little overlap between phonics and whole language. The information gathered from this instrument helped identify changes in teachers' understandings of literacy instruction (Appendix D).

Additional information about the teachers' professional practices and professional development experiences was collected anonymously in a survey adapted from Padak and Rasinski (2001). Data from this survey were collected prior to the beginning of the balanced literacy professional development sessions and after the yearlong professional development project concluded (Appendix E).

The researcher conducted initial and final interviews with the three case study participants to gather information about classroom instructional practices, beliefs about reading, and professional development in the school district (Appendix F). The pre-interviews were conducted prior to the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. The post-interviews took place at the end of the school year.

The researcher collected evaluations from the balanced literacy professional development group three times during the school year: after the June 2006 sessions, at mid-year in November

2006, and in April 2007. The purpose of the evaluations was to receive feedback on the content of the professional development, to inquire about topics for future study, and to ask teachers to share and reflect on their classroom experiences with balanced literacy instruction (Appendix G).

### ***Student Data***

I collected a variety of data from students of the participating teachers. The teachers learned to administer and analyze Clay's (2002) *Observation Survey* under my guidance. It was intended that Clay's *Observation Survey* would enable teachers to observe students in a systematic way to discover what they already know and where to begin instruction. There are six components of Clay's assessment:

1. Letter identification: identify upper and lower case letters;
2. Word test: read a list of 20 words;
3. Concept about print: demonstrate understanding of concepts about book handling and conventions of printed language while teacher reads a book;
4. Writing vocabulary: student has 10 minutes to write all the words he/she knows;
5. Hearing and recording sounds in words: student writes a dictated sentence which is scored by the number of sounds heard; and
6. Text reading level: the highest level read with a 90% accuracy rate

This assessment was given at the mid-year point of the school year and at the end for the kindergarten students. The first grade students completed the assessment at the beginning of the school year, mid-year and at the end of the school year. The assessment was given three times over the school year to four struggling second grade students.

Student data in literacy growth were collected from reading and writing checklists adapted from Dorn and Soffos (2001). Data were organized around the concept of a literacy

processing system, which was defined by Dorn and Soffos as "a well-orchestrated internal network of interrelated information that works to construct meaning for a given event" (p. 33). Children acquiring literacy can be considered to be at four levels: emergent (end of kindergarten), early (beginning of first grade through midyear first grade), transitional (end of first grade through end of second grade), and fluent (beginning of third grade through end of third grade (Appendix H). Other sources of student data were running records from guided reading, samples of student writing, and the researcher's anecdotal records and field notes which provided rich descriptions of the classroom climate, teaching, and learning. (Appendix I). According to Owocki and Goodman (2002), the main goal of observation is to document what children know and their ways of constructing and expressing that knowledge.

### ***Researcher Data***

I observed each teacher four times during the school year, using the Reading Lesson Observation Framework (RLOF, Henk, Moore, Marinak, & Tomasetti, 2000). This is an instrument that examined practical components of day-to-day literacy instruction. The instrument provided a structure for emphasizing desired instructional practices to classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and administrators (Appendix I). It is a checklist with seven components: classroom culture, prereading phase, guided reading phase, postreading phase, skill and strategy instruction, materials and tasks of the lesson, and teacher practice. The observations were carried out beginning with a pre-observation conference and a post-observation feedback session.

Not every component was observed in every lesson. The framework was an effort to include possible desirable aspects. With the intent to improve elementary reading achievement and instruction, the RLOF (Henk, et. al., 2000) also attempts to increase cooperation and

communication among literacy teachers and administrators. Fullan (1998) suggests that "informed collaboration occurs when enlightened administrators and teacher stop looking to external sources for instructional improvement, but look within, focusing on the effects that their practices exert on children's performance" (p. 10).

Anecdotal notes taken during the lessons added to the gathered data and enriched the feedback sessions for the teachers and researcher. I visited each classroom approximately twice monthly. I visited the kindergarten classroom 24 times, the first grade classroom 26 times, and the second grade classroom 22 times. I kept field notes during the visit to expand my understanding of the classroom literacy instruction, the teachers' understandings, and the students' learning. A timeframe for data collection is located in Appendix J.

Data collection involved the participant teachers, their students, and the researcher. The frequent classroom visits provided rich descriptions for observations and for identifying evidence of the impact of the professional development and many opportunities for literacy coaching interactions. The observed events were recorded in natural setting within three classrooms. Yin (1994) writes that case studies are the preferred method when event occur naturally.

### **Data Analysis**

The design of the proposed case study allowed for many rich opportunities to gather data. There was a great deal of data to analyze: teacher surveys, reflection logs, interviews, formal and informal student assessments, fieldnotes, and classroom observations. Data analysis involved the following steps (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995).

1. Organization of details about the case: the specific facts about the case are arranged in a logical (e.g., chronological) order.

2. Categorization of data: categories are identified that can help cluster the data into meaningful groups.
3. Interpretation of single instances: specific documents, occurrences, and other bits of data are examined for the specific meanings they might have in relation to the case.
4. Identification of patterns: the data and their interpretations are scrutinized for underlying themes and other patterns that characterize the case more broadly than a single piece of information can reveal.
5. Synthesis and generalization: an overall portrait of the case is constructed. Conclusions are drawn that may have implications beyond the specific case that has been studied.

The analysis of my data began as soon as the data collection began with the first classroom visits. The analysis occurred on a recursive basis while collecting the data. Because of the nature of qualitative research, the data analysis was "customized, revised, and choreographed" (Creswell, 1998). Dey (1995) writes that qualitative research relies upon "insight, intuition and impressions" (p. 78).

Data gathered directly from the participating teachers included the following:

1. Teaching logs: These records of detailed activities, strategies, and content of literacy instruction facilitated categorization of data and identification of patterns from the specific facts recorded in chronological order. Teacher dispositions about the literacy instruction were coded from the open-ended reflection component of the log. From the codes themes emerged of the teachers' thoughts about their lesson designs and the students responses.
2. DeFord's Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile: This instrument, which was administered at the beginning and at the end of the 2006-2007 provided representations



of teacher beliefs. With the data from this, it was possible to identify, synthesize, and generalize changes in teachers' understanding in literacy instruction. The analysis of the pre and post reading profiles were computed using SPSS to determine the standard deviations of the three orientations and to use a dependent sample t-test to determine an effect size.

3. Pre and post literacy teacher surveys: These surveys gathered information about the teachers' classroom practices and professional development experiences. It enriched the categorization of data and the identification of patterns and themes. The pre and post surveys were compared by hand to notice changes in responses over the school year.
4. Pre and post interviews: These gathered information in another manner to inform the researcher about the teachers' instructional practices, beliefs about literacy, and professional development. The data enriched the synthesis and generalization of the overall study. The interviews were coded and organized to find emerging themes.

Data gathered from students of the participating teachers included:

1. Marie Clay's Observation Survey: This informal assessment given at the beginning of the school, mid-year and at the end of the 2006-2007 school year helped direct the data analysis to categories and conclusions for generalizations. Data from the Observation Surveys were charted on tables and compared in order to see growth in raw scores.
2. Reading and Writing checklist adapted from Dorn and Soffos (2001): This was completed four times during the school year to deepen interpretations of student progress. These were compared four times during the year to notice changes in students' literacy behaviors.

3. Artifacts of student work: These provided details to expand data interpretation and to strengthen patterns and themes. They were examined for evidence of student learning over time.

Data collected from the researcher include:

1. Reading Lesson Observation Framework: This instrument informed the researcher of each teacher's instructional efficacy and offer opportunities for positive feedback with participants. Its influence upon data analysis lies in the identification of patterns and leads to more accurate generalizations. The framework provided an instrument to track literacy instruction and any changes that occurred during the year. The checklist format provided a consistent method to record and respond.
2. Fieldnotes and anecdotal records: These were collected during each classroom visit to expand understanding of the literacy instruction, the teachers' understandings, and the students' learning. This data provided the details, expanded the categories, shaped the interpretation, led to patterns and themes, and developed the generalizations. The fieldnotes and anecdotal records provided an open window to record teachers' literacy instruction and students' literacy learning.
3. Reflections: These were written after each professional development session and after each classroom visit. The data provided insight into the understandings of the teachers of balanced literacy procedures and processes and provided feedback to me as facilitator and coach on my communication, modeling, and roles. As with fieldnotes and anecdotal records, my reflections provided details, expanded categories, shaped the interpretation, led to patterns and themes, and developed the generalizations.

The data collected for this case study included multiple sources of evidence, a variety of instruments, and three main informant sources: teacher beliefs and reflections, student data, and researcher observation and fieldnotes. Using multiple sources allowed for triangulation of the data in an attempt to establish converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 1994). Triangulation was accomplished by comparing teacher self-reports documents of practice and beliefs, the results of student assessment data and artifacts, and the researcher's observation and field notes

The data from the study fit Creswell's (1998) data analysis spiral . The first loop of the spiral is data management, which involves organizing materials and tools. The next loop asks the research to gain a sense of all the gathered data. "Read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts" (Agar, 1980, p.103). When reading, Agar suggests writing memos of key concepts in the margins to begin the process of exploring initial categories and evidence to support them.

The third loop moves from the reading and memoing into describing, classifying, and interpreting the loop (Creswell, 1998). Within this loop, category formation begins with detailed descriptions revealing classifications and interpretations. Classifying begins when themes and categories emerge, and the research can identify several general themes. It is during this process that the data is reduced to smaller manageable sets to use in the final narrative. Interpretation is included in this third loop to make sense of the data and determine larger meanings of the study. The final loop of the spiral reveals a representation of the data and its findings (Creswell, 1998).

With the study of professional development, I made a detailed description of the case and its setting. Dyson and Genishi (2005) write that the end goal of the case study is "to understand how the phenomenon matters from the perspectives of the participants in the case

(p. 81). The process was inductive and grounded in the collected data. Looking at change over time in classroom instruction, I was able to analyze the multiple sources of data to determine evidence of change in instruction and synthesize those changes into an overall perspective of the impact of the professional development upon instruction.

Data analysis occurred on a recursive basis and was conducted simultaneously while collecting data. Miles and Huberman (1984) place this type of data into three categories:

- data reduction, which refers to the "process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data";
- data display, which is "an organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking"; and
- "conclusion drawing and verification" (p. 22).

I conducted and facilitated the balanced literacy professional development sessions for K-2 teachers who chose to participate. In my proposed research, I acted as literacy coach for one kindergarten teacher, one first grade teacher and one second grade teacher who also participated in the professional development sessions throughout the year. Soon after the beginning of the school year, I met the participating teachers and visited in their classrooms. For the remaining school year, I made classroom visits approximately twice a month to act as literacy coach.

### **Standards of Quality**

From Creswell (1998), standards of quality may be assessed through verification procedures. He writes that verification is a unique strength of qualitative research because of the extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness to participants in the study. Creswell lists eight procedures for establishing trustworthiness in a qualitative

study: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying research bias, member checks, rich and thick descriptions, and external audits. In the proposed research, extensive verification is needed to answer the question, "Do I have it right?" and then to highlight the importance of the validity of the study (Stake, 1995).

In this study, several of Creswell's (1998) suggested procedures were applied. *Prolonged engagement and persistent observation* were integral to the study's methodology and helped to build trust with the participants, informed the researcher of the culture within the classrooms, and provided opportunities to clarify any confusions that may occur. *The time spent in the classrooms* allowed me to review and revise components of the study making it more relevant to the purpose and focus (Creswell, 1998). Another verification procedure to be used in the proposed study was *triangulation*. With the multiple and different sources of data, it was hoped to obtain corroborating evidence to indicate the impact of the professional development for balanced literacy instruction on classroom instruction. *Peer review or debriefing* is a procedure, which provides an external check of the process (Creswell, 1998). The peer debriefer asks questions about the methods, meanings, and interpretations and listens to the researcher's experiences and feelings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dr. Marjorie Hancock, my major professor, worked with me as a peer reviewer.

In addition, procedures for *rich, thick description* from my time and experience in the classrooms allowed me to make decisions about how the information could be transferred to other settings "because of shared characteristics" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). The final procedure that must be applied to the verification process was clarifying *research bias*. With my education and experience in whole language and Reading Recovery®, it was important

that anyone reading my research understand my position. It was necessary to comment on my past experiences and orientations that might have shaped the interpretation and approach of the study.

To obtain permission to conduct the study, I submitted my proposed plan to the midwestern public school district. Dyson and Gensishi (2005) describe this as a critical first step, which helps to build trust necessary for the research in a case study. As Dyson and Gensishi suggest, I requested permission from the district to conduct the research and I obtained the permission of the Institutional Review Board at Kansas State University for research involving the study of human subjects (Appendix B). Dyson and Gensishi (2005) reminded me, "how we represent who we are in written form, particularly on the consent form that subjects/participants are asked to sign, has practical and theoretical implications" (p. 62)

In addition, I asked for consent to participate from the K-2 teachers and parents of the children in the K-2 classrooms. Copies of those requests are included in Appendix A.

In all phases of this proposed research, I maintained frequent and explicit communication with my major professor, Dr. Marjorie Hancock. She assisted me in maintaining clarity of the research study's purpose and procedures.

### **Possible Research to Practice Implications**

The purpose of the study was to observe and to describe changes in teaching and learning in one kindergarten classroom, one first grade classroom and one second grade classroom during the 2006-2007 school year as the teachers participated in a district professional development plan for balanced literacy. The teachers had the support of coaching from me throughout the school year. From the data analysis, the impact of the professional development upon teaching and learning emerged. Key components of the professional development were

evident in the data - the elements of balanced literacy teaching, the effectiveness of the professional development design, and the influence of the coaching.

The data showed transfer of the professional development to classroom practice. The application of the professional development to practice provided authentic evidence of the effects of the sessions. Because data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection, proof of transferring teaching knowledge and skills were noted early. It was observed in instruction and in student work. It was the researcher's responsibility to identify transfer with the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1990).

During this study, it was found that the professional development met the teachers' needs for a model "in which teachers confront research and theory directly, were able to regularly engage in evaluation of their practice, and use their colleagues for mutual assistance" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 11). This study encouraged teachers to be decision-makers, reflective, and collaborative.

Courtland (1992) states "Even after participation in long-term projects in which educators have opportunities for ongoing professional development, they will vary in their conceptual understanding of learning, their practices, and their degree of commitment to the innovation " (p. 546). Teachers respond differently to the professional development based on their personal and professional experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning (Swan, 2003). It was my intent as the facilitator of the professional development to create a vicarious experience in a balanced literacy classroom so the teachers were able to transfer the knowledge and skills to their classrooms. Stake refers to this as "naturalistic generalization" (1995).

The study intended to create a culture where teachers were comfortable taking on the theories and practices of balanced literacy, trying new instructional skills, reflecting on practice,

collaborating with a literacy coach, and working as a community of professional learners. Just as balanced literacy aims to teach all children to read and write, professional development needs to work with all teachers within a supportive community of learners with common goals. By providing relevant, ongoing professional development, there were positive implications for teacher change and student achievement.

### **Summary**

Qualitative research "illuminates the dynamics of the classroom and instructional setting" (Courtland, 1992, p. 545). The purpose was to determine the impact of participation in a yearlong professional development project in balanced literacy instruction on teaching and learning. In this study, I facilitated a teacher study group and coached the literacy instruction in one kindergarten, one first grade, and one second grade classroom to observe the dynamics of teaching and learning.

This study used the case study (Cresswell, 2002) method to look at the implementation of balanced literacy instruction, its influence on teachers' practices and beliefs, and its impact on students' literacy learning. Data collection instruments included teacher reflection logs, theoretical orientation profiles, surveys, interviews, fieldnotes, classroom observations, and student work samples.

The following chapter discusses the results of the case study of a balanced literacy professional development in K-2 classroom. As Courtland (1992) writes, the dynamics of the classrooms and the instructional settings empowered this qualitative research.



## **CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS**

This chapter presents the results of teachers' participation in a yearlong professional development project in balanced literacy instruction. To be expert classroom teachers, teachers need professional development to support their instructional approaches. The implementation of new or refined teaching practices is more likely to succeed when teachers have support systems in place. This research provided professional development and classroom literacy coaching to give teachers instructional theories, evidence-based instructional practices, modeling of teaching, and opportunities to practice and to reflect. All names in this chapter are pseudonyms.

This study encompassed one school year beginning in June 2006 and ending in May 2007. The participants were all elementary teachers in a mid-western school district, and all teachers volunteered to participate in the study. They were able to earn three hours graduate credit from a nearby university.

The content of this chapter reports the effect of the yearlong balanced literacy professional development upon the K-2 professional development group and the impact of the professional development project and classroom literacy coaching upon the classrooms of three teachers of the case study. The outcomes of this study respond to the central question and four subquestions which formed the basis of the research.

**What is the impact of a year long balanced literacy professional development plan on K-2 teachers and students?**

- 1. How does participation in the professional development impact K-2 teachers' understanding about literacy learning processes?**

- 2. How does participation in the professional development influence K-2 classroom instruction?**
- 3. How does teachers' participation in the professional development influence K-2 students' literacy learning?**
- 4. How do my roles as a professional development facilitator and literacy coach influence my understandings of these positions?**

### **Professional Development Study Group**

The K-2 professional development group began by meeting on Monday through Friday afternoons for 30 hours from June 19 to June 30, 2006. There were from 13 to 20 teachers in each session. Participants often brought colleagues along to share the topics under study. Thirteen teachers enrolled in the class for graduate credit. All surveys, profiles, and evaluations were anonymously submitted.

The goals for the June sessions were to expand awareness of recent reading research, to discuss constructivist learning, to set a framework for high quality classroom instruction for all students, and to examine the components of balanced literacy with attention to guided reading. Each session was structured as a book club with all participants reading the materials and sharing their connections and insights. The texts used to connect teachers' knowledge and experiences were Richard Allington's (2001) *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Reserach-Based Programs* and *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children* by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (1996).

Topics drawn from those resources included:

- Reading theory
- Literacy processing

- Theories of balanced literacy
- Research findings of classroom practices
- Guided reading
- Organizing and managing for balanced literacy
- Comprehension
- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Informal assessment
- Running records

During the next eight two-hour professional development study sessions, which were conducted monthly from August to April, the components of balanced literacy instruction were studied in-depth and were linked to participants' classroom practices (Appendix J).

The combination of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills recommended by the NRP (2000) were part of the focus for the two hour workshops. Debbie Miller's (2002) book, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* was read and studied by the participants to explore the values of teacher modeling, reflecting, and informal observations.

In this chapter, teachers' written responses and oral comments are recorded in italics. This format highlights the precise remarks from the reflection logs, surveys, interviews, and evaluations.

## Teacher Survey

At the beginning of the study sessions in June, 13 teachers completed a survey adapted from Padak and Rasinski (2001), which provided information about their professional practice, professional development experiences and professional development interests. Thirteen teachers completed the same survey in April 2007 after the professional development sessions concluded. Ten of those teachers had completed the pre-survey in June 2006. The teacher survey gathered information on: 1) personal information about the teachers and their experiences, 2) instructional practices, 3) teaching reading, 4) teaching writing, 5) literacy assessment, 6) resources for teaching literacy, 7) professional habits, and 8) professional development opportunities.

The teachers who completed the survey had the following teaching assignments:

**Table 4.1 Participants and Teaching Assignments**

| Teaching assignment | Number of Participants<br>June 2006 | Number of Participants<br>April 2007 |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Kindergarten        | 2                                   | 2                                    |
| First Grade         | 3                                   | 3                                    |
| Second Grade        | 2                                   | 2                                    |
| Title 1             | 1                                   | 2                                    |
| Special Education   | 2                                   | 1                                    |
| Speech pathologist  | 1                                   | 2                                    |
| Librarian           | 1                                   | 1                                    |
| Para-professional   | 1                                   | 0                                    |

Classroom teaching experience ranged from one year to 33 years. Twelve of the teachers had taught seven years or more, and nine had taught at their current grade level for five or more years. Ten of the teachers have taught in their current buildings for five or more years. From the group, five had Master's degrees. One teacher held certification from the Kansas Department of Education as a Reading Specialist, two teachers held English as a Second Language

endorsements, and one was certified as an elementary administrator. All the teachers had earned graduate credits in reading and language arts over the last ten years.

The group reported that they had implemented the Harcourt Collections (Farr, Strickland, & Beck, 2001) basal series for the last six years. As a district adoption, classroom teachers were given professional development in its implementation. School district administrators also provided professional development in the Four-Blocks® Literacy Model (Cunningham and Defee, 1991). Individual teachers supplemented the Harcourt series and the Four-Blocks model with materials and programs that appealed to their teaching styles and interests. Some of the additional materials and programs were guided reading, Read Naturally (Read Naturally, Inc., 2000), Scholastic Leveled book collections (Scholastic, 1998), Reading Counts (Scholastic, 1998), Zoo Phonics (Zoo Phonics, 1999), ReadWriteThink (International Reading Association/National Council of Teachers of English, 2002), Starfall (Starfall Education 2007), and Kidspiration (Inspiration, 2003).

In a comparison of the pre- and post-surveys, there were notable changes in teachers' responses during the school year. There were four categories which showed change over the period of the study. These categories are instructional practices in reading and writing, the use of assessment to inform instruction, perceptions about classroom materials, and needs for professional development. Table 4.2 shows the categories of changes and percentages of teachers in the professional development group who indicated their practice in each category.

**Table 4.2 Pre and Post Survey Responses/Indications of Change**

|  | <b>Responses June 2006</b>              | <b>Responses April 2007</b>            |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Changes in Instructional Practices</b>  |   |  |
| 1. Whole group instruction for reading, writing, and spelling                                | 38%                                     | 0%                                     |
| 2. Time spent daily on decoding, and spelling  | 77% More than 30 min                    | 54% More than 30 min                   |
| 3. Time spent daily teaching writing   | 23% More than 30 min                    | 85% More than 30 min                   |
| 4. Providing frequent opportunities to write   | 31%                                     | 69%                                    |
| 5. Effective in working with struggling readers and writers                                  | 23%                                     | 85%                                    |
| 6. Increased confidence in working with strongest readers and writers                        | 15%                                     | 62%                                    |
| 7. Balance between skills and strategy instruction   | 23% All skills<br>31% Mostly strategies | 0% All skills<br>85% Mostly strategies |
| <b>Changes in Use of Assessment to Inform Instruction</b>                                    |   |  |
| 1. Regular assessment and diagnosis of reading needs of struggling readers                   | 69%                                     | 100%                                   |
| 2. Sufficient time and support to diagnose students' reading needs                           | 23%                                     | 92%                                    |
| 3. Possessing comprehensive strategies and skills to evaluate student growth                 | 46%                                     | 92%                                    |
| 4. Collects information about the extent to which students achieve curricular literacy goals | 46%                                     | 85%                                    |
| 5. Assessment in integral part of instruction  | 69%                                     | 100%                                   |
| <b>Changes in Perceptions about Classroom Materials</b>                                      |   |  |
| 1. Sufficient books and other literacy materials in classroom                                | 38%                                     | 77%                                    |
| 2. Sufficient literacy materials in school library   | 54%                                     | 92%                                    |
| 3. Sufficient instructional supplies   | 62%                                     | 100%                                   |
| <b>Changes in Needs for Professional Development</b>   |   |  |
| 1. Adequate opportunities to engage in professional conversations                            | 77%                                     | 31%                                    |
| 2. Adequate opportunities to visit and observe other teaching                                | 38%                                     | 69%                                    |
| 3. Opportunities to reflect with colleagues to problem solve literacy issues                 | 85%                                     | 31%                                    |

### *Changes in Instructional Practices*

Changes in instructional practices appeared in items focusing on reading, writing, and spelling. The changes were the following:

1. On the pre-survey, five teachers reported using whole group instruction for reading, writing, decoding, and spelling. In April 2006 all teachers had abandoned whole group instruction in literacy teaching.
2. Time spent on decoding and spelling instruction also changed over time. On the pre-survey, ten teachers spent more than thirty minutes each day on decoding and spelling instruction. On the post-survey, seven teachers reported spending less than thirty minutes each day on spelling and decoding.
3. Time spent teaching writing also increased. At the beginning of the study, three teachers reported spending thirty minutes or more on writing. At the end of the study, eleven teachers reported spending thirty minutes or more on writing.
4. Teachers reported providing more opportunities for students to write. In June, four teachers related that their students wrote for a variety of purposes. In April, nine teachers related that their students had opportunities to write for a variety of purposes.
5. Working with struggling readers and writers was perceived more effective on the post-survey. Three teachers supported effective teaching to the lowest students in the beginning of the study, and at the end of the study, 11 teachers believed their teaching was effective with the low students.

6. There were also increases in teachers' confidence when working with the strongest readers and writers. Two teachers thought their teaching was effective with the strong students on the pre-survey, but eight teachers believed it was effective on the post-survey.
7. There were changes in how teachers viewed the balance between skills instruction and strategy instruction. On the pre-survey, three teachers indicated their instruction was almost all skills, but on the post-survey, no teachers reported that view. In the beginning of the study, four teachers believed their instruction was mostly strategies with some skills. At the end of the study, eleven teachers viewed their instruction as mostly strategies with some skills

### ***Changes in the Use of Assessment to Inform Instruction***

Changes in the use of assessment to inform instruction were noticeable over the time of the professional development project.

1. On the pre-survey, nine teachers agreed they regularly assessed and diagnosed the reading needs of the struggling readers in their classrooms, and on the post-survey, 13 teachers affirmed that.
2. There were changes in the number of teachers who believed they had sufficient time and support to diagnose students' reading needs. At the beginning of the study, three teachers reported they had enough time to support students' reading needs, and at the end of the study, 12 teachers indicated they had enough time.
3. Possessing comprehensive strategies and skills to evaluate student growth in reading and writing that examine all aspects of students' reading and writing was an area that teachers expressed changed over the school year. On the pre-test, six



teachers indicated their evaluation skills were comprehensive, and on the post-test, 12 teachers believed their evaluation strategies and skills were comprehensive.

4. At the beginning of the study, six teachers reported collecting information about the extent to which students were achieving curricular goals in literacy. At the end of the study, that number of teachers grew to 11.
5. Increases occurred in the number of teachers who believed assessment was an integral part of instruction in their classrooms. Nine teachers stated that assessment was integral on the pre-survey, and 13 teachers upheld assessment as an integral part of their classroom instruction on the post-survey.

### ***Changes in Perceptions about Classroom Materials***

Teachers' responses about the literacy materials in their classrooms changed over the course of the professional development. The changes were supported by a comment written in the margins of one post-survey: *I started looking for teaching opportunities in the books I already had in my classroom library.*

Some meaningful changes in perceptions about classroom materials were the following:

1. On the pre-survey, five teachers reported they had enough books and other literacy materials in their classroom libraries. On the post-survey, ten teachers stated they had enough books and other literacy materials in their classrooms.
2. Considering school libraries, seven teachers believed there were enough literacy materials at the beginning of the professional development project, and 12 teachers expressed that belief at the end of the project.

3. Over the school year the number of teachers who responded they had instruction supplies needed to offer an effective literacy program grew from eight to 13.

### ***Changes in Needs for Professional Development***

From the pre- and post-survey responses, there appeared to be rethinking of needs for professional development opportunities. Those revised responses reflected options in professional development that had not been earlier considered. One comment entered on the pre-survey form stated, *I never thought about visiting another teacher to watch what she did well. Who would watch my class?* Another teacher wrote on her pre-survey form, *We need this kind of professional development that lasts longer than one day.*

Some changes concerning responses about professional development were the following:

1. The number of teachers who stated they had adequate opportunities to engage in professional conversations decreased from ten to four over the project school year.
2. On the pre-survey, five teachers believed they had adequate opportunities to visit and observe other teaching. After the professional development, nine teachers stated they had that opportunity.
3. At the beginning of the project, 11 teachers believed they had opportunities to reflect with colleagues upon student work and to problem solve issues relating to literacy instruction and learning. After participating in the project, only four teachers revealed they had adequate opportunities to collaborate on student learning to problem solve.

As seen in Table 4.2, there were changes in teachers' instructional practices. The teachers switched focus from whole group to working with individual students, to investing more instructional time on writing and to teaching strategies for problem solving, and to believing they

were able to work effectively with struggling readers and with the strongest readers. The use of assessment increased in all the classrooms as assessment became an integral part of instruction and especially in working with struggling readers. As teachers considered the role of assessment in informing their instruction, they found sufficient time to diagnose students' needs and to collect information about the extent to which students achieved curricular literacy goals. Responses to the pre- and post- surveys reflected a changed awareness of classroom materials. Table 4.2 showed changed perceptions of potential for using the existing classroom materials and the contents of school libraries. The survey responses indicated that teachers realized the instructional possibilities within the materials they already had in their classrooms and in their schools. During the course of the balanced literacy professional development project, teachers determined that they did not have adequate time or opportunities for professional conversations or for collaborating to resolve issues relating to literacy instruction and learning.

The teachers' responses on the pre- and post- surveys showed transformed literacy instruction in terms of teaching practices, use of assessment to inform instruction, perceptions about classroom materials, and needs for professional development. Those changes fit the definition of balanced literacy as defined in this study "an instructional approach which is research-based, guided by assessed needs, integrated across the curriculum, and flexible so that teachers can respond to the individual needs of each child in decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension in a socio-cultural setting with the purpose of empowering children to develop into lifelong readers and writers" (p.18).

Participants completed informal evaluations after the June 2006 sessions, in November, 2006 and at the end of the school year in April 2007. These evaluations asked for feedback on presented content and its application to their instruction. With these evaluations, the participants

became stakeholders in the process and gained ownership in the study. Cresswell (1998) described this evaluation method as "participant-oriented".

The June 2006 evaluation contained comments regarding the opportunities the professional development offered to collaborate with colleagues in discussion and in sharing of ideas and practices. One teacher wrote, *I look forward to the follow-up sessions and to the interaction with other teachers from other buildings.* Another comment of the session was on the content of the sessions. *It helped us see the connections and the actual practice for guided reading.* One comment was particularly revealing. *What I liked best about this study was it was okay to think differently from the norm. I am ready to take a chance and do what's best for kids.* An additional teacher wrote, *I was already dissatisfied with part of the district's language arts curriculum. This gives impetus to change.* One teacher thought of possibilities for a professional book study in her school. *I'm trying to think of how I could 'hook' teachers in my building on the What Really Matters book.*

In November 2006, teachers' evaluations addressed changes that were happening in their classrooms as the balanced literacy professional development sessions progressed. One teacher remarked that she always knew reading and writing *go hand in hand.* She expressed her goal for the upcoming school year was motivating readers. Then she wrote, *Now, I feel like I should go back and change my goal to motivating readers and writers. I have definitely incorporated more writing in my daily routine.* Another expression of awareness of the reciprocity of reading and writing was stated. *There is such a strong correlation between reading and writing. This class helped me see the research in which one supports the other.* Some teachers did not express changes in views of the reading and writing processes, but their comments were meaningful.

*No. I have not changed my views. Much of what I have heard through the balanced literacy class has either validated what I am doing or it was something I had read or heard about through other resources. Another teacher expressed thoughts of no changes even more specifically. No. I really feel as if I have had these views of the balanced approach to reading and writing. I just didn't know how to do it well. This class has helped me see that all children can learn at a deeper level when they are instructed properly and in a developmentally appropriate way.*

The November 2006 evaluations also revealed some information about changes in instructional practices, which occurred since the beginning of school. One teacher reported implementing guided reading and wrote, *I have never had all the kids interested in their own learning and so engaged!* Another teacher wrote that she found changing to working with small, instructional groups was more effective. A comment from one teacher stated, *I am looking more at guided reading and getting better at challenging the kids and making the learning meaningful to them.* A Title 1 teacher shared she was spending less time on direct phonics instruction and incorporating it into small reading groups. Not all teachers indicated changes in literacy instructional practice. *I was already using guided reading and literacy centers for MANY years. I am adding a few new centers that this immature class might benefit from.*

Several teachers related they had let go of some instructional practices to allow for a more balanced approach. One teacher wrote, *There is less 'cutsey' and more meat!* Another teacher shared that she was *not just covering material.* She wrote that her teaching had more focus on observation and frequent assessment to develop her lessons based on the students' needs. She continued to write:

*If I need to revisit a concept in other ways, I do until students feel confident and have mastered the necessary skills. In a sense what I am trying to say is that I have let go of the fact that we are just 'covering' material and now I am helping students master skills and learn strategies to help them develop literacy.*

At the end of the professional development in April, 2007 teachers shared more specific details about the influence of the balanced literacy study. A teacher detailed some activities she gained from the sessions and had implemented in her instruction. She listed using magnetic letters for letter and word work, explicit prompting language, administering and analyzing running records, and making time for students to do familiar reading. The most frequent remarks were made about the opportunities to meet for collaboration and discussion. *One of the best things about this professional development was the opportunity to talk with other teachers. It needed to be for all teachers in the district, especially struggling and inexperienced teachers.* Another teacher stated the same thoughts this way: *Some of the best parts were the camaraderie with district colleagues.* One teacher wrote that the best part about the professional development was that it carried on over the entire school year, and another teacher requested that it continue for another year with more frequent sessions. One teacher shared that the professional development made no changes in her views, instructional practices, or student literacy learning. She wrote, *I was already doing this.*

### ***The DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile***

Teachers' classroom practices are related to their beliefs (Richardson, 1994). From the theoretical knowledge and instructional skills studied and examined in the balanced literacy professional development sessions, the study's aim was to document impact upon classroom literacy practices. When looking at balanced literacy implementation in classrooms, it was

impossible to look at instructional changes without looking at changes in teachers' beliefs as shown on the pre- and post-TORP instruments. The instruments identified the teachers' theoretical orientation to reading instruction on a Likert scale ranging from phonics with emphasis on decoding through shared skills with emphasis on word recognition to whole language instruction with emphasis on developing sense of story and text.

The TORP was given to 13 participants in June 2006 and to the same 13 participants in April 2007. The teachers' responses fell in the shared skills area on both pre- and post-profiles. A dependent samples test for the TORP dimensions indicated no statistical significant change in teachers' orientation from pre -to post-profiles. However, there were differences as shown in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3 DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Pre- and Post Reading Profile**

**Paired Samples Statistics**

|                                       | Mean   | N  | Std.<br>Deviation |
|---------------------------------------|--------|----|-------------------|
| Pair 1 Phonics Orientation Pre        | 2.8492 | 13 | .42013            |
| Phonics Orientation Post              | 3.0892 | 13 | .52988            |
| Pair 2 Whole Language Orientation Pre | 2.8008 | 13 | .59703            |
| Whole Language Orientation Post       | 2.8477 | 13 | .44477            |
| Pair 3 Shared Skills Orientation Pre  | 2.8808 | 13 | .46257            |
| Shared Skills Orientation Post        | 2.8854 | 13 | .38744            |

An dependent sample t-test (APPENDIX D), showed a change in the teachers' orientation away from phonics instruction (phonics:  $t(12) = -1.350, p > .05$ ; whole language:  $t(12) = -.281, p > .05$ ; shared skills:  $t(12) = -.026, p > .05$ ). Taking that data, an effect size was computed to look

for the impact of the balanced literacy professional development upon teachers' theoretical reading orientations:  $r = 0.363$ . Using Cohen's (1992) suggestions, there was a medium effect from the professional development plan.

### ***Summary of Professional Development Study Group***

Over the 2006-2007 school year, the 13 teachers who participated in the balanced literacy professional development reported changes in instructional practices, which grew from their involvement in the study group. There were four categories, which showed notable changes.

The changes were in:

- instructional practices in reading and writing,
- the use of assessment to inform instruction
- perceptions about classroom materials
- needs for professional development.

Although there was no notable change in teachers' theoretical orientations to reading instruction, those orientations were confirmed for one teacher. She shared in her final evaluation, *There are instructional practices that I use that were validated through this balanced literacy class.*



## **Three Teachers**

This section showcases three teachers from kindergarten, first and second grades who volunteered to be focused subjects in this case study over the 2006 - 2007 school year. The teachers teach in a school district in a midwestern town of nearly 50,000 residents. All students in their classrooms are important participants in the case study. The narrative of each teacher describes the teacher, her students, and the impact of her participation in the balanced literacy professional development project on her classroom instruction. Data gathered from each teacher came from interviews, classroom observations, fieldnotes, reflection logs, and the Reading Lesson Observation Framework (Henk et al, 2000). During the 2006-2007 school year, the three teachers were observed many times. The kindergarten teacher had 24 observation visits. The first grade teacher had 26 observation visits, and the second grade teacher had 22 observation visits. Data gathered from the students in the classrooms came from fieldnotes, student work samples, the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002), and from a literacy growth checklist designed by Dorn and Soffos (2001). Italics are used with all direct statements from the three teachers and their students, and pseudonyms are applied to each teachers and student.

### **Ms. Thomas' Kindergarten Classroom**

Ms. Thomas taught full-day kindergarten at Lakeview Elementary School. She earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Kansas State University. Her early classroom experiences were in a large district in the western United States. There she taught fourth grade for one year and third grade for another year. She taught in a kindergarten classroom for two years. Since her return to the Midwest, she has team taught kindergarten with the same partner at Lakeview Elementary for the last seven years.

Ms. Thomas shared that her personal reading choices came from recommendations from friends and colleagues. Although she used to keep a writing journal, she quit doing that because as she stated, *I am not a confident writer, and I think that stems from trying to be a perfectionist as a child. Now it is hard to get the flow going* (Interview, May 2007).

At Lakeview during the 2006 - 2007 school year, Ms. Thomas was the Professional Development Coordinator. Her responsibilities included meeting monthly with other district professional development coordinators, organizing building professional development, approving teachers' professional development plans, and entering data for the school staff onto a computer program that tracked professional development points.

Ms. Thomas was concerned about the minimum of district involvement with the *experts* from Kansas State University. It also concerned her that only *a handful* of teachers were participating in the balanced literacy professional development. She expressed concern that it was only for one year and would not be ongoing.

*Our district needs to decide a focus for professional development, and that professional development needs to go deeper. Our building level activities are never part of any district focus. I want professional development that helps us teach our students to be thinkers* (Initial interview, September 2006).

In the September interview, Ms. Thomas was asked what changes she wanted to make as part of her participation in balanced literacy professional development project. She replied, *To become able to help the students be responsible and to provide more chances to help them develop independence* (Initial interview, September 2006).

### *Ms. Thomas in the Classroom*

Ms. Thomas and her teaching partner's class had 34 students who moved in and out during the year. There were two student teachers each semester from Kansas State University. The classroom was very large and spacious. It measured 45 feet by 90 feet. There was a wall of shelves and cubicles for the students to hang their coats and backpacks. The classroom was divided into sections by low-standing bookshelves and short tables with kindergarten sized chairs. The bookshelves and tables were used for independent, small group, and activity centers for student work.

Activity centers were located throughout the classroom. The centers included a center for listening to reading, four computers for skills practice in phonemic awareness and math, and a center for creative writing and for writing letters to be placed in the class post office boxes. There was an activity table that contained a variety of materials during the school year. Some of the materials were water, sand, packing peanuts, plastic insects, and cotton balls.

In the center of the classroom, Ms. Thomas established a gathering place for whole class activities. The students sat upon a rectangular ABC rug , which faced a white writing board upon an easel. The easel also held big books and writing pads. There was a rocking chair for the teacher. Along the wall beside this gathering place was an eight feet long word wall. The words on the wall were students' names, high frequency words, and words relating to curriculum content studies.

While participating in the balanced literacy professional development project, Ms. Thomas decided she wanted to expand her literacy instruction with more focused work on letters, letter sounds, and symbols. From the information and modeling presented in the professional development, she specifically wanted to teach directionality in reading and writing by integrating

the use of magnetic letters in her instruction. She related her knowledge of using movement to stronger learning. *I know that the eyes, hands, and brain have to look left to right* (Initial interview, September 2006).

Ms. Thomas also wanted to adjust her guided reading lessons to *go deeper* (Personal communication, October 24, 2006). She believed she could expand her instructional focus to include more vocabulary development, more focus on comprehension, and better problem solving strategies. She also wanted to focus on directly teaching the students to use what they knew in reading when they were writing and vice versa. She believed these instructional changes would lead to stronger teaching for students' independence in literacy behaviors.

### ***November 9, 2006***

During my school visit on November 9, 2006, Ms. Thomas worked with a group of four students in a guided reading lesson. The read aloud book to the class that day was *If I Owned a Candy Factory* by James Stevenson (1989). In a conversation about the story, Eli connected that story to the movie *Charley and the Chocolate Factory*, and all the other students indicated the same connection. Ms. Thomas took that cue and commented that often books they read make them think about other books they have read or movies they have seen. She reread the book to the small group and during that rereading, she stopped her reading at several points in the book to model aloud her thinking about the story. All the students were engaged in the story and in Ms. Thomas' thinking while reading. These activities reflected Ms. Thomas' participation in the balanced literacy professional development and its study of Debbie Miller's (2002) book *Reading with Meaning*.

Ms. Thomas continued the guided reading lesson by asking the students to share their favorite candy. She framed their responses by saying, *What candy do you like?* The students

responded *I like* ..... She asked them if they knew a word that began like the word "like". Jo answered "love", and the others looked at the word wall to find "love". Ms. Thomas then handed the students the correct magnetic letters to build the word "like", and all the students built the word. Then she told them to check the word by running their finger under the word and saying it slowly. Ms Thomas incorporated this self-evaluation behavior from the summer professional development sessions on cross-checking strategies to problem solve which lead to independence. The students were asked to scramble and rebuild the word "like" several times. She then gave them small white boards and dry-erase markers to practice writing "like". Frank and Jo wrote the word fluently and fast while Hillary wrote it correctly but very slowly. Jesse copied from the others. Frank, a second language learner, who fluently wrote the word looked up at me and asked with a smile on his face, *You think me smart?*

The students then received a blank piece of paper on which they wrote their contribution to a class book modeled on *If I Owned a Candy Factory* (Stevenson, 1989). Each student used the same sentence structure to write "I like \_\_\_\_." They chose a picture of their favorite candy to paste in the sentence. Ms. Thomas had printed clip-art pictures of different candy for the students to choose.

After the guided reading group went to their center activities, Ms. Thomas and I reflected on what went well in the lesson, She expressed that she believed she had taken the lesson *deeper* with vocabulary development, teaching high frequency words, and linking reading and writing. She was pleased with the students' active participation and evidence of vocabulary development, comprehension, problem solving, and independence.

*February 8, 2007*

An early morning observation visit on February 8, 2007 found Ms. Thomas and her students in the gathering area. They were composing the morning message. This was part of their daily routine, and this day it was about the schedule for the day. The students knew they were to contribute to the writing and to finding resources for problem solving unknown words.

Ms. Thomas began the message *Dear Class*. While she wrote this on the big chart paper, the group said the words slowly and quietly. She said "today" and asked, *Do you hear a little word you know at the beginning of 'today'?* Oscar and Norah said "to". Ms. Thomas asked Norah to come to write "to". As Norah began to write, she commented, *It needs to be a big t*. Ms. Thomas finished writing "today", and Alex shouted, *Leave a space*. The class reread *Today*, and said *is*. Paul jumped up, walked to the word wall and pointed to "is". Ms. Thomas asked him to write "is" in the message. As Paul wrote, the class spelled it aloud. The class reread the message and hesitated on the next word. Jo pointed to the monthly calendar on the nearby wall and quietly said the days of the week in sequence until she came to "Thursday". Most of the class shouted *Thursday*. While Ms. Thomas wrote "Thursday", she asked the class if they knew a word that started like "Thursday." There was no response. She asked them to check the word wall. Nita said *to* and, *the*. Ms. Thomas asked the class to take a good look at "Thursday" on the calendar and to look at the word wall. Shelly said, *They both start with t*. Ms. Thomas acknowledged Shelly's response, *You're right. Now look at the first two letters of Thursday*. Jo said, *T, H*, and Nita stood up and shouted *"The" starts like "Thursday."* The class reread the sentence, and in unison shouted, *Stop sign!* Ms. Thomas asked Beth to add the period at the end of the sentence.

The morning message continued with the daily schedule. Ms. Thomas said, *We have music and P.E. Do we know a word that sounds like "We"?* The class did not respond. Ms. Thomas asked, *What letter do you hear at the beginning of "we"?* Alex said *Y*. Ms. Thomas asked Alex and the class to look at the ABC chart and asked, *What starts like "we"?* Alex said, *String*, and most of the class said, *Watermelon*. Eli said, *It starts like watermelon with a "w"*. Ms. Thomas asked Alex to go to the ABC chart and point to the "w". He did that. She then asked Alex to show the class how to make a "w" in the air. He did that, and the class practiced making "w" several times. Ms. Thomas asked Alex to make a "w" for the message, and she finished the sentence. The class reread the sentence.

The next sentence in the message was about the choices for lunch. Ms. Thomas said *Lunch is spaghetti or quesadillas*. Ms. Thomas wrote *Lunch*. She asked Beth to write "is". Beth wrote it easily. The class reread the sentence. Ms. Thomas said, *Spaghetti...I'm not sure. Where can I look?* Eli said, *Look here*, and he pointed to the printed menu posted beside the calendar. Ms. Thomas went over to the menu and asked, *How do I know which word is spaghetti?* Jo said, *It start with "s."* Jo wrote "s" in the message, and Ms. Thomas finished the sentence. The class said all together, *Love, Ms, Thomas*. Frank wrote "Love", and Ms. Thomas added her name. She handed a pointer to Alex who pointed to each word as the class reread the morning message. The class went to write in their journals.

As the students wrote independently, Ms. Thomas and I discussed this shared and interactive writing experience. She had guided the students to compose the message and had acted as their scribe. During this lesson, she provided full support and modeled and demonstrated writing processes. In addition, Ms. Thomas involved individual students in demonstrating what they knew and controlled. I pointed out how this lesson had been useful in

allowing the students to make connections between oral and written language, in providing opportunities to attend to hearing sounds in words, in linking letter symbols to letter sounds, in allowing practice with high frequency vocabulary, and in using classroom resources to problem solve. Ms. Thomas commented that her classroom writing experiences were reinforcing the students writing and reading. She expressed that each writing lesson gave her more opportunities to observe what the students really knew. She realized that Alex still had problems with some letters of the alphabet and their related sounds and that she needed to teach to this more specifically.

*April 5, 2007*

Instructional changes were later observed during an April 2007 visit. It had rained hard overnight, and the playground was covered with earthworms. As the children entered the classroom, they had handfuls of wet, slimy, wiggling worms. One child announced to the class that they needed to build "habitats" for the worms. Shelly hurried over to the art center and cut a band of paper, which she shaped into a ring and glued in place. While she was doing this, she said, "I have a strategy". Then she put her worms into the center of the circle and raced back to the playground to pick up gravel to add to the "habitat".

Ms. Thomas grabbed this teachable moment and gathered the class on the ABC rug. She said they were going to write what worms like and what worms do not like. On a big piece of chart paper, she and the class shared the marker to write their knowledge of worms. The students dictated what they knew. The following is the result. The underlined letters and words are the contributions made by numerous students as they were called up to share by Ms. Thomas.



Worms like dirt, other worms, and making tunnels.

Worms do not like too much water, crocodiles, or birds. (Mattie)

During the journal writing time that followed their calendar activity that day, the students wrote their thoughts on worms. Some of their journal entries were:

Wome like Leefs an dddrt or Mud Worms Do not like PeBr win Tay sce Thm and dirds.

Worms like leaves and dirt and mud. Worms do not like people when they see them and birds. (Zoe)

the wrms od nut like Brds. Wrms like uther wrms.

The worms do not like birds. Worms like other worms. (Frank)

These experiences demonstrated evidence of instructional changes that Ms. Thomas established as goals and had continued to adapt throughout the year to meet the needs and interests of her students. Her co-teacher and student teachers were adapting and changing their teaching methods as they observed Ms. Thomas becoming more flexible in noticing what the students knew and what they needed to learn.

Throughout the school year, Ms. Thomas was very active in sharing with the balanced literacy professional development group. She shared how having a literacy coach in her classroom to model and support her reading and writing instruction made shifting to a balanced literacy model easier. *When Suzanne models a lesson, I have the opportunity to observe and think about the format of the lesson and to watch how the lesson focus is met* (October 5, 2006). Ms. Thomas also shared with the balanced literacy professional development group that she believed she was better at observing students' progress and needs. *I'm listening to the students'*

*comments and watching their behaviors in a different way. I'm noticing gaps and gains in learning that I've missed in other years. I've learned to be a better observer* (January 26, 2007).

The changes made in her classroom instruction were exciting to her as she saw the growth in her students' literacy learning.

### ***The Students in Ms. Thomas' Classroom***

Lakeview Elementary School is located on the edge of a U.S. Army base. Six of Ms. Thomas' students had parents who were in the Army, but none of the parents were deployed in Iraq. During the school year, there were 34 students in the classroom, but never more than 25 students at one time.

At the beginning of the school year, Abbey described her students as *sweet and low* (Initial interview, September 2006). Four of her students had attended the At-Risk Pre-School at Lakeview during the prior school year. She explained that most of her students did not have many experiences to build general knowledge about the world and that their literacy experiences were limited. She believed her small class size, the team teacher, and the engagement of student teachers gave the students more attention to individual needs and opportunities to observe student progress. Her classroom organization allowed for students to have choices during the day and to learn responsibility. Ms. Thomas did not believe there were any unusual behavior problems in the class. She shared, *The most important component in my literacy instruction is to encourage and motivate the students to become readers and writers* (Initial Interview, August 2006).

In January 2007, the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002) was given to Ms. Thomas' students to look systematically at their individual early reading and writing behaviors. Twenty-one students took the assessment. The Observation Survey was also given in April 2007 to nineteen

students to look at change over time in the students' literacy progress. Table 4.4 shows growth in the components on the assessment for the eighteen students who were in attendance January through April. The possible correct items for each component are shown in parentheses.

**Table 4.4 Kindergarten Observation Survey: Mid-year/End of Year**

| Student | Letter Identification (54) |           | Sight Word Test (20) |           | Concepts About Print (24) |           |
|---------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
|         | Jan '07                    | April '07 | Jan '07              | April '07 | Jan '07                   | April '07 |
| Alex    | 53                         | 53        | 3                    | 6         | 15                        | 19        |
| Eli     | 52                         | 54        | 4                    | 5         | 15                        | 18        |
| Frank   | 51                         | 52        | 4                    | 4         | 6                         | 12        |
| Hillary | 52                         | 53        | 5                    | 12        | 19                        | 17        |
| Jo      | 52                         | 53        | 2                    | 10        | 19                        | 18        |
| Mattie  | 52                         | 53        | 4                    | 8         | 15                        | 13        |
| Matt    | 50                         | 51        | 0                    | 5         | 7                         | 9         |
| Norah   | 53                         | 53        | 9                    | 19        | 17                        | 21        |
| Neita   | 53                         | 54        | 7                    | 20        | 17                        | 20        |
| Oscar   | 54                         | 54        | 9                    | 10        | 17                        | 20        |
| Paul    | 53                         | 53        | 4                    | 5         | 20                        | 20        |
| Shelly  | 50                         | 53        | 1                    | 4         | 9                         | 18        |
| Sheryl  | 49                         | 51        | 5                    | 6         | 15                        | 15        |
| Vernon  | 53                         | 52        | 5                    | 10        | 19                        | 20        |
| Wes     | 47                         | 47        | 1                    | 2         | 9                         | 10        |
| Beth    | 49                         | 50        | 7                    | 8         | 12                        | 18        |
| Zoe     | 54                         | 54        | 4                    | 15        | 14                        | 18        |
| Alice   | 49                         | 53        | 1                    | 3         | 13                        | 18        |

| Student | Writing Vocabulary (no ceiling) |           | Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (37) |           | Text Reading Level (A-Z_) |           |
|---------|---------------------------------|-----------|--|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
|         | Jan '07                         | April '07 | Jan '07                                    | April '07 | Jan '07                   | April '07 |
| Alex    | 8                               | 20        | 15   | 26        | B                         | C         |
| Eli     | 15                              | 21        | 28   | 28        | C                         | E         |
| Frank   | 12                              | 10        | 15   | 24        | A                         | B         |
| Hillary | 15                              | 16        | 23   | 30        | C                         | D         |
| Jo      | 18                              | 19        | 20   | 34        | B                         | E         |
| Mattie  | 15                              | 22        | 18   | 23        | C                         | D         |
| Matt    | 8                               | 34        | 22   | 27        | A                         | C         |
| Norah   | 28                              | 48        | 22   | 35        | D                         | G         |
| Neita   | 31                              | 29        | 32   | 37        | C                         | G         |
| Oscar   | 16                              | 29        | 36   | 36        | C                         | G         |
| Paul    | 21                              | 24        | 30   | 31        | C                         | D         |
| Shelly  | 5                               | 7         | 2  | 16        | A                         | B         |
| Sheryl  | 15                              | 18        | 16   | 26        | B                         | C         |
| Vernon  | 9                               | 31        | 23   | 35        | B                         | D         |
| Wes     | 3                               | 6         | 0  | 0         | A                         | A         |
| Beth    | 16                              | 23        | 29   | 33        | B                         | D         |
| Zoe     | 19                              | 37        | 28   | 34        | C                         | D         |
| Alice   | 8                               | 13        | 19   | 30        | A                         | C         |

Table 4.4 illustrates the gains of all Ms. Thomas' students. All 18 students showed gains in the literacy tasks on the Observation Survey with the exception of two students. Frank did not gain on writing vocabulary, and Mattie did not show progress on concepts about print.

Ms. Thomas' intentions to present more focused teaching on letters, letter sounds and their symbols and to enhance her guided reading lessons were reflected in the assessments and observations. There were gains in letter identification and in hearing letter sounds. Evidence linking what the students know in reading to their writing was seen in the gains in writing vocabulary, in concepts about print, and in the text reading level growth.

Student data in literacy growth collected from reading and writing checklists indicated that Abbey's students were at the emergent level (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). The four students observed with this checklist grew from the most emergent levels of reading and writing. The

checklist indicated the greatest gains were made during the second and third quarters of the school year. The biggest gains were in known letters and their related sounds in identification and in writing, fluency with some high-frequency words in reading, and writing a few high-frequency words.

Ms Thomas' students at all achievement levels showed growth based on the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002) and on the reading and writing checklists (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). Many of her students' left kindergarten believing they were readers and writers. In a literacy survey Ms. Thomas conducted with her students, some of their responses showed the depth of those beliefs. Jo said reading was important because *You can learn about stories and stuff*, and that people should learn to read and write because *You can learn and learn and learn* (Ms. Thomas, May 2007). Neita said, *A good writer is a good reader*, and she gets ideas for writing when *I think in my brain*. Vernon said people write because *It is part of reading and building stamina*. He also believed that good readers *read so long and keep on reading over and over and over*.

### ***Reading Lesson Observation Framework of Ms. Thomas' Kindergarten Classroom***

Using the Reading Lesson Observation Framework (ROLF) (Henk, Moore, Marinak, & Tomasetti, 2000), Ms. Thomas' literacy instruction was observed four times during the school year. The observation dates were September 21, 2006, November 15, 2006, February 21, 2007, and April 23, 2007. The classroom climate was always of very high quality. When introducing new books for read alouds and guided reading, Ms. Thomas always activated the students' prior knowledge of the books' contents. In the September 2006 observation of a small group, the text used was from a reproducible book created for early reading and for teachers' convenience. Ms. Thomas' book introduction guided the students to use the pattern of the book language: "It is a (rainy, snowy, windy, sunny) day." She directed the students to repeat the language pattern. She

also attended to the high-frequency word "is" by pointing to the word as it appeared in text. Trying to teach one-to-one matching of spoken to written words, she instructed the students to point to the words as they read. They were not able to do that, so Ms. Thomas supported their learning by drawing a line for each word in sentence and asking the kids to count the lines. The students counted the lines correctly, and Ms. Thomas asked them to count the words in the sentence. They were not able to do that. Ms. Thomas continued with the book by providing a very high level of support for the students to be successful. According to the criteria set by the ROLF, the materials did not represent authentic texts, there were few opportunities for independent work for the students, and the teacher initiated the activities. However, Ms. Thomas' completing the lesson with high support for the students to insure their success indicated her awareness and sensitivity to the instructional needs, which she had just observed and of her needs to reflect and to adjust her teaching.

When the ROLF was recorded in April 2007, the book introduction included conversation to activate prior knowledge and to generate predictions of the book's meaning. Ms. Thomas asked the students to locate the word "this" in text. She asked if they knew a word that started like "this". All the students responded with "the". They were handed magnetic letters and constructed the word "this", checking it by running their fingers under it and saying it slowly. The students then read the book independently while Ms. Thomas listened to each child reading softly. The text the students read was from a Scholastic guided reading collection, represented authentic text, and was appropriate for the students' reading level. In this lesson, Ms. Thomas focused on reading as a meaningful process and her instruction reflected an awareness of recommended practices. She was confident with the students and flexible with the flow of the lesson indicating she could follow the needs of the students. Using the ROLF criteria, Abbey's

prereading phase, guided reading phase, skills and strategy instruction, materials, and practices were all judged to be of high quality.

### ***Reflective Thoughts from Ms. Thomas' Kindergarten Classroom***

Keeping a reflection log for three weeks over the course of the school year gave Ms. Thomas an opportunity to examine what was working and to identify areas where improvement was needed. The logs were recorded in November, January, and April. In the November 2006 log, she noted that working with magnetic letters for letter and letter sound work was moving her students' forward in their learning. This was a topic discussed and demonstrated in the balanced literacy professional development study group on November 2, 2006. Also saying words slowly while running a finger under the word as explored in the professional development group on the same date was helping her students learn. She expressed a need for *more meat* in her guided reading lessons and shared that she could be more effective if she had a plan for *systematic teaching of strategies* (Reflection Log #1, November 2006).

In the January 2007 reflection log, Ms. Thomas shifted from remarks about procedures and systems to awareness of instruction focused on individual student's understanding. She wrote, *Instruction is more about children's understanding of literacy, and I am more aware that it is a process they each go through individually at their own pace* (Reflection Log #2, January 2007). Ms. Thomas was very focused on integrating writing with reading and decided to let the kindergarteners write on their own with less copying from her models. She stated her intention to model more writing with explicit language to prompt the students' risk-taking in using their letter-sound knowledge in their writing. Ms. Thomas took information on book introductions for read-alouds and guided reading from the balanced literacy professional development project June 2006 and expanded her orientations to the book before reading.

In April 2007, Ms. Thomas recorded in her reflection log that much of her teaching was now *built upon prior teaching* (Reflection Log #3, April 2007). She expressed that she had increased the amount of time students write independently, and that the daily journal entries were now longer and more complex. In her classroom, which now reflected a balance in reading and writing, students were reading more independently, and Ms. Thomas noted growth in their high-frequency vocabularies in reading (Reflection Log #3, April 2007). In her final reflection log, Ms. Thomas expressed a desire to teach students to be independent problem solvers using their knowledge in reading and writing.

### ***Summary of Ms. Thomas' Professional Development Participation***

Ms. Thomas volunteered to participate in the district balanced literacy professional development project and to be a part of the case study for the research project. She attended all 18 of the sessions and was always a willing participant. When I was in the classroom as an observer or as a literacy coach, she was eager and interested in my input and information. Ms. Thomas was always anxious to learn of professional books, research, and methods to study to improve her classroom practice.

An example of this attitude followed a discussion of *Choice Words* by Peter Johnston (2004) during the January 26, 2007 session of the balanced literacy professional development project. His book showed how teachers' intellectual environments created through their language produce competent students and caring, secure, actively literate human beings. Ms. Thomas shared that the book made her consider her conversations with the students. *I do feel better about the conversations I have with the children about encouraging them to be accountable for their learning by saying to the students 'Aren't you proud of yourself?'* (Personal conversation, January 2007).



Table 4.5 shows which topics from the balanced literacy professional development project were evidenced from observations, reflection logs, and interviews from Ms. Thomas.

**Table 4.5 Ms. Thomas' Balanced Literacy Implementation**

|   | Observations | Reflection Logs | Interviews |
|---|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Reading Theory                                |              |                 |            |
| Literacy Processing                           | 6            | 5               |            |
| Theories of Balanced Literacy                 | 15           | 4               | 3          |
| Research Findings of Classroom Practices      |              |                 |            |
| Guided Reading                                | 18           | 6               | 8          |
| Organizing and Managing for Balanced Literacy | 23           | 2               | 4          |
| Comprehension                                 | 20           | 5               | 5          |
| Phonemic Awareness                            | 16           | 1               |            |
| Phonics                                       | 11           |                 |            |
| Vocabulary                                    | 18           |                 |            |
| Fluency                                       | 4            |                 |            |
| Informal Assessments                          | 14           | 6               | 10         |
| Running Records                               | 6            | 5               | 7          |

Over the 2006-2007 school year, Ms. Thomas implemented several changes to her balanced approach to teaching reading and writing. Most of the changes were not new concepts but were adaptations in her instructional practices. She made connections to what she was already doing and what she learned in the balanced literacy professional development project and from my role as a literacy coach. One change was implementing the use of magnetic letters for letter and word work. It was used in her instruction on a regular basis with the whole classroom and with small groups. Another change was the change in thinking of "going deeper" with each guided reading lesson to make it meaningful for individual students. Her ability to informally observe literacy

behaviors changed over the year as seen on the ROLF. In November 2006, Ms. Thomas commented, *I'm using more observation notes to see the kids' needs and trying to develop my lessons based on those needs* (Mid-year Survey, November 2006). She later summarized that change by saying, *This professional development has made me even more aware of how formal and informal assessment needs to drive my instruction and the instruction needs to be differentiated for each child's needs* (Final Interview, May 2007).

### **Ms. Harper's First Grade Classroom**

During the year of this study, Ms. Harper taught first grade at Hillside Elementary School. This was her second year as a classroom teacher. She taught kindergarten at Hillside in her first year of teaching, and moved to first grade for the 2006-2007 school year. Ms. Harper graduated with a bachelor of science degree in elementary education from Kansas State University. She was recognized at the university as a Teacher of Promise, and in her first year of teaching in the classroom, she received a state Horizon Award as an exemplary teacher.

Ms. Harper shared her personal and professional reading habits. For personal reading, she enjoyed the local newspaper, *Time* magazine, recommendations from the local public library, and the most recent publications in children's literature. She also invested time reading professional material. Her list included publications from the National Education Association and the International Reading Association. She stated that she was reading Debbie Miller's (2002) *Reading with Meaning*, with her student teacher, and revisiting parts of Johnston's (2004) *Choice Words* and *The Daily Five* by Boushey and Moser (2006). In addition she was reading Regie Routman's (2000) *Kids Poems* (Initial interview, September 2006).

Ms. Harper shared that she wrote primarily to communicate. She communicated with the parents of her students on a daily basis through email and newsletters. She also wrote letters to

her students over the summer break because, *I feel like 'snail mail' is very motivating to students* (Initial interview, September 2006). She kept a journal and believed that it was more often thoughts and reflections on her teaching and students than on personal considerations.

In the initial interview, Ms. Harper expressed her feeling of responsibility to be the *voice of the children* in her classroom. Her actions that reflected that feeling were her involvement in the school's site council and parent-teacher organization. She stated that her goal was *to make a difference in the classroom, school, community, and world. With my determination, continual reflection on classroom practices, and perseverance, I plan to make this goal a reality* (Initial interview, September 2006).

Ms. Harper believed that the school district participated in the balanced literacy professional development to encourage more teachers to *try new things*. She questioned, however, if this professional development project would be on-going. She ended the initial interview by saying, *I am looking forward to the collaborative relationship and partnerships that will undoubtedly form from the many experiences that are yet to come* (Initial interview, September 2006).

In the initial interview, she stated her perception of the difference between successful readers and struggling readers:

*A successful child asks questions, makes connections to self, is active. He doesn't just read words He thinks, reflects and can apply and transfer meaning and skills. A struggling reader doesn't interact with text. He needs more practice reading....but I don't see my first grade students as struggling readers. They're just beginning* (Initial interview, September 2006).

After participating in the two week balanced literacy sessions in June 2006, Ms. Harper shared that she wanted to continue to study what motivates young readers. She outlined some strategies she wanted to use in the coming school year to *internalize the love of reading and literacy* (Personal communication, September 2006). Those ideas came from her professional reading. Those ideas included:

- Implementing the *Daily 5 Literacy Model* (Boushey & Moser, 2006)
- Setting aside time during the *Daily 5 Literacy* program to allow students to discuss books and make recommendation to each other about books they have read
- Providing students with a variety of books to choose from in the classroom library and with a leveled book collection
- Utilizing book inventories to discover interests of each student
- Teaching students to independently keep track of their own subjects of interest by having them fill out book inventory book marks on a regular basis

In addition Ms. Harper set some personal goals. There were:

- Keeping a journal of her thoughts, questions, observations, and student comments about the above list of strategies
- Interviewing students to find out what motivates them to want to read.
- Summarizing the findings collected during the 2006-2007 school year to look for evidence that her strategies impacted her students' motivation to read
- Presenting the summary to her first grade colleagues.

Ms. Harper commented at the end of her list of goals that her goals may seem a *bit far-fetched* since 2006-2007 would be her first year teaching first grade. She continued by adding, *If*

*I am not able to reach this initial goal, I plan to go into the 2007-2008 school year to collect more data.*

### ***Ms. Harper in the Classroom***

Ms. Harper's first grade classroom had 16 students at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. There were nine boys and seven girls. Throughout the year, a total of 19 students were class members. Ms. Harper noted her students were from upper-middle class families. There was little ethnic or cultural diversity represented in the class. During the initial interview in September, she expressed concern about lack of parental involvement in the students' first grade experience. An at-risk aide worked daily with students Ms. Harper identified as needing additional practice on reading and math. Throughout the year, elementary education students from Kansas State University were in the classroom to practice teaching lessons in science.

Two walls of the room were lined with storage shelves and cabinets. Ms. Harper used the fronts of some cabinets and file cabinets for displaying charts and classroom lists. Some learning centers materials and activities were stored in plastic baskets and tubs in the shelves. On top of the shelves were the classroom gerbils and fish. In one corner, Ms. Harper set up a reading area with beanbag chairs and tubs of trade books from the classroom library and the school library. There was a word wall along one entire wall and a long white board along another. Student work was displayed along walls inside and outside the classroom. She had an easel for writing a message to the class each day. At one end of the room between cupboards and the reading corner, she established a gathering spot for the whole class. There was another large white board and easel in that spot. In the center of the room was a table for small group instruction. Student desks were grouped in sets of three or four. In the center of the classroom, there was a

rectangular table for small group work. Ms. Harper had materials organized near her chair at this table for convenience.

Ms. Harper made use of technology as a teaching and learning tool. She used computers, both PC and laptops. Her students used the computer lab at Hillside Elementary School to learn and to practice keyboarding skills, and to utilize software programs to practice skills in reading, writing, and math. Some of the websites and software the students used were starfall.com (<http://www.starfall.com>) , readwritethink.org (<http://www.readwritethink.org>), and Kidspiration2 (<http://genesis-technologies.com>). Ms. Harper integrated technological teaching tools such as the ELMO document camera, digital cameras, audio recording and listening devices, and streaming video from the Internet.

### ***September 28, 2006***

During an observation on September 28, 2006, the implementation of the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) literacy model was underway. This was a structured series of literacy tasks which students completed daily while Ms. Harper met with small groups of students or conferred with individuals. The literacy tasks were reading to self, reading with a peer, writing, working with words, and listening to reading. Ms. Harper had rigorously modeled and demonstrated the tasks with the students to launch the framework, so that the students could engage independently in the tasks. The students had built stamina for three tasks. They were reading to self for thirty minutes, writing independently for nine minutes, and reading to a peer for eight minutes.

With a verbal cue of counting down from five to one, Ms. Harper called the students back to their desks and instructed them to take out their spiral reading notebooks. Jack pushed through several students to get back to his desk. Ms. Harper sent him to the "time out" chair in

the classroom for a few minutes. He went complaining. She told them to find the first empty page and to make a list of pictures or words of farm animals. While the students worked, Ms. Harper moved around the classroom to monitor their work. She stamped the lists with the date. As she moved through the classroom, the students became more engaged and settled into the task. Jack shouted that he messed up, and Ms. Harper asked him to make an X on his attempt and start again. He did. After a short time, Ms. Harper called the students to the gathering spot. Some students pushed and shouted to get to the area. Ms. Harper immediately addressed their behavior in a calm manner, told them they could lose *Daily 5* time, and briefly discussed being responsible for their actions.

There was a can in the gathering spot used for selecting students. The can held popsicle sticks with the students' names written on them. Ms. Harper pulled sticks and the selected students to share their lists of farm animals. This activity led to an introduction of Sue Willams' (2000) book, *Let's Go Visiting*, a book about being on a farm. Ms. Harper used a pointer to mark each word as she read the whole book. She frequently stopped while reading to ask the students if they noticed rhyming words and to have the students make predictions about the next pages. Using rhyming words from the Williams' book, Ms. Harper used magnetic letters to build words and modeled how to change the first or last letter to make a new word. The order was: hat, ham, tam, tap, tat, hat. Then Ms. Harper reviewed the *Daily 5* tasks, which were read to self, read to a peer, listen to reading, and writing. She went to the task board and reviewed which tasks each student was to complete.

Ms Harper called a guided reading group to the table in the center of the room. Five students were introduced to *Good Bye, Fox* (James 2001), a leveled book from the Harcourt Brace collection (2001). Ms. Harper introduced the level B book with three statements, which

provided an overview of the story. She told them that a farm dog chased a fox across the farmyard and the fox jumped over things on the farm. Each student received a copy of the book, and Ms. Harper led them through it page by page. She instructed them to look at the pictures and to *think about the story*. The students and Ms. Harper engaged in a conversation about the story. Ms. Harper used book language to support the students reading. Some of the vocabulary used by Ms. Harper and repeated by the students were "mud, gate, cat, and rocks". She wrote "over" on the white board and told the students the word and asked them to find it in the text.

Ms. Harper read the story to the small group. She then gave them pieces of PVC pipe, which were shaped like a "C". She called them "whisper phones" and asked the students to read the book into them. The students were told to put their head down on the table when they finished the book. When all students finished, they all read the book together. Ms. Harper asked why the dog chased the fox. Rob answered, *Because he likes to chase*. Madison said, *So the fox doesn't chase the animals away*, and Sara responded *The dog wants to keep the farm for himself*. Ms. Harper told the students she wanted them to pretend the dog in the story was theirs because the next day they would write a story about that.

After the students left the guided reading table, Ms. Harper asked if I would model a guided reading lesson on my next visit the following week. She believed she had not supported all the students enough because when she listened to them read independently, there were many errors and confusions. Rob did not attend to any of the print and invented the text. I suggested that she reread the chapter on selecting and introducing book from Fountas and Pinnell's (1996) *Guided Reading*.



*January 11, 2007*

With the class in the gathering spot, Ms. Harper shared an example of a story she had written on the big white board. She told how she often wondered what the gerbils did after everyone left the school. That was the idea for her story. The story was:

*The Gerbil's Adventure*

*Once there were threEe gerbils named RoCKY, YO-yo and Coco.*

*They lived in a cage in classroom.*

*at night, they came out of their cage and ran around classroom.*

*One night RoCKY found some food in desk in he ate it all.*

*he was so sick.*

*His friends Coco and Yo-yo helped him back to the cage.*

Ms. Harper shared that writing about the gerbils was fun, and she enjoyed writing her ideas. She wanted them to know that after she had her ideas written, she took good look at her writing to see if anything needed to be fixed. She told the students this is part of writing, and it is called *editing*. Ms. Harper asked the students if they noticed any spelling, letters, or punctuation that she needed to go back and fix.

Susan immediately responded with *There's a capital e in the middle of 'three'*. Ms. Harper asked her to come fix it. When Susan began to erase the upper-case e, Ms. Harper told her not to erase the *E* but to make an X over it. She explained, *I want to see your thinking*.

Colton pumped his arm up and down to get Ms. Harper's attention. When she asked him *What did you notice?*, he went to the white board and pointed to *RoCKY*. Ms. Harper asked him

again, *What did you notice?* Colton continued to point to *RoCKY* and said, *You know. Those letters are big!* Katie volunteered, *You don't need capital letters in that name except the R.* Colton agreed, *Yeah.* Then he pointed to the second *RoCKY* in the story and said it needed to be fixed also. Colton crossed out the first *RoCKY* and wrote *Rocky* under it. Katie fixed the second *RoCKY* in the same way.

Billy was ready to point out the two sentences that began with lower-case letters. *You always start with big letters.* He came to the white board, made *X*'s over the lower-case letters, and wrote upper case letters below the *X*'s. Ms. Harper stated, *Sentences do begin with capital letters. Thank you, Billy.*

Ms. Harper asked if everything was okay and suggested they read again. The class reread the story aloud. In the middle, Tim shouted, *It needs 'the'.* *It needs 'the' by classroom.* Tim went to the white board, stood with a marker in his hand, and asked, *Where do I put the X?* Ms. Harper explained to Tim and the class about using a caret to insert words in writing. She demonstrated how to use it and wrote *the* above it.

The class began from the beginning of the story and reread. When they reached the next to last sentence, most students recognized a word had been omitted. Some students wanted *the* and others wanted *a* to precede *desk*. After trying both words, Ms. Harper told the class she preferred *a*. She made a caret and wrote *a* above it. The class reread the story again to check for other places to edit.

Ms. Harper and the class reread the story to look for more opportunities to edit. She told the class they were going to work with a partner to edit the writing from the previous school day. She asked Eddie and Ned to model how to find a partner. They looked directly into each other's eyes and nodded yes. *If you don't want to be his partner, you shake your head 'no'*, said Jack.

The students found partners, and Ms. Harper handed out their writing. As they sat in pairs, Ms. Harper told them to look at a chart near the gathering spot, which had rules for sharing reading. It read:

*Find your partner with you eyes.*

*Read your story to your partner.*

*Keep your eyes on the paper while your partner reads.*

*After reading, compliment your partner and help with editing.*

Ms. Harper asked Alexis to read the chart. When she finished, Alexis added, *Point out mistakes in a friendly way.* Jack said, *Yeah, don't yell.* The students shared their stories and worked on editing with independence. They used the word wall and books from the room as resources to check on spelling.

As the students worked on their editing, Ms. Harper shared the class had earlier practiced editing for punctuation with periods, question marks, and exclamation marks. The focus for January had been the use of capital letters. She believed the students showed a good amount of independence in their editing and that had grown from working in pairs. She explained that the method for finding partners had been the result of confusion and hurt feelings from other experiences. The method she created set a framework for finding a partner in an orderly way and allowed for some choice by the students. The students' ability to carryout this task provided evidence of demonstration, practice, and expectation of success.

### ***March 28, 2007***

In late March, Ms. Harper shared that she was using Miller's (2002) book *Reading with Meaning* to extend her literacy instruction. This book was being discussed in the balanced literacy professional development group on January 25, March 1, and April 5, 2007. She

believed much of the book could extend her instruction. She specifically drew upon the strategy lessons for inferring, asking questions, making connections, and creating mental images.

Ms. Harper introduced Verne's (2001) *Lilly's Busy Day*. She then asked if any of the students had spent time with a *crabby person*. The students all had stories to tell from their experiences. Ms. Harper read the story while the students followed along in their books. She asked them to listen to *fluent reading*. After reading, she asked the students what they learned about Lilly and her friends. All the students agreed that the characters in the story all liked parks. Several students had personal connections to playing with "crabby" people.

Ms. Harper then transitioned to writing workshop. On a large chart, she shared a poem she had begun to write. The poem was:

*I like to read a good book*  
*Especially those that teach me how to cook.*  
*Just open it up and take a look.*  
*I like to read lots of books.*

Ms. Harper talked about rhyming words. One student connected to *Mother Goose* and *Jack and Jill*. Using magnetic letters on the white board, she modeled how rhyming words end alike. Some students had chances to manipulate the letters to make rhymes. The students were asked to write a rhyming poem in their writing journals. The correct spellings are in parentheses. Colton wrote:

My drt (dirt) bike is so fast.  
I am never lasst (last).  
My seet (seat) is blue.

I do not know/no (know) if it will do.

Alexis wrote:

I like my dog.

She looks like a hog.

She chases (chases) frogs.

She drinks egg nog.

She sits on logs.

My dog likes to jog.

I love my dog.

Julie wrote:

I have a car from mars.

It's shaped (shaped) like a marshmallow and

It is big bright (bright) and yellow.

When the students returned to the classroom after recess, Katie showed Ms. Harper a snail she had found *fresh from the soil on the playground*. Ms. Harper took advantage of the teachable moment and held a discussion about snails, their shells, and their habitats. Katie had previous interest in snails because she pulled papers out of her desk, which she had printed off the Internet at home. She read some interesting facts about snails to the class. One term she read and explained to the class was "parasite".

While the students returned to their poems, Ms. Harper noticed the students who worked independently and asked several students to read their work. Ms. Harper told the students to find their *Daily 5* checklists and go to the next activity. The checklist was a two-sided paper with a section for each of the *Daily 5* tasks (Appendix K). The students examined their checklist to find the next task and went to work. The listen to reading task this day was a book read and recorded by a Billy. He had chosen the book, practiced reading it, and recorded it at home. There was great interest in this task.

Ms. Harper called a guided reading group to the table to read a non-fiction book about the human skeleton. This was the second day to use this book in the small group. She asked the students to tell her what a "fact" was. Their responses included *gives information*, *It's something true*, and *It makes you learn*. Ms. Harper instructed the students to read the book quietly, copy important facts from the text onto sticky notes, and place the notes on the page with the fact. After the students read and copied their fact, Ms Harper asked Eli to be the team leader and ask the other students two questions. The questions were: *Were there any tricky words? Can you tell me a fact you found?*

Katie thought the word "vertebrae" was tricky. Ms. Harper asked her what she tried when she came to that tricky word. Katie said, *I said the first sound and used the words around it*. Ms. Harper asked for another tricky word and for problem solving strategies. Billy and Mary said they looked at the pictures said the first sound. As the other students responded, she acknowledged their responses and supported their learning with explicit prompting language that led them to problem solve. During the transition time that followed this guided reading group, Ms. Harper related that she thought asking the students how they problem solved a tricky word help them to be more independent.

The students were called to the gathering area. Ms. Harper asked them to think about how *Daily 5* went that day and to respond by showing thumbs up or thumbs down. All the students thought *Daily 5* had gone well.

The three observations from September, January, and March established the success of Ms. Harper's implementation of the *Daily 5* literacy model. From her expert modeling and demonstration, the model became a framework for the classroom literacy instructional time. The students completed the tasks independently and with responsibility. She integrated her goals of motivating students to read with the *Daily 5* tasks.

Throughout the school year, Ms. Harper was very active in participating with the balanced literacy development group. She generated interest in the *Daily 5* literacy model among the group and gladly shared her classroom's progress. She was persistent in her efforts to achieve her goals and confident of their positive effects in her classroom.

### ***The Students in Ms. Harper's Classroom***

The 2006-2007 school year was Ms Harper's first year to teach first grade. In an interview in September 2006, she expressed concern over the limited amount of parental involvement shown from her students' parents. Seven of the students had been in her kindergarten class the previous year, and there had been little involvement with them that school year. Ms. Harper identified several of those students as *low* readers. She believed their parents' involvement was critical to their academic success. It was important to note that two students had parents who were deployed with the US Army in Iraq. Another concern Ms. Harper expressed was the district's reading curriculum. She believed it was too broad and needed to be more focused on specific reading achievement for first grade. This concern was reflected in her statement from the initial interview in September 2006:...*I don't see my first grade students as*

*struggling readers. They're just beginning.* In personal communication (September, 2006) Ms. Harper shared that the most important component of her literacy instruction was motivating young readers, which she believed would empower them to become successful readers. She believed if her students experienced success in reading, her instruction could be built upon their achievements. *I know that I can watch for what the kids can do and use that information to help them reach those first grade goals* (Personal communication, September, 2006).

Student growth was seen in the Observations Survey (Clay, 2002), which was administered in August 2006 and in January and May 2007. Table 4.6 shows growth in the Observation Survey components for the fifteen students who were in attendance from August through May. The number of items for each component is shown in parentheses. If the student reached the ceiling score for a component, he/she was not given that component again.

All students gained and/or sustained progress in letter identification, the sight word test, and concepts about print. Riley was the only student who did not extend or sustain growth in writing vocabulary and hearing and recording sounds in words. Four students read below an acknowledged text reading level for the end of first grade. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) establish that level at H.



**Table 4.6 First Grade Observation Survey: August 2006, January 2007, and May 2007**

| Student | Letter ID (54) |         |         | Sight Word Test (20) |         |         | Concepts About Print (24) |         |         |
|---------|----------------|---------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------|---------------------------|---------|---------|
|         | Aug '06        | Jan '07 | May '07 | Aug '06              | Jan '07 | May '07 | Aug '06                   | Jan '07 | May '07 |
| Ned     | 54             | 53      | 54      | 5                    | 18      | 20      | 17                        | 22      | 24      |
| Alexis  | 54             | 54      |         | 20                   | 20      |         | 21                        | 24      |         |
| Mary    | 54             | 54      |         | 19                   | 20      |         | 20                        | 24      |         |
| Colton  | 47             | 54      | 54      | 5                    | 13      | 19      | 15                        | 19      | 21      |
| Katie   | 51             | 53      | 54      | 20                   | 20      |         | 15                        | 24      |         |
| Madison | 54             | 54      |         | 10                   | 18      | 20      | 15                        | 23      | 23      |
| Tim     | 44             | 52      | 53      | 0                    | 12      | 20      | 10                        | 24      |         |
| Annie   | 53             | 54      |         | 17                   | 17      | 20      | 17                        | 23      | 20      |
| Eli     | 54             | 54      |         | 19                   | 20      |         | 20                        | 21      | 24      |
| Carl    | 50             | 54      |         | 7                    | 20      |         | 15                        | 21      | 23      |
| Rob     | 53             | 51      | 53      | 5                    | 13      | 12      | 16                        | 21      | 20      |
| Billy   | 53             | 54      |         | 17                   | 20      |         | 20                        | 23      | 20      |
| Jack    | 52             | 54      |         | 6                    | 13      | 14      | 15                        | 18      | 20      |
| Susan   | 51             | 52      | 54      | 5                    | 16      | 20      | 18                        | 19      | 22      |
| Riley   | 53             | 53      | 53      | 19                   | 20      |         | 21                        | 18      | 20      |

| Student | Writing Vocabulary (no ceiling) |         |         | Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (37) |         |         | Text Reading Level (A-Z) |         |         |
|---------|---------------------------------|---------|---------|--|---------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|
|         | Aug '06                         | Jan '07 | May '07 | Aug '07                                    | Jan '07 | May '07 | Aug '06                  | Jan '07 | May '07 |
| Ned     | 16                              | 34      | 43      | 33   | 37      |         | D                        | H       | J       |
| Alexia  | 36                              | 54      | 80      | 37   | 37      |         | L                        | M       | W       |
| Mary    | 9                               | 26      | 70      | 37   | 37      |         | L                        | M       | W       |
| Colton  | 10                              | 21      | 37      | 32   | 34      | 37      | B                        | C       | E       |
| Katie   | 15                              | 21      | 69      | 37   | 37      |         | H                        | K       | T       |
| Madison | 22                              | 43      | 83      | 32   | 37      |         | C                        | H       | P       |
| Tim     | 3                               | 11      | 32      | 0  | 37      |         | A                        | C       | F       |
| Annie   | 22                              | 43      | 62      | 31   | 36      | 37      | H                        | H       | P       |
| Eli     | 7                               | 35      | 67      | 31   | 37      |         | R                        | W       | W       |
| Carl    | 11                              | 35      | 47      | 32   | 35      | 35      | D                        | E       | H       |
| Rob     | 6                               | 23      | 27      | 29   | 35      | 35      | C                        | C       | D       |
| Billy   | 16                              | 59      |         | 71   | 35      | 37      | F                        | L       | R       |
| Jack    | 8                               | 20      | 44      | 30   | 35      | 35      | B                        | D       | F       |
| Susan   | 8                               | 30      | 76      | 29   | 35      | 36      | C                        | E       | J       |
| Riley   | 23                              | 39      | 32      | 34   | 36      | 35      | I                        | H       | L       |

A reading and writing checklist adapted from Dorn & Soffos (2001) were recorded on four students in Ms. Harper's class in September, November, February, and April. Ned, Susan, Carl, and Madison were in the same guided reading group and at the emergent level in September. They attended to print using some known letters, pointed to words using on-to-one match on one or two lines of patterned text, tried to problem solve some unknown words by using the meaning from pictures and language structure, and read some high frequency words in easy text. In September 2006, none of the students recognized links between known letters and their related sounds nor did they articulate the first letter in an unknown word. The observations in September recorded that the all of the students wrote known letters fluently with correct formation and used spaces between words most of the time. The students also wrote a few high frequency words with accuracy, which reflected their attention to print during reading. By the February 2007 observation, the four students were articulating the first letters in unknown words, self-monitoring using high frequency words and other known visual cues, and rereading to cross-check the first letter of a word against meaning and language structure. In writing, the four students were using the ABC chart in the classroom as a resource for letter and sound links and using the first part of known words to help write parts of an unknown word.

The April 2007 observation indicated that all of the students had progressed to demonstrating strong behaviors at early levels of reading and writing. They were using visual information to search through words in a left-to-right sequence and to take words apart by consonant digraphs, inflectional endings, rime patterns, and blends. They were self-monitoring easily and initiating attempts to problem solve. In writing they were noticing misspellings and searching the word wall and other sources to correct. As they wrote, they were analyzing sounds

and recording the sounds. One student, Madison, made accelerate progress and moved into a higher achieving guided reading group in February.

Ms. Harper remarked in November 2006 that her initial goal of motivating readers had evolved to motivating readers and writers (Personal conversation, November 2006). *I have definitely incorporated more writing in my daily routine than in years past.* This attention to the reciprocity of reading and writing led her to share that her students were more active in their own learning with small group instruction and with the tasks of the *Daily 5*.

Ms. Harper's implementation of the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) as a framework for literacy instruction and her attention to individual student's progress throughout the school year encouraged independence and growth in her students. The observations from September 2006 to March 2007 showed growth in literacy skills, problem solving, independence, and responsibility. The Dorn and Soffos' reading and writing checklist showed consistent gains for the observed students. The students in Ms. Harper's classroom became readers and writers.

During a visit in early May 2007, students were reading independently, some were reading to a partner, and others were writing about super heroes. Katie and Susan were reading to one another, and this conversation was overheard.

"I like the way you read. You read fast."

"Thank you."

"It sounded fluent."

This conversation revealed the independence, the literacy learning, and the behaviors modeled and practiced in Ms. Harper's classroom.

### ***Reading Lesson Observation Framework of Ms. Harper's First Grade***

Ms. Harper's literacy instruction was observed four times using the Reading Lesson Observations Framework (ROLF) (Appendix I). The classroom climate was always of very high quality. There were many different types of reading materials in the classroom, and the environment indicated that reading and writing were highly valued and practiced daily. In the September 2006 ROLF observation, Quinn introduced *What a Shower* (Farrell, 2001), guided reading level B. The story was about playing in the spray from a fire hydrant. It had a repeating pattern with strong picture support for meaning. Ms. Harper encouraged students to preview the text by listening to the title of the book, discussing the illustrations and predicting the story line. She guided the students through the text, used words from the text in her discussion and engaged the students in conversation about the illustrations. She specifically taught the word "jump" by writing it on a white board and asking students to orally repeat it. Ms. Harper first read the text to the group and then asked the students to read to themselves. After the reading, Ms. Harper asked if the students ever played with their pets in a lawn sprinkler. Rob said he didn't have a dog. Colton said there weren't any sprinklers like in the book at his house. There was no writing or skill and strategy instruction to expand the lesson.

When the ROLF was recorded again in April 2007, Ms. Harper had greatly extended the framework of the guided reading lessons. This day the new text was a Korean folktale, *The Strongest One of All* (Choi, 2001), guided reading level. She asked the students if they knew other folk tales, and one Madison mentioned "The Boy Who Cried Wolf". Sara named "the story about the animals who make a lot of noise to scare off the robbers". With that background knowledge activated, the students were interested in reading. Ms. Harper provided a rich

orientation to the text, which included book language and predicting the outcome of the story. During the guided reading, she knelt beside each student as he/she read quietly to her. She took brief notes on their reading and engaged each student in a short conversation about his/her strategy use. For example, she noticed that one child repeated the first sentence before going to the end of the page. Ms Harper asked the child why he reread, and the child said, "I didn't think that sounded right so I read it again." Ms. Harper then asked, "Did it sound right then?" The child nodded "yes" and continued to read independently. With all of the four students in this group, Ms Harper asked them questions focused on the meaning of the story. After the reading, she remarked about the child who repeated to check on his reading and told them that readers often do that to check on themselves. During and after the reading, Ms. Harper monitored the students' comprehension and gave appropriate feedback. She then addressed the -est ending on the word "strongest" in the story. The group made a list of words that also could have the -est ending: fast, short, big, cold, mean, nice. Throughout this lesson, Ms Harper allowed for active student participation and adjusted the lesson's pace to follow the students' understandings. She kept the lesson focused on reading as a meaningful process.

Ms Harper's four observations using the ROLF criteria indicated improvement as the school year progressed. With increased attention to student needs, prompting language, and teaching for strategic processing, her guided reading lessons were judged to be of very high quality. Under the guided reading phase of the ROLF, Ms. Harper received high marks for monitoring the children and giving them proper assistance and feedback while they read, for encouraging the students to use a variety of word study strategies to decipher the meaning of unknown words, and for posing an appropriate mix of factual and higher level thinking questions in the comprehension discussions. She shared in November 2006 that she realized her instructional

practices were changing from a whole group approach to small groups. *I feel like the students take more ownership a little more this year. The students are more active, not just observing.* (Personal conversation, November 2006).

### ***Reflective Thoughts from Ms. Harper's First Grade Classroom***

In Ms. Harper's November 2006 reflection log, she expressed concern for teaching strategies for problem solving unknown words. She believed the students were not taking initiatives to problem solve but were waiting to be given the unknown word by her. During the week she kept the reflection log, she recorded her focus on being *more direct* in her instruction, so there was less guessing of unknown words (Reflection Log #1, November 2006). She recalled a discussion during the June 23, 2006 balanced literacy professional development study group. That discussion focused on the use of explicit language for prompting students to cross-check the meaning of the text and the letter and sound relationships to problem solve. The reflection log contained her recollection of telling the students in a guided reading group to *think about the story and start the word*. She noticed them checking the pictures and saying the beginning sounds. Ms. Harper reflected how she wrote the beginning sound on a small white board and modeled cross-checking. She made a note to herself to demonstrate that strategy in the next day's writing workshop. Ms. Harper briefly commented that she had serious concerns about her lowest guided reading group. She noted that she needed to be *clearer* about the object of her instruction for them. She also expressed the necessity of meeting with them daily.

In January 2007, Ms. Harper indicated heightened concern for the low reading group. There were disruptive behaviors happening when this group met, and she thought that the behavior might be *because some of the kids are frustrated*(Reflection Log #2, January 2007). She had reread the Allington (2006) book on struggling readers studied in the June balanced literacy

group and stated her thinking that *the most struggling readers need small group instruction like Allington said research supports*. She also noted that the small group enabled her to provide more *one on one attention* in instruction. Later that week, Ms. Harper commented the struggling students' limited knowledge of high frequency words was a factor in their slow progress. She connected that their comprehension and fluency suffered because of the poor high frequency vocabularies. Ms. Harper wrote that she intended to *binge* on teaching for growth in high frequency vocabulary for those students. She planned to expand the students' work with building words and holding them accountable for using the high frequency words in writing.

There was one struggling student who had been in Ms. Harper's kindergarten class the previous year. She was concerned about Rob's emotional and *developmental* immaturity (Reflection Log #1, November 2006). She noted that his parents were not very involved in his education. During his guided reading group, he often became disruptive by shouting out and refusing to try to work. Ms. Harper resolved to communicate frequently with his parents through email and conferences. She was concerned about the influence of his behavior on other students. By January, Ms. Harper shared that working with Rob one to one was effective but not always possible. *Can I be more effective with a smaller group? One on one? How can I do this? I know. I should clone myself!* (Reflection Log #2, January 2007). She had conducted several conferences with his parents and believed communication was improving, but Rob was still crying and acting out when any reading or writing work required him to take risks. Throughout the school year, Ms. Harper worked closely with Rob, his parents, and the school improvement team. She persistently observed and monitored his literacy progress and adjusted her instruction to meet his needs as she perceived them.

Beside her concern for the struggling reading group, Ms. Harper observed needs in other students. She exclaimed *Some students are progressing quicker than others. I'll use running records to see if they can be moved to another group* (Reflection Log #2, January 2007).

By April 2007, Ms. Harper continued to reflect upon the progress of the struggling readers. Her reflection log told of supporting the students as they wrote responses to read alouds and to the leveled texts used in their guided reading groups (Reflection Log #3, April 2007). She commented that the behavior problems were lessened when the students were building words from magnetic letters and reading to partners. *If they're active, then they don't get as frustrated* (Reflection Log #3, April 2007). Ms. Harper shared that she had been teaching the whole class to identify the main idea of stories in reading mini-lessons. She asked the students in the struggling group to write a sentence that told the "big idea" of the day's guided reading text and share it with another member of the group. Two of the students independently reread the text before they began to write, and Ms. Harper celebrated their behavior. She made the comment that *Tying lessons together allowed the students to implement what they learned in flexible ways* (Reflection Log #3, April 2007).

### ***Summary of Ms. Harper's Professional Development Participation***

Ms. Harper's participation in this balanced literacy professional development project was completely voluntary. She attended all but one of the sessions and was an active participant. She was always willing to take time for informal discussion with colleagues and with me. Her enthusiasm and implementation of the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) was often a topic for the study group. She also shared her professional reading with her colleagues within the group and at her school.



The 2006-2007 school year was her first year as a first grade teacher. During the previous school year in a kindergarten classroom, Ms. Harper taught literacy to whole groups (Personal communication, October, 2006). As a first grade teacher, her literacy instruction moved to small groups. Some topics and discussions from the balanced literacy professional development became integrated in her instructional practices. She was very interested in teaching for strategic problem solving for unknown words. The study of guided reading by Fountas and Pinnell (1996) directed her in teaching strategies. She wrote, *Here's a change I'm making in my classroom. I'm going to teach some mini-lessons on what to do with a word you don't know. I'll make a classroom chart and keep telling the kids to check it when they're reading* (Personal communication, November 15, 2006).

Table 4.7 shows which topics from the balanced literacy professional development project were evidenced during observations, reflection logs, and interviews with Ms. Harper. Awareness of individual student needs grew over the school year. Moving from practicing whole group instruction in kindergarten, Ms. Harper worked hard to teach to small groups in first grade. In December 2006, she presented a lesson on making words. She had presented these letters in this order: "i f t g s" and asked the students to write words in their journals using these letters. The students then shared some of the words they made: if, ift, sift, gift, it. Eli stood and shared his words: "You could make 'if' or 'fif'...It could be 'fifth' except there's no 'th' at the end." That afternoon the balanced literacy professional development group met after school. Ms. Harper shared that she could tell from Eli's comment that he and some other students didn't need this type of work because they were beyond it. She continued to say that word work for the students also needed to be done at their instructional levels during guided reading lessons.

**Table 4.7 Ms. Harper's Balanced Literacy Implementation**

|   | Observations | Reflection Logs | Interviews |
|---|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Reading Theory                                |              | 2               | 2          |
| Literacy Processing                           | 8            | 7               | 4          |
| Theories of Balanced Literacy                 | 9            | 5               | 5          |
| Research Findings of Classroom Practices      |              |                 |            |
| Guided Reading                                | 16           | 8               | 6          |
| Organizing and Managing for Balanced Literacy | 12           | 3               | 3          |
| Comprehension                                 | 20           | 5               | 5          |
| Phonemic Awareness                            | 14           |                 |            |
| Phonics                                       | 13           |                 |            |
| Vocabulary                                    | 20           | 6               |            |
| Fluency                                       | 9            |                 |            |
| Informal Assessments                          | 7            | 4               | 3          |
| Running Records                               | 5            | 2               | 2          |

In a final interview in May 2007, Ms. Harper stated that implementing guided reading and teaching for strategies had influenced her classroom instruction. She also noted that using explicit teaching language impacted her students' learning. She closed the interview by saying her participation in the balanced literacy professional development project *helped me continuously reflect on what I do in my classroom. I've taken many of the ideas we studied and applied them.*

### **Ms. Carter's Second Grade Classroom**

Ms. Carter taught second grade at Lakeview Elementary School during the year of the balanced literacy professional development. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Kansas State University. The 2006-2007 school year was Ms. Carter's second year as a teacher. The previous year she taught first grade at Lakeview. For a semester prior to teaching first grade, she had worked as a para-educator. She was working to earn an English as a Second Language endorsement on her teaching certificate.

In an interview in September 2006, Ms. Carter shared a hope that the balanced literacy professional development project would foster professional book studies within the district. She expressed concern that the district did not focus clearly on any one topic for professional development. Ms. Carter wanted the balanced literacy professional development to help her effectively use the district curriculum to meet the students' needs. She often mentioned that having enough time to work with all students was a problem in her classroom.

Ms. Carter believed that she presented models of a reader and a writer to her students. She regularly read and wrote with the students to demonstrate that those behaviors were important parts of her life. The struggling literacy students in her classroom concerned her. She did not feel adequate in diagnosing the needs of the weakest students, so she felt the instruction she planned for them was not effective (Pre-survey, June 2006). In the September 2006 interview, Ms. Carter said like the struggling readers, she *lacked confidence* in teaching the most needy students.

### ***Ms. Carter in the Classroom***

Ms Carter had 22 students in her classroom in August 2006. Twelve of those students had been in her first grade the previous year. During the school year, two more students entered the class. Ms Carter believed her students lacked independence and general knowledge. *So many of them won't try new things. They wait for me to show them how to do something then they just want to copy. You know, most of my kids haven't had very many experiences. It's like they only want to stay in their 'comfort zone'* (Interview, September 2006). She observed a wide range of literacy abilities in her class. For the fall semester, Ms. Carter was mentoring a student intern from Kansas State University.

The classroom was in a portable building that was detached from the main building. One-half of the building contained a Headstart classroom. Within the approximately 30' x 30' classroom, Ms. Carter organized a colorful, attractive but cramped learning space. A word wall covered one wall. Student work, tasks charts, and calendars were on other wall spaces. The students' desks were organized into four groups. Materials were stored in shelves and in plastic crates arranged against the walls. In one corner, Ms. Carter designed a gathering spot with space for the students to sit near her and an easel. In another corner, there was U-shaped table for small group instruction. Even with well-organized arrangements of furniture and materials, the classroom was very crowded for the students and teachers.

During morning instructional time in Ms. Carter's classroom, there were many interruptions. The office called each day for attendance. Students went to Title 1 and to other pull-out classes throughout the mornings. Ms. Carter explained that the students went for *extra help* but there was never time when the teachers collaborated on the content of the *extra help* or

on the students' progress (Personal communication, September 2006). None of the students had individual educational plans from special education programs.

By October 2006, Ms. Carter had learned of the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) literacy model from Ms. Harper during the balanced literacy professional development sessions and was beginning to implement it in her classroom. She believed a structured classroom management plan would improve her instructional delivery (Personal communication, October 2006). In addition to implementing the *Daily 5*, Ms. Carter began to take running records on the lowest students. At this time, Ms. Carter only calculated the accuracy rates from the running records and was not analyzing the students' processing of meaning, language structure, or visual information. The recording of running records did demonstrate her desire to learn how to diagnose the needs of the weakest readers in order to plan more effective instruction.

### ***October 3, 2006***

During a classroom visit in early October 2006, the students sat in the gathering spot while Ms. Carter reread a big book version of Pat Hutchin's (1989) *The Doorbell Rang*. She reviewed yesterday's discussion of the problem and the solution presented in the story. At this point, Ms. Carter showed the students another book with a problem and solution, Mem Fox's (1986) *Hattie and the Fox*. She stated that there was a problem in this book that also needed a solution. She asked students what they knew about hens and foxes. Beth's response was *They eat hens*, and Zack said, *Chickens are scared of foxes*. Ms Carter suggested that the students *read the pictures* as they looked through the book. As she turned the pages, the story emerged and the students understood the problem and the solution to the story. John, did not engage in the discussion about the book and became disruptive. Ms Carter told him to move next to her and said, *John, come here and I'll know you can read the best*.

To read *Hattie and the Fox*, Ms Carter read each sentence and asked the students to echo that sentence. As she read, she pointed to the text with her index finger. As the students read, she pointed again to the text. She asked John to point to the words as the class read. He pointed, but he did not look at the print and did not match one to one.

As the story continued, Kyle held up his hand and began counting the fox's body parts revealed in the illustration. Ms. Carter praised him for noticing and continued reading. After this reading, the discussion did not return to the problem and solution but went to other "crazy animal books" the class had read. Students connected to several books: Anne Miranda's (1997) *To Market, To Market* and to Pat Hutchins' (1968) *Rosie's Walk*.

Next Ms Carter reviewed the criteria for finding the right book for the *Daily 5* reading to one's self task. The students said it was important to pick the right book because it *built stamina* and *could be fun*. As Ms Carter prepared for a guided reading group, she wrapped a scarf around her neck, which signaled she could not be interrupted while she wore the scarf.

The guided reading group was the lowest achieving readers in her classroom. The group members were Lynn, Dylan, David, and John. John had been pulled from the classroom earlier for assistance with a special education aide. Lynn had been a concern for Ms. Carter at the beginning of the school year. She was very young, six years and nine months. Her family recently moved from California, and Lynn did not attend first grade in California. The father insisted that she be in second grade at Lakeview Elementary School, and the school did not object. At least once a day, a special education aide took Lynn out of the classroom for some assistance in reading. Ms. Carter was never informed of the content of this assistance. Dylan and David were low achieving students who had been in Ms, Carter's first grade class. John had also been in her first grade class.

This group was being introduced to a new book. It was Pat Hutchins' (1987) *Have You Seen My Cat?*. It was a book from a Scholastic guided reading collection and was leveled at B. Ms. Carter provided an overview of the book with connections to the problem and solution topic discussed earlier with the whole class. Each student was given a copy of the book. As she led the discussion through the book, Ms. Carter named the types of cats on each page and used the language structure of the book to support the students reading. The discussion included the ending of the book, and the students understood the whole story. Using a small white board, Ms. Carter wrote the word "have" and asked the students to locate it in the text. Then she said , *Ready, begin, clap, H-A-V-E...What does that spell?*

Next Ms. Carter asked them to find "this" and "my" in the book. She then asked the students what the boy might ask while looking for his cat. Before they responded, she read *Where is my cat?* and asked them to point to the word "where". Ms. Carter asked them to read the book to themselves and when they finished reading, she asked them to write how the boy felt when he lost his cat or to write about how they felt when they lost something. As each student read, Ms Carter moved around the table to listen to them read. She made comments about their fluency and told them words they could not problem solve.

As they finished the book, the students wrote in their composition notebooks. Dylan began his response by drawing a cat and wrote *I lost my cat win he ran away.* David copied from Dylan and wrote, *I lost cat and dog.* Lynn wrote *I los my baicd/I lost my blanket.* She underlined the words she couldn't spell.

While the group finished reading and writing, John returned to the classroom, and Ms. Carter worked quickly to teach him the lesson. His oral language guided his reading, and he consistently read *This ain't my cat* instead of the text's *This is not my cat.*

Ms. Carter handed out ziplock bags with magnetic letters inside. All the letters were in upper case. She asked the students to make "my, by, cry, and try". They manipulated the letters. John and Lynn were unable to build any words except for "my".

In a brief conversation following this lesson, Ms. Carter explained that she read *Hattie and the Fox* one sentence at a time and then asked the students to reread that sentence to model fluency. It was suggested that hearing the entire text would provide a better model of fluency. To explain the spelling of the word "have" as a clapping and oral spelling exercise, she shared that she read that clapping tells the brain to remember words (Personal conversation, October 2006). The process included clapping on consonants, pulling down fists on vowels, and hunching shoulders on silent letters. Ms. Carter later recalled she had learned about the clapping and chanting from a Four Blocks (Cunningham, Hall & Sigmon, 2000) workshop.

Ms. Carter asked about her word work with the guided reading group, and it was suggested that she use some explicit language, which would support the word work. For example: *Take away the first part of 'my' and add a new first part.* For that to be successful, Ms. Carter needed to demonstrate how the tasks looked and be certain that the students understood the term "first part".

As the school year progressed, it was noted that Ms. Carter had students coming and going in and out of her classroom all during the literacy instruction time each morning. She noticed that Dylan had become very frustrated and easily irritated during instruction time, and she believed he was not achieving. It was suggested that his instructional time had too many interruptions each day. In separate conversations in February 2007 with the principal, the special education teacher, and the school counselor, it was decided that Dylan could be allowed to remain in the classroom during the literacy instruction time. The special education teacher commented that



she had no idea he was being pulled out three times each morning. Dylan's placement in special education was for speech and language.

*January 12, 2007*

The school day began with the class in the gathering area. The students had their composition books open to a clean page and independently wrote the date. Ms. Carter had written and cut out word cards and had put tape on their backs. She arranged the words *pretty*, *little*, *happy*, *funny*, and *nice* on one vertical row upon the easel and arranged the words *joke*, *truck*, *teacher*, *city*, and *car* in a vertical row to the right. She pointed to the row on the left and asked, *What job does this group of words have? You know, every word has a job.* Dylan said, *They're letters.* Ms. Carter went right into a definition of adjectives. *These are adjectives. They tell about nouns. They describe words that name things. Write 'adjective' in you composition book.* She spelled *adjective* aloud, and the children wrote it in their composition books. John had trouble keeping up, so he copied from Zack. Lynn scooted closer to Ginny to copy.

Ms. Carter pointed to the row of words on the right and asked, *What is a joke?* Shawnda responded, *A thing that's funny.* Ms. Carter continued, *What's a teacher?* Lori said, *A person who helps you.* Ms. Carter asked, *What's a city?* John said, *A place where you live.* Ms. Carter then asked, *So what do we call the word that tells about these words?* Zack shouted, *Attributes!*

Ms. Carter continued by pointing to the row of nouns and asked the students to match those words with the words that described them. *I'll ask some of you to come up here and choose a word that tells about the nouns.* She called upon the students to match nouns and adjectives. As they were matched, the students wrote the pairs into their compositions books. They had *funny joke*, *little truck*, *nice teacher*, *pretty city*, and *happy car*.

Ms. Carter immediately began to introduce a new task for the working with words activity of the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006). She showed the students a file folder, which had the top half cut into thirds and a paper inside, which looked like this:

| Read it.<br>Spell it.<br>Say it/Cover it. | Say it.<br>Write it.<br>Spell it. | Say it.<br>Check it.<br>Correct it. |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| know                                      |                                   |                                     |
| knife                                     |                                   |                                     |
| knock                                     |                                   |                                     |
| knight                                    |                                   |                                     |
| knew                                      |                                   |                                     |
| knead                                     |                                   |                                     |

Ms. Carter explained to the class the procedure for reading the directions at the top of the page, lifting the flaps up and down to practice spelling the words. She read the words and made up sentences using each word. Allen said, *They start like 'knee'*. Ms. Carter responded with, *Good link*. She instructed the class to use the file folder activity for the working with words task. The students were given the options to also build the words with play dough or to write them in sand trays.

The class went to their desks for *Daily 5* tasks. The students were independent in the tasks. They had built stamina and independence in reading to one's self, reading to a peer, listening to reading, writing, and working with words.

As the students worked, Ms. Carter expressed how pleased she was with the way *Daily 5* had helped her manage her classroom schedule and behaviors. *The kids are reading for long periods of time and really enjoy it. They don't do so well with writing, but I hope than changes.* We discussed the working with words activity and the choice of words starting with "kn-". Ms. Carter did not use a formal spelling program. She chose these words because some of them had

been appeared in guided reading groups, and she knew they were difficult for some of the students. *I'm noticing what's hard for the kids and trying to teach those things. It will help all the kids.*

### ***March 2, 2007***

In early March 2007, Ms. Carter began her class by having the students complete a daily oral language review. Each child had a worksheet on his desk and was to correct errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. If the student needed help, Ms. Carter told them to *phone a friend*. The students were talking to neighbors and not seriously attending to the task. After ten minutes, Ms. Carter called the students to the gathering area to go over the exercise. Only three of the students were successful with the exercise. Ms. Carter wrote it on the white board and the whole class went through the process to correct the spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors.

Immediately, Ms. Carter took the class to a lesson about contractions: *it's, don't, that's, and won't*. The words were read aloud by Ms. Carter and then spelled with actions by the whole group. The action associated with the apostrophe was shouting *whoop*. The lesson on contractions was completed by spelling the contractions into a toy microphone in a variety of voices. Some of the choices for voices were "rocker, opera, Barbie, robot".

There was one more whole group activity this day. Ms. Carter wrote "drink" on the white board and told the class that it started like "dress" and ended like "pink". She led the class in spelling "drink" by saying, *d to the d to the r, r to the r to the i, i to the i to the n, n to the n to the k...what does that spell?...drink!*

After one hour of whole class work, the class was told that the *Daily 5* activity for the entire class would be read to one's self. The guided reading group with the lowest students came to the table with Ms. Carter. There were Lynn, John, Dylan, and David. Ms. Carter gave an

overview of a level G book from a Scholastic leveled book collection, David McPhail's (1997) *The Great Race*. In her introduction, she used a great deal of language from the text. She led the students through the book and had them predict some words, which might be difficult for them to problem solve independently. She supported the students in locating those words by asking them to write the first letter of the word they were to locate. Lynn was unable to write the initial letter of any of the words. Ms. Carter acknowledged her attempts by saying, "That's a learning opportunity". Then she wrote the letter for her. Before the group began to read, John was pulled out by a special education aide. The group started to read independently with Ms. Carter listening to individuals. A Title 1 aide entered the room and took Dylan.

With Lynn and David remaining in the guided reading group, Ms. Carter listened to them read. Both students needed a great deal of support to read. They attempted to sound-out unknown words, did not use meaning, and did not read high frequency words fluently. Ms. Carter followed up the reading with word work using magnetic letters and the -ace rime. With her assistance, the students made the words race, face, lace and space. She had them spell the words orally after they constructed them. The students then wrote the "-ace" words into a composition notebook.

After Ms. Carter sent the students back to their desks, she explained that she had changed the *Daily 5* routine because she had not had time to organize a new word work task and had not gotten new books and tapes for listening to reading. Ms. Carter expressed concern again that the teaching during the tutoring time was not connected to the classroom instruction. When she asked the Title 1 teacher to refrain from pulling out the students during the literacy instructional time, she was told, *This is my job*. During this conversation Ms. Carter shared she hadn't taken running records on the group for quite a long time because a lack of time.

The observations from October 2006, January 2007, and March 2007 indicated that Ms. Carter attempted to implement many instructional methods in her classroom. From the balanced literacy professional development study group, she tried to integrate word work using manipulatives, running records to determine students' instructional levels in reading, and guided reading instruction. She also attempted to structure her classroom with the *Daily 5* framework, to use daily oral language review to strengthen language arts skills, and to use some components of Four Blocks instruction. None of the changes in instructional methods seemed to be securely in place in the classroom routines or to last for any length of time. There was always a sense of urgency to get to the next activity in the classroom as well as the confusion of the students being pulled out for additional instruction. There were days when Ms. Carter exhibited the same frustration and irritation as Dylan.

However, Ms. Carter was always enthusiastic and eager to take on new learning during the balanced literacy professional development project. She shared her views and her experiences with the group and welcomed suggestions. She attended five of the eight sessions from August through April, and was always very open to classroom visits. As she stated in the initial interview, having enough time to work with all her students was a problem. It remained a problem throughout the school year. *Even with the Daily 5 and getting better doing guided reading groups, time is my biggest problem. I never get to all the kids...and my kids have so many interruptions!* (Final interview, May 2007).

### ***The Students in Ms. Carter's Classroom***

At Lakeview Elementary School, 54.5% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged by the Kansas State Department of Education. Ms. Carter had concerns for her

students' lack of general knowledge. Only one student in the class had a parent serving at the nearby U.S. Army base. During the 2006-2007 school year, 24 students were in the class.

Ms. Carter's concern with the lowest students in her class was the rationale for administering to them the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002) three times during the school year. The intent was to enable Ms. Carter to observe those students in a systematic way to find what they knew and controlled and to inform their instruction. Table 4.8 shows the scores from the Observation Survey for Lynn, John, Dylan, and David.

**Table 4.8 Observation Survey: Fall, Midyear, and Spring**

| Student | LID<br>(54) |            |            | Sight<br>Word<br>Test<br>(20) |            |            | Concepts<br>About<br>Print<br>(24) |            |            |
|---------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------------------------------|------------|------------|
|         | Sept<br>'06 | Jan<br>'07 | May<br>'07 | Sept<br>'06                   | Jan<br>'07 | May<br>'07 | Sept<br>'06                        | Jan<br>'07 | May<br>'07 |
| Lynn    | 38          | 49         | 52         | 3                             | 12         | 19         | 8                                  | 17         | 19         |
| John    | 41          | 39         | 49         | 5                             | 6          | 9          | 8                                  | 10         | 17         |
| Dylan   | 50          | 51         | 53         | 8                             | 12         | 19         | 13                                 | 15         | 19         |
| David   | 50          | 52         | 52         | 4                             | 15         | 18         | 14                                 | 18         | 20         |

| Student | Writing<br>Vocabulary<br>(no ceiling) |            |            | Hearing<br>and<br>Recording<br>Sounds in<br>Words<br>(37) |            |            | Text<br>Reading<br>Level<br>(A-Z) |            |            |
|---------|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|---|------------|------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
|         | Sept<br>'06                           | Jan<br>'07 | May<br>'07 | Sept<br>'07   | Jan<br>'07 | May<br>'07 | Sept<br>'06                       | Jan<br>'07 | May<br>'07 |
| Lynn    | 7                                     | 15         | 30         | 32  | 35         | 36         | C                                 | G          | I          |
| John    | 3                                     | 10         | 20         | 27  | 29         | 33         | B                                 | C          | E          |
| Dylan   | 14                                    | 31         | 55         | 30  | 31         | 37         | C                                 | F          | K          |
| David   | 11                                    | 21         | 43         | 27  | 34         | 36         | C                                 | G          | L          |

All four students showed progress on all components of the Observation Survey.

According to the guided reading levels established by Fountas and Pinnell (2001), Lynn read at end of first grade or Level I in spring, and John read at preprimer 3 or Level E. Dylan and David were reading at mid-second grade levels in spring, Levels K and L, respectively,

Growth in literacy was collected from a reading and writing checklist adapted from Dorn and Soffos (2001). The three students selected for observing with the checklist represented a range of literacy levels. Running records and writing samples from reading response journals taken in September 2006 helped to identify the range of their literacy growth. The following are examples from those three students in Ms. Carter's class.

Ginny began her second grade year at the transitional level. She self-monitored her reading easily and used parts within words to solve unknown words. She was able to problem solve while reading with little difficulty and often used word meanings to solve new words. In her writing, she took risks with new and unusual words and attended to syllables. Ginny tried different ways to express meaning by revising word choices. At the end of the school year, she was reading longer texts with greater accuracy and fluency. She could be noticed anticipating errors before she made them. She wrote increasingly longer texts with more accuracy and complexity. The following is an example of Ginny's journal entry in April 2007:

*This morning I heard cats sitting on my window meowing and I got up and threw a big bucket of water on it. It was soking wet! I laughed very hard and it ran away. I went in the kitchen and had some bacon and rice. The rice was sesoned and delishus! I had some orange juice and that started my day.*

Ginny was confident in her reading and writing. She found opportunities to read independently through the school day and frequently asked to go to the school library to check out books for her independent reading. Although she was not observed writing independently, she engaged actively in writing work when it was assigned and enjoyed sharing her writing with friends. Using the Dorn and Soffos (2001) checklist, Ginny had characteristics of a fluent reader in spring and was reading at level Q. She could read longer texts and easily learned new words.

She was able to apply knowledge about word meanings across different texts and make predictions about word meanings and check those predictions within texts. Ginny's writing had not progressed to the fluent level.

Greg began his second grade year at the early level in reading. He self-monitored his reading using meaning. When he needed to problem solve a new word, he tried to decode first by searching through the word in a left-to-right sequence. As the year progressed, he noticed larger units of analysis in words like inflectional endings, rime patterns, and blends. He continued to problem solve using decoding before using meaning or language structure. In writing, Greg was not a risk-taker. His writing composition was halted when he was unable to spell a word correctly. With classroom and teacher attention to the word wall and searching through texts, Greg became more resourceful in his spelling, and more automatic in writing high frequency words. In April 2007 when Ms. Carter instructed the students to write about the first thing they heard that morning, Greg wrote: *This morning I heard my brother play the Xbox. it was Football.*

By spring several of Greg's reading behaviors had moved into the transitional level. He was taking on new words easily by using word meanings to problem solve and reading longer texts with more accuracy and fluency. He was beginning to anticipate errors before making mistakes. He read at level M.

John was the third student observed using the Dorn and Soffos' checklist. Ms. Carter requested he be observed. He had been in her first grade class the previous year, and she was very concerned about his literacy achievement. As shown on the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002), John had meager knowledge of sight words, print concepts, and letter and sound relationships. He was not able to discriminate a letter from a word and did not match one to one.



His guided reading level was B. His reading and writing were at emergent levels. His oral language often overrode his attention to print and interfered with his ability to match one to one. As the school year progressed, John began to attend to print and to recognize the links between letters and their related sounds. He did begin to self-monitor when he noticed a mistake, but he usually became frustrated and did not initiate attempts to problem solve.

In writing John wrote with difficulty in forming the letters. He did not take risks in spelling. Composing a response or story was very frustrating to him. John indicated progress through the year in acquiring some high frequency words in writing. He attempted to slowly articulate words and linked some letters and their sounds. In April 2007 when Ms. Carter asked the class to write about the first thing they heard that morning, John responded, *I woc op and I hrd my dog breathing in my face* (I woke up and I heard my dog breathing in my face). Ms. Carter helped him spell "breathing "and "face".

In spring John had stronger characteristics of an emergent reader. He attended to print using some known letters and matched words one-to-one throughout several lines of text. He did begin to use the word wall as a resource for reading and writing and read more high frequency words fluently. However, John never became a risk-taker and was very dependent upon Ms. Carter for his reading and writing. In April 2007, John read guided reading level E.

All students in Ms. Carter's classroom made progress during the 2006-2007 school year. The teacher and students achieved in their cramped classroom and with the school staff's schedule. In informal conversations with several of the students in May 2007, they were asked what types of things make a good reader. Ginny said, *Reading lots of books that are hard*. Greg said, *Good readers know lots of words*. Lynn said, *Making it sound like my teacher*. John said, *You don't make mistakes*.

### ***Reading Lesson Observation Framework of Ms. Carter's Second Grade Classroom***

The Reading Lesson Observation Framework (ROLF) was used four times during the school year to examine the practical components of Ms. Carter's day-to-day literacy instruction. The classroom climate included an area for small group reading instruction and active participation and social interaction were integral parts of the classroom. There was no organization for reading materials in the classroom and no classroom library. Each student had a basket for his guided reading books and library books. In the gathering area, the books Ms. Carter used for read alouds and shared reading were available to the students.

During a guided reading lesson with her most struggling readers in November 2006, Ms. Carter passed out the level H book, *Robert and the Rocket* (Waldron, 1997) and asked them to check the illustrations for clues about the story. The students previewed the text in this manner, and then Ms. Carter asked them to read independently while she listened to each of them. The ROLF indicated that a conversation to discuss the contents of the story, an introduction of new vocabulary words in a meaningful context, and a focus on words that were central to understanding the story were important components for prereading that Ms. Carter needed to implement but omitted. Dylan was passive and made very weak attempts to read. John and David joked around about the illustrations in the book. Ms. Carter asked the boys to read quietly, and John sat on the floor next to his chair and pouted. Lynn did not try to read.

Obviously frustrated, Ms. Carter asked John to return to his chair at the guided reading table, and she asked the students to follow along as she read the text to them. After a very brief discussion of the story, the students returned to their desks to read to themselves. Ms. Carter shared that her book selection for the group had not been appropriate. It was suggested that running records needed to be taken and analyzed to know the reading level of the group and to

help with book selections. Ms. Carter agreed. Using the ROLF, the guided reading phase had not gone well.

The fourth observation using the ROLF was conducted in April 2007. The classroom climate was the same as in the three previous observations. Ms. Carter requested that the same guided reading group be observed. The book introduced that day was *Class Trip* (Maccarone, 1999), level G. The class had recently gone on a trip. There was a large chart titled, "Rules for Our Class Trip" on the wall near the guided reading table. The rules were:

*When on the bus, you may chatter quietly.*

*Make sure to keep up with the group.*

*Follow directions.*

*Enjoy yourself.*

Ms. Carter gave a brief overview of the text and reminded them of their recent class trip and the rules the class had written for it. She asked the students to look through their copies of the text with her. She used the patterned language of the text and asked the students to repeat the pattern several times. The students were attentive to the illustrations and made prediction about the story. Ms. Carter had them point to ten words that she thought were important to the story. She then told the students that they would read the book the next day.

In a conversation following the guided reading lesson, Ms. Carter expressed that she believed the group was not able to be introduced to the text and read it in the same day. Referencing the ROLF, Ms. Carter shared that she didn't think it was a good checklist for an observation with struggling readers. She continued to say that she was still unsure of the group's reading level. She felt pressured to move them into higher guided reading levels. Ms. Carter

said *I know I need to do running records to check their reading levels, but I don't have time to do that.*

### ***Reflective Thoughts from Ms. Carter's Second Grade Classroom***

In her first reflection log, Ms. Carter expressed enthusiasm for small instructional groups. She had not taught literacy this way before the balanced literacy professional development. She wrote that her lessons were stronger and more effective *because I can work with the differences* (Reflection Log #1, December 2006). She also remarked about using strong book introductions. She had not presented an overview of the story or book to the guided reading group. Nor had she presented book language or had students locate words critical to successful reading. She felt that expanding her book introductions as discussed in the professional development group allowed her students to read more independently. Ms. Carter shared that *giving really supportive book introductions have been a real eye-opener for me. The book introductions and how they support the kids' predictions and comprehension work great.* Ms. Carter made an interesting comment about the students' comprehension. She said, *There needs to be less discussion from me until the students have the chance to respond by talking or in his response journal.* Ms. Carter had many questions in her reflection log about working with the lowest students. She questioned what evidence was necessary to move students up in guided reading levels and how to support that move with the struggling students. There seemed to be great desire to move the students to higher levels, but there was uncertainty that the move was appropriate.

Ms. Carter's first reflections indicated the use of instructional skills and procedures discussed in the balanced literacy professional project. The reflections also revealed the problem of scheduling which Ms. Carter expressed at the beginning of the school year. On Fridays when the class went to the school library for thirty minutes, she did not meet with all the guided

reading groups. She noted that the group she omitted most often was the low group. Ms. Carter shared that she often used guided reading time to finish up class projects. In the December 2006 reflection log, she had the class finishing a cut and paste project on Indian folklore.

In January 2007, Ms. Carter's reflections showed an influence from the professional development project's study of Debbie Miller (2002). She spoke of encouraging the students to use schema before beginning to read and how it seemed to improve their comprehension and fluency. Ms. Carter continued to lament about her issues with time. In her efforts to raise the lowest students achievement levels, she felt that she was rushing them too much. In addition, Dylan was pulled from her class twice every morning that week. She wrote *Some days the interruptions are excessive. How can I help kids when they keep getting pulled out?* (Reflection Log #2, January 2007)

Ms. Carter believed using the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2002) literacy framework helped her to work better with small groups and individual students. *Daily 5* was working for Ms. Carter when she noted that *all my students are actively engaged in D5 activities* (Reflection Log #2, January 2007). She added that she did not seem able to implement all five of the literacy tasks on the same day.

Ms. Carter did not submit a reflection log in April 2007. She shared that she had lost the forms and requested another copy. By May 1, 2007 when she had not submitted the reflection log, I reminded her and did not receive a response.

### ***Summary of Ms. Carter's Professional Development Participation***

Ms. Carter volunteered to participate in the district balanced literacy professional development project and to be part of the case study for the research project. She missed three of the professional development sessions and was absent from her classroom four times during the

research project. When she was present, she was very active and always wanted to know more about teaching reading more effectively. Many of the topics discussed in the professional development group were new concepts for Ms. Carter, and many of the topics were implemented in Ms. Carter's classroom. She worked to develop rich book introductions, to work with small instructional groups, to link reading and writing, to establish the *Daily 5* as a framework for managing her literacy instructional time, and to meet the needs of individual students. Ms. Carter began each endeavor with enthusiasm. All through the school year, she provided rich book introduction in read alouds, which included helping students make personal connections. Throughout the year, she continued to teach in small groups.

Early in the school year, she took running records to look for the accuracy of the students' reading. When given demonstrations of how to analyze them for literacy processing, she said *There isn't time for me to do that at school. I'll have to take it home* (Personal communication, November 2006). By February 2007, Ms. Carter was no longer taking running records on any of the students. Managing the *Daily 5* model became cumbersome for her. *I don't have time to plan the word work and to go to the library to get books on tape for the listening task* (Personal communication, March 2007).

Table 4.9 shows which topics from the balanced literacy professional development project were evidenced from observations, reflection logs, and interviews from Ms. Carter.

Ms. Carter continued to be concerned for the lowest students in her classroom. She believed that they needed strong sight word vocabularies and that guided reading was not meeting that need. When their group met during the last two months of the school year, Ms. Carter worked with the students from reproducible books with controlled vocabularies and little opportunities for strategic processing. An example of one book was:

## Plants

We see plants on our earth.

I will plant \_\_\_\_\_.

I will need a \_\_\_\_\_.

Plants need \_\_\_\_\_.

Plants need \_\_\_\_\_.

After the group returned to their desks, Ms. Carter explained that guided reading just wasn't working for those kids. She believed they needed *more structure and that helps me plan their lessons. I can do guided reading with the other kids, but it isn't working for these kids.*

As in her classroom observations, Ms. Carter took every opportunity to express her frustration about her crowded classroom, the classroom's interruptions, and the issues of time. Even though she often seemed rushed and frustrated, she expressed that teaching guided reading and teaching to small groups had *totally changed* her classroom (Personal conversation, March 2007).

**Table 4.9 Ms. Carter's Balanced Literacy Implementation**

|   | Observations | Reflection Logs | Interviews |
|---|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Reading Theory                                |              |                 |            |
| Literacy Processing                           | 6            |                 |            |
| Theories of Balanced Literacy                 | 9            | 4               | 3          |
| Research Findings of Classroom Practices      |              |                 |            |
| Guided Reading                                | 14           | 6               | 7          |
| Organizing and Managing for Balanced Literacy | 12           | 8               | 10         |
| Comprehension                                 | 10           | 5               | 4          |
| Phonemic Awareness                            |              |                 |            |
| Phonics                                       | 9            | 8               |            |
| Vocabulary                                    | 14           | 5               | 6          |
| Fluency                                       | 4            |                 |            |
| Informal Assessments                          |              |                 | 2          |
| Running Records                               | 7            | 4               | 7          |

### **Literacy Coaching**

A component of this study was for me to assume the role of literacy coach in the kindergarten, first grade, and second grade classrooms. As a literacy coach, I provided sustained, on-site professional development to model instructional strategies. I provided feedback to teachers, examined student work, analyzed data, and helped to create interventions for low-performing students. The one-to-one coaching I provided involved guided participation, while classroom teachers observed the interactions between me, the coach, and the students. This was embedded in daily practices, based on students' behaviors, and aligned with the balanced literacy professional development. To facilitate positive changes in teaching and



learning, I worked to scaffold teachers as they reflected on their own teaching and learning and on transferring their knowledge and skills to improve student literacy. This study endeavored to work in a culture of learning where teachers were comfortable taking risks and focused on providing the best instruction for all students.

By design of the study, my role as a literacy coach situated me as a participant observer. Creswell (2002) wrote that in this observational role, I was able to take part in the activities in the setting I observed. Puig and Froelich (2007) identify participant observation in coaching when a literacy coach is in a classroom interacting with the students and the teacher. They further define literacy coaching to include the coach encountering the same experiences as the person being coached.

### ***Coaching Ms. Thomas***

At the beginning of the 2006-2007 schoolyear, Ms. Thomas expressed concern about her activity centers. She believed they were not focused on providing opportunities for the students to practice the concepts and skills taught in her classroom. She requested suggestions on making the centers *more meaningful to the kids' learning* (Personal communication, August 2006).

### ***August 23, 2006***

On August 23, 2006, I coached Ms. Thomas in implementing letter work into an ABC center. She and I had a short conference about Clay's (2005) attention to helping children learn all the letter shapes and features in fast and flexible ways. I shared with her Lyons' (2003) writing about involving movement with learning. Lyons wrote, "the movement is necessary to develop the processing system that will eventually help the child learn ways of remembering the letter name, and recalling how to form the letter" (p. 41-42).

With a group of four students, I had them stand in front of a large white board. Each child had an array of 10 to 12 magnetic letters. The letters were at the students' eye levels. Each set of letters contained two letters, which were known to the students. The letters were "k" and "s", "t" and "v", "o" and "y", and "h" and "c". I had an array of "s" and "o". The students watched as I used both hands to sort the letters into two groups. My first attempt was done slowly. Then I did it quickly. I asked the students to use both hands and sort their letters quickly. They were able to do it accurately but had difficulty using both hands and doing it quickly. After several attempts, the pace of the task improved, and the students were using both hands more flexibly. I asked the students to move to the array of letters next to them and sort them quickly. The students were able to do this.

When the students returned to their tables, Ms. Thomas asked if the students should be saying the names of the letters as they moved them. I shared Clay's (2005) thinking that the students need to learn to look at print. Working with letters in isolation will increase the fast recognition of letters, which will lead to faster recognition of all letters at a glance. That knowledge will allow the students to make faster decisions about words as they acquire reading and writing behaviors. Ms. Thomas asked for suggestions in organizing a center activity for the letter sort. We discussed placing pairs of magnetic letters in zip-lock bags and placing them near the white board. She stated that she needed to practice this task in each of her guided reading groups before making it a center activity. *Don't you think all the kids need to practice this before I put in the center?* I reminded her that the letters needed to be known to the students. Ms. Thomas had given an informal assessment during the first two days of school to learn the students' knowledge of the alphabet.

In reflecting upon the conversations and demonstration around the letter sorting activity, I considered my role as coach. From Toll's (2007) concepts of literacy coaching, I identified myself in several roles. The first concept I noticed was that of a technician. I had acted as a technician who shared knowledge and skills in a way that enabled Ms. Thomas to develop similar technical abilities. The second concept I noticed was that of a service provider. I had acted as a service provides by responding to Ms. Thomas' request for help. The third concept I noticed was that of a fresh alternative. I had acted assertively with processes for coaching while Ms. Thomas provided the content for coaching.

Another connection from my reflections was to Puig and Froelich (2007). They discussed Cambourne's (1988) conditions for oral language acquisition in relation to literacy coaching. Cambourne states that demonstrations are necessary conditions for literacy development, which need to be continually repeated. Puig and Froelich (2007) state that demonstrations have the greatest impact on a teacher when they are supported by sound research that uses assessment to guide instruction and modeled by the literacy coach by teaching students.

My conversations with Ms. Thomas before and after the demonstration guided her understanding of letter work. The conversations were based on observed student behavior and focused on student outcomes. The teaching demonstration did not supplant her instruction but guided her teaching in to literacy learning. During the debriefing, there was a sense that we were cooperating partners in the literacy instruction of her students.

### ***October 24, 2006***

On October 24, 2006, I observed Ms. Thomas in a guided reading group. Two days earlier she had read *The M&M Halloween Treat Book* (McGrath, 2000) to the class. She was extending the read aloud with writing about the candy, M&M's. The focus of the lesson was

color recognition and becoming familiar with color words. In the two days before this observation, Ms. Thomas had assessed color recognition and knowledge of upper and lower case "m". She had prepared an eight-page book with the sentence "I like (color word) M&M's." The students were to color pictures of the candy and write the corresponding color word in the blank. Ms. Thomas had word cards with the color words written in corresponding colored ink to scaffold the students as they completed their books. The students seemed to enjoy the choices they had in selecting colors and in the drawing.

When the students left the guided reading table, Ms. Thomas said she did not like the way that writing lesson had gone. *I believe I taught to the object of the lesson, learning colors and color words, but it wasn't real writing.* I asked if I could demonstrate a shared writing lesson. Taking a cue from a sorting table filled with plastic insects, I used the text from Joy Cowley's (1996) *Spider, Spider* as a framework for the shared writing.

*Ant, Ant, come to me.*

*No, no, spider not me.*

*Ladybug, ladybug, come to me.*

*No, no, spider, not me*

*Caterpillar, caterpillar, come to me*

*No, no, spider, not me*

As I wrote the story on the large white board, I guided the students to read and reread as words were added to the story. Students suggested which bugs from the sorting table should be included in the story. The students were very engaged. While pointing to each word while

rereading, Vernon shouted, *That's 'no'. I know that word.* He pointed to the word wall in the classroom. Neita stood up and told the class, *I see 'to'. I know 'to'.* Ms. Thomas passed out the students' daily journals and asked them to write about other bugs the spider might invite to his web. The students went right to work with a few of them stopping by the sorting table to examine the bugs. Most of the students attempted to continue the text from the shared writing. Ms. Thomas wrote the names of some other bugs on the white board. Most students copied from the example.

While the students wrote in their journals, Ms. Thomas commented that using authentic text had made the students more active learners than filling in the blanks of a reproducible book. She noticed how Vernon made the connection of a word he knew to the shared writing and to the word wall. *That's what I needed to see. That's going deeper.*

The conversations after this coaching experience made me consider the roles I had played in the role of literacy coach. As in the August coaching, I was a service provider who responded to Ms. Thomas' request. This coaching opportunity allowed me to act as a technician by letting me share my knowledge and skills to help Ms. Thomas observe a shared writing lesson.

### ***April 5, 2007***

During the April 5, 2007 observation, Ms. Thomas demonstrated how she had integrated balanced literacy instructional skills. When the students brought worms into the classroom, she moved flexibly into an interactive writing lesson that was relevant to the students and provided opportunities for them to practice composing, transcribing, and reading their story. Ms. Thomas gave them more opportunities to practice their literacy skills by asking them to write more about worms in their daily journals.

That day was evidence of movement along the continuum of coaching as described by Puig and Froelich (2007). Ms. Thomas no longer needed scaffolding to observe teaching opportunities in writing. She was able to quickly observe students' behaviors and design a relevant lesson. Throughout the school year, Ms. Thomas' literacy instruction changed through multiple opportunities to observe teaching through coaching demonstrations, to problem solve collaboratively through coaching, to confer, and to reflect on her instructional practices.

### ***Coaching Summary***

During the school year, Ms. Thomas and I moved along the continuum of coaching as described by Puig and Froelich (2007). The continuum was never linear but shifted to meet her concerns, requests and the needs of her students. Ms. Thomas provided content for coaching, requested help, and enthusiastically engaged in literacy instructional practices, which aligned with balanced literacy.

### ***Coaching Ms. Harper***

Ms. Harper began the school year implementing some of the topics from the June 2006 balanced literacy professional development. She organized a notebook for keeping students' running records and had an Observation Survey (Clay, 2002) notebook. In late August 2006, she asked me to look through her notebooks to see if they were organized logically and in a way that would be efficient. She began right away to use running records to assess students' instructional levels in reading and used that information to group her student for guided reading. Ms. Harper integrated letter and word work practices, which were discussed in the professional development project with her implementation of the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006). Another topic from the June 2006 balanced literacy professional development which Ms. Harper explored

was using language prompts for movement patterns to form letters. There was no adopted handwriting program in the district, and she wanted to try the suggestions from Dorn, (2001). She asked to borrow Dorn's (2001) book, *Shaping Literate Minds: Developing Self-Regulated Learners* to read more about the language prompts and to share with her first grade teacher colleagues.

**October 5, 2006**

During my weekly coaching and observation visits to her classroom in August and most of September, Ms. Harper worked independently without requesting assistance. Although we had frequent conversations about the students' literacy behaviors and activities, I never believed she was inviting me to coach through demonstration. In late September, she did ask if I would model a guided reading lesson. *It seems all the lessons are becoming routine. I know that I'm not doing enough to help each kid in each group. Will you work with one guided reading group and show me how to be more on target for the kids?* (Personal communication, September 28, 2006).

Ned, Madison, Carl, Rob, and Sara came to the guided reading table. Ms. Harper sat to the side to observe. I provided a broad overview of the new book, *The Little Red Hen* (Barton, 1998), guided reading level D.

*You may have heard this story before. Do you know 'The Little Red Hen'?*

*This is the story of the little red hen. She is making a cake. Who will help her?*

*No one. Not the cat, or the dog, or the mouse.*

*Let's look at the pictures and think about the little red hen and her cake.*

As I guided the students through the book, we had a conversation about the illustrations and their connections to the plot. Carl, Madison, and Sara said they had heard this story before.

I used the language in the book to provide support for the students' first reading. *Who will help me make a cake? Now you say that.* To give more support, I asked the students to locate a word they knew, "will". All the students located "will". To give support for a new word, I asked, *What two letters do you hear at the beginning of 'who'?* Madison responded with *w* and pointed to "who". I asked again, *What two letters do you see at the beginning of 'who'?* The group looked where Madison was pointing and said *wh*. I asked the students to read the question, *Who will help me make a cake?* The students looked through the book, and I asked them to locate *who* on two more pages.

Next the students read to themselves while I went around and listened to their reading. I instructed them to read the story again if they finished before the whole group. Everyone but Rob used the language pattern *Who will help me make a cake?* They were successful with the first reading. Rob seemed unable to repeat the pattern and became frustrated, closed his book, and put his head on the table. I asked him to tell me what the main idea of the story. He said, *The hen is making a cake and wants them to help her but they won't.* I replied, *Okay, let's read and think about that.* I read along on two pages with *Who will help me make the cake?* He was able to complete the book independently.

When the students finished the reading, I guided a conversation around the feelings of the cat, dog, and mouse when they found out they weren't going to get to eat the cake. Ned said they were sad. Carl said they were mad. Rob said, *Yeah, real mad!* Sara said, *They should have helped then they could have some cake.* When I asked Madison what she wanted to share about the animals feelings, she said, *They were sad.* I asked, *If the little red hen makes another cake, do you think the animals will help?* All the students said, *Yes.* I asked them to return to their



desks and write in the response journal. They were to write about the little red hen and what might happen the next time she makes a cake.

Ms. Harper and I had an opportunity to talk when the students left the classroom for their physical education class. She remarked about how much I supported the students in the book introduction. She said, *I don't spend that much time talking about the story and the pictures.* I took her to Fountas & Pinnell's (1996) guided reading book to Chapter 11, which discusses book introductions. We talked about the introduction as the key to the students' success with the first reading. She knew about activating the students' prior knowledge before reading and spoke of its importance. Locating the known word, "will" and the new word, "who" were interesting to Ms. Harper. *When you had them practice the sentence, 'Who will help me make a cake?', I didn't know how much it would help them read. Finding those words really helped them.*

I talked about encouraging problem solving by asking for the two letters at the beginning of "who". She made the connection between the letter sounds and symbols and how the students practiced cross-checking those when they located "who".

After this opportunity to provide an observation lesson for Ms. Harper, I reflected upon Dozier's (2006) discussion of responsive literacy coaching. She writes when teachers and literacy coaches participate in dynamic professional development processes and develop practices for increased student achievement, they develop respectful instructional relationships, which allow for trust and collaboration. I believed Ms. Harper and I developed this relationship and were moving into further collaboration opportunities.

Relating to Toll's (2007) concepts of literacy coaching, I identified my role in several concepts during this coaching experience. Ms. Harper viewed me as a technician to convey my skills and knowledge to help her develop similar skills. She viewed me as a professional

developer because she drew from our previous professional development relationship. She provided me with content for coaching and an opportunity to be assertive which enabled me to act as a fresh alternative.

### ***October 19, 2006***

In an email correspondence on October 15, 2006, Ms. Harper expressed concern about wide ranges of knowledge, skills, and progress among her guided reading groups.

*I am starting to notice some students that are moving out of the group they were originally placed with. The tough part is that two of my groups are so widely spread apart that I would not be able to bump this student up to the next group. Do I make a group just for one student? What should I do? I really don't want to make any more groups. As it is, it is a struggle to meet with four groups already* (Email correspondence, October 15, 2006).

When I received this message, I replied that I would be in the classroom very soon. In the meantime, I asked her to read from Fountas and Pinnell (1996), Chapter Eight, "Dynamic Grouping". During her planning time on October 19, we reviewed the concept of dynamic grouping from Fountas and Pinnell (1996). We discussed how observation was the foundation for grouping students in guided reading. Their progress needed to be monitored closely, and running records needed to be taken regularly. Ms. Harper noticed in Fountas and Pinnell (1996) the recommendations for some grouping of students for interaction during literacy activities outside the guided reading lesson. She commented how the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) task of reading to a peer aligned with that recommendation. I stressed that all the students needed to be reading on their instructional level in guided reading groups. With her documented observations and running records, she could provide quick, targeted interventions to keep the

students working in the group. I suggested that her ongoing monitoring and running records were necessary and that change would be expected.

Ms. Harper shared her running record notebook with me. We examined the records of the students who created the concern. Looking at the records of Rob and Jack, we noticed two things: the last running record was one month old and it was on the same level as the first one taken in early September. Ms. Harper said, *I know that I need to get running records more often. I didn't realize how long it had been. So how often do I take them?* It was my suggestion that she take weekly running records on the lower achieving students and that she only take two or three each day for the whole classroom. That schedule made it manageable for her and gave her regular information. She noted, *I was trying to take one day a month and do running records. I see now that it won't be useful if I do that.*

Several days after Ms. Harper and I studied her guided reading grouping and her running record notebook, she shared this with me through email correspondence.

*After taking your suggestions, I feel like even those some of these kids have a long way to go, I can get them there. It is nice to have someone offering such direct and goal oriented advice. So many times all I hear is "how good of a teacher" I am. While I appreciate such kind words, I know that I have things that I can be working on.*

From this point, I believed that Ms. Harper and I were focused on seeking solutions for all the students in her first grade. Although I did not teach or model every time I was in her classroom, we shared observations, assessment data, and other evidence to improve instruction and student learning.

*January 18, 2007*

Ms. Harper worked to develop rich, supportive book introductions in her guided reading group. We discussed how book introductions with reading aloud to the whole class can scaffold comprehension, language, and reading for enjoyment. She asked me to model reading a book to the class. The class was studying Kansas' history. Ms. Harper had previously helped the students imagine what it was like to be living on the Kansas' prairie in the 1800's. I chose to read *Sod Houses on the Great Plains* (Rounds, 1995) to the class. On this day I used the *ELMO* to project the book on the white board in order to enlarge the illustrations and text of the book. The students sat at their desks.

Only showing the front of the book, I gave a short overview.

*This book tells how the people who lived on our Kansas' prairies built their houses from the ground around them because there were no trees to use for houses or log cabins. When we read this book, we'll see how the houses were built, how they looked on the inside, and what it was like to live in a sod house.*

I guided the students through the illustrations to activate prior knowledge and to develop the meaning of the story. There were brief conversations sparked by the pictures, especially when the students noticed a snake dropping from the ceiling onto the table inside the house. As I read the text, I often stopped to question the building process, to comment of the darkness and dampness of the house, and to think about living in such a house. When the reading was finished, the students asked to go back to some of the pages they found interesting. We reread the page about "visits from uninvited wildlife".

After school that day, Ms. Harper and I talked about the read aloud. She noted that the introduction helped the students realize the purpose of reading the book and supported their connection with other Kansas topics they had studied. Ms. Harper said she read aloud to the class without introductions. *The kids usually like the story, but I see how I could make it better with an introduction. I just never thought about doing an introduction for a read aloud. I'm going to try it.*

When I reflected upon our conversation after school, I believed that working with Ms. Harper that day had shifted her understanding of the purpose of reading aloud to the class. Seeing the active participation of the class before, during, and after reading *Sod Houses* increased her understanding of the potential learning opportunities for read alouds. Because Ms. Harper was able to be self-reflective, she was able to see her teaching and make changes. She looked at the results of the read aloud and considered adopting the practice of using rich book introductions for future read alouds. Ms. Harper's reflective thinking about my demonstration illustrates Lyons and Pinnell's (2001) statement, "Coaching is a way to help teachers become more analytic about their work" (p. 111).

### ***Coaching Summary***

Throughout the 2006-2007 school year, Ms. Harper challenged me as a literacy coach. Her reflections of her teaching and on our constructive conversation kept me engaged in my own reflections about my practice as a literacy coach. That led me to consider Lyons (2002) statement: "The greatest changes and gains in understanding and practice occur when the teacher is engaged in the reflective process with a more knowledgeable and experienced coach" (p.93). Ms. Harper kept me on the cutting edge of my knowledge of literacy learning and coaching.

### ***Coaching Ms. Carter***

From the beginning of the balanced literacy professional development project, Ms. Carter shared that there was never enough time for her instruction. *Time is always an issue. I never have enough time to do assessments, reading groups. I don't even have time to talk with other teachers. I know all about collaborating and all that stuff, but there's no time!* (Interview, September 2006).

Ms. Carter had developed a daily schedule, which included two hours each morning for literacy instruction. From my first experience in her classroom, the many interruptions indicated problems in managing daily instruction for all the students. Students were pulled out for Title 1 instruction, for work with a special education aide, for speech therapy, and for visits to the office for a variety of reasons. One morning in September, the students entered the classroom at 8:30, put away their backpacks, grabbed their independent reading boxes, and went to their desks. As soon as Ms. Carter called them to the gathering area, the school office called on the inner-com to ask which students were absent. A few minutes later, a student announced the upcoming events at the school over the speaker. David was pulled out for speech. Then John was pulled out for work with a special education aide. Next someone came over the inner-com to ask if anyone had lost a blue backpack. Ms. Carter continued with a lesson on using upper case letters in proper names and was soon interrupted by birthday announcements by the school secretary on the inner-com.

Helping Ms. Carter organize and manage her literacy instruction became one goal of my literacy coaching. She needed uninterrupted periods of time to teach effectively. Her students needed uninterrupted periods of time to have ample opportunities to read and write.

In a September 2006 interview, Ms. Carter stated she wanted to be successful with guided reading groups because *I know those small groups meet the kids' needs better, and I can teach all the subjects in guided reading lessons*. Instructional time remained a concern. *I just want to make better use of time. Can I do that and guided reading?*

### ***October 24, 2006***

Ms. Carter had asked me to model a guided reading lesson, which included word work using magnetic letters. On this day I taught Lynn, John, and Dylan. They were beginning a new book, *I'm Hungry* (Veehoff, 2002). I gave a brief overview of the story.

*In this story, the little monkey was so hungry. He went into the kitchen to make a snack. All the monkeys in his family thought that was a good idea. They said 'We are all hungry.' They all made snacks too. When they were all finished making snacks, the little monkey said 'It's a party!'*

As I guided the students through the book to orient them to the layout of the print and to gain meaning from the illustrations, I asked them to locate "so" and "made" which were known words to the students. Dylan found the words easily. Lynn found "so" quickly. When she looked for "made", she said, *mmmmmm* softly to herself as she studied the print and pointed to it correctly. John located "so" quickly and watched Dylan to locate "made". To read this book successfully, the students needed to read the word "all". I asked them, *What letter do you hear at the end of 'all'?* They made the correct sound for "l". Then I asked, *What letter makes that sound?* John looked at the alphabet chart on the nearby wall and said, *Lion, It's like lion*. Dylan said, *That's an 'l'*. Next I asked them to find the word "all" which they did. In the orientation, I stressed the repeated language pattern, *We are all hungry* and asked the students to say it with me when it appeared in text.

To be certain that they understood the meaning of the story, I asked the students to take me through the story, telling me about the story through the pictures. The students read the story independently as I listened to each student read. The students read the story easily. I asked them to tell me why the little monkey thought it was a party. John said, *'Cause when you got all that food, it's a party!*

I gave the each student magnetic letters for the word "all" and told them to make the word and to check it by running their finger under it and saying it slowly. I demonstrated that procedure and took away my model. Dylan made the word easily, Lynn and John made the word slowly. I placed an array of "b's", "c's", and "f's" on the table. I guided them in some word work. *This is a word that will help you know other words. If I add "b" to the beginning, what word do I have?* Dylan said *Ball*. I asked them to take away the first part and put "c" in the first part. Then I asked Lynn to tell me the new word. She said the sound for "c", hesitated and said *Call*. Next I asked them to take away the first part and add a new first part. John pulled out an "f". He stretched out the "f" sound and said *Fall*. Then I asked them to take away the first part and tell me the word that was left. *All*. To link the word work with the reading we had done, I asked them to open the books and find the word "all". All the students did that. As the students returned to their desks, I asked them to take out their reading response journals and write about a snack they would like to make for a party.

Ms Carter hurried to the guided reading table to organize for her next group, and we had a short conversation about the word work. She shared that she liked the way I worked with "all". *I need to think about telling the kids to use something they know to get to new words.* I reminded her that taking the word work back to the text strengthened the learning, and that providing opportunities to use those words in writing made the learning even stronger.



My role with Ms. Carter was that of a technician (Toll, 2007). She presumed that teaching a guided reading group relied upon a set of skills and knowledge and asked me to share that. It concerned me that Ms. Carter was so intent on getting to all her guided reading groups. Later that day, I sent an email message to her about scheduling guided reading groups.

*Please consider this suggestion: The high-achieving readers do not need to meet daily. Their instructional group will look like a study group. Meet with them two to three days a week to touch base on content and comprehension and to check their response journals. On the days you don't meet with them, they will be reading and writing independently.*

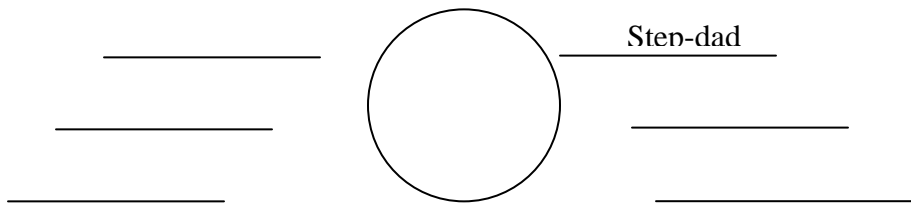
*The average readers will meet more often but perhaps not every day. You are observing their progress and needs. But the lowest achieving readers must meet daily to practice reading and writing and to give you opportunities to observe and monitor their progress.*

*I hope this suggestion helps. We'll talk next week. (Email correspondence, October 24, 2006).*

### **November 30, 2006**

Ms. Carter's class was studying early settlers in America, and she had used *Sarah Morton's Day: A Day in the Life of a Pilgrim Girl* (Waters, 1989) as a read aloud. The class had heard the story three times. Ms. Carter had four copies of the book in the classroom library. She wanted the class to write about the main character, Sarah Morton, and asked me to model a writing mini-lesson.

The students came to the gathering area, and I led a discussion of the book by going through the book and sharing the pictures. On the white board, I drew a web and told the class that we were going to think of ways to tell about Sarah Morton and her life in Pilmoth Plantation. In the center of the web, I wrote *Sarah Morton*, and asked the students to tell me what they knew about her. Ginny shared that Sarah had a step-dad. Lori said, *Lots of kids have step-dads*. I wrote "step-dad" on a horizontal line next to Sarah's name. John added that she goes to school at home, and Shawnda said, *She gets up early to do chores*. Zack said, *She gets to milk cows and goats*. Katie said, *She helps her mom cook and work in the garden*, and Allen said, *She reads the Bible*. Liz smiled and said, *She had a doll with a funny name*. Zack said, *Oh, yeah, it's a 'poppet'*. All those comments about Sarah were added to lines around "Sarah".



The mini-lesson continued by my saying that using the information we had just collected in the character web could help the students write about her and her life in Pilmoth Plantation. I asked the students to use the hand out of a character web and to write their ideas to tell about Sarah's life. As the students worked at their desks, Ms. Carter and I walked around to see how the students worked. Some of them worked together. John went to the classroom library and got a copy of the book. After about ten minutes, the students brought their character webs back to the gathering area and shared. Most of the descriptions were the same as they created in the mini-lesson. Some new ones were: *She had to stand up to eat*. *She made fires*. *She wore lots of clothes and a hat*.

Ms. Carter and I took a minute to talk using the character web to help the students organize their thinking. She noted, *That will make it easier to write tomorrow*. I suggested that using graphic organizers could be used in all subjects to help students organize information and thinking. I also suggested that she might encourage the students to use them independently when studying. Ms. Carter replied, *That's a great idea. That would help the kids learn some study skills*.

After this experience, I believed Ms. Carter and I shared our reflections on the use of the story web and extended our understandings of their use and potential. She was a participant in the learning from this demonstration and was able to articulate her thinking. Thinking back to Toll's (2007) concepts of literacy coaching, I identified with the coach as a service provider who responded when Ms. Carter asked for help and with the coach as a technician who conveyed my skills and knowledge to help Ms. Carter develop her own skills and extend her knowledge.

### ***March 27, 2007***

Ms. Carter requested that I observe her reading aloud to the class. The chapter book in progress was *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952). Before reading, she asked the class recall the chapter read the day before. Alea said, *Charlotte doesn't know if she'll go to the fair with Wilbur because she needs to lay her eggs*. Zack added, *But she told Wilbur not to worry*. Ms. Carter began reading with great expression, and the students were all very engaged in the story. When she read about Wilbur's buttermilk bath (p. 121), the students giggled and "ooooooooooooohed".

At the end of the chapter, Ms. Carter asked the class to think about what had happened because of Charlotte's web. Allen answered, *The pig's not bacon*. Shawnda said, *It saved his life*. David said, *They're going to the fair*, and Lori added, *I bet that'll be fun*.

Ms. Carter sent the class to their desks to write in response journals about their thinking. I asked her how she felt about the read aloud. She believed it had gone well. I agreed and praised her for such expressive reading, which held the students' attention. Her reading provided motivation for the students to read *Charlotte's Web* independently and demonstrated reading for enjoyment. She commented, *It seems that even the good readers like to hear stories*. I shared that we all enjoyed hearing stories, and I listened to books on tape as I traveled.

We connected through *Reading With Meaning* (Miller, 2002) and its writing about the practices of modeling thinking out loud, asking questions, making connection, and visualizing while reading aloud. She thanked me for reminding her of those key elements for building comprehension skills. She added, *I'll try using some of those things tomorrow*.

Although our conversation was brief, we connected through the Miller (2002) book studied in the balanced literacy professional development which led to a point on Puig and Forelich's (2007) continuum of coaching that is not always aligned with literacy coaching. However, this coaching experience was aligned with previous coaching and with the teacher's interests and requests. It involved conferring, observing, and debriefing to improve instruction and student learning. To me personally, I was pleased that Ms. Carter had asked me to observe her reading aloud. She had shown me growth in her confidence in her teaching.

### ***Coaching Summary with Ms. Carter***

Coaching Ms. Carter presented different opportunities every day. She had great energy, but it seemed there was difficulty focusing that energy. Ms. Carter tried to implement components from the balanced literacy professional development but was unable to sustain many of the practices. My role as a literacy coach in her classroom was as a service provider. She asked me for help when she wanted it.

### *Summary of Results*

In June of 2006, 13 teachers voluntarily agreed to participate in a balanced literacy professional development. They attended 10 three hour afternoon sessions from June 19 to June 30, 2006 and eight additional two hour sessions from August 2006 to April 2007. Three of the teacher participants agreed to be focused subjects in this case study. Ms. Thomas, Ms. Harper, and Ms. Carter made themselves available for communication at school, by phone, and by email. During the year all teachers were introduced or reintroduced to strategies for effective literacy instruction, theories, and research. The teachers were encouraged to implement these strategies and instructional practices. The findings from this yearlong balanced literacy professional development indicated some impact upon the teachers and students.

The outcomes of the study aligned to topics of the questions which formed the basis of the research: impact upon teachers' understanding of literacy learning processes, influences upon classroom instruction, influences upon students' literacy learning and my role as a professional developer and as a literacy coach.

The balanced literacy professional development study group indicated changes in instructional practices in reading and writing, in the use of assessment to inform instruction, in perceptions about classroom materials, and in needs for professional development. The opportunity to meet collaboratively over the school year to discuss literacy instruction was important for many of the group's participants.

Findings from Ms. Thomas, a kindergarten teacher, indicated change in her understanding of the processes of literacy learning, changes in her classroom instruction, and influences in her students' learning. She used formal and informal assessments to inform her

teaching and to observe individual students' growth. She acknowledged and utilized the reciprocity of reading and writing with her students to see growth in vocabulary in reading and writing and in comprehension. Ms. Thomas recognized she could meet the instructional needs of all her students through a balanced literacy approach to reading and writing.

Ms. Harper, a first grade teacher, also expressed changes in her understanding of literacy learning, changes in her instructional practices, and in her students' achievement. She indicated that her understanding of teaching for strategies to enable students to be independent problem solvers and self-regulated readers and writers had influenced her classroom instruction and her students' learning. Ms. Harper believed the balanced literacy professional development project had encouraged her to be more reflective on her instruction, which improved her students' achievement.

In Ms. Carter's experience with the balanced literacy professional development project, she applied many of the instructional practices discussed in the group and suggested through literacy coaching. Early in the project, she expressed a strong acknowledgement of the link between reading and writing and tried to help her students empower their learning with that connection. Ms. Carter worked hard to implement a balanced literacy approach but experienced difficulty in sustaining it.

The balanced literacy professional development project helped 13 teachers learn more about the literacy learning process, about instructional practices in balanced literacy instruction, and about meeting the needs of all students in their classrooms. The three teachers in the case study indicated growth as literacy professionals from their observed practices, written reflections, and interviews. Those three teachers had the support of literacy coaching in their classrooms during the school day. That professional development provided models and

demonstrations of balanced literacy instruction. The opportunity to coach provided new understanding for me of individual teachers' reflections and responses to literacy coaching.

## **CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION**

This study provided a description of the impact of a year long balanced literacy professional development plan on K-2 teachers and their students. Thirteen teachers chose to participate in a year long balanced literacy instruction study. One kindergarten teacher, one first grade teacher, and one second grade teacher volunteered to be the focus of the case study. In the study, I facilitated the balanced literacy professional development study, and I acted as literacy coach in one kindergarten, one first grade classroom, and one second grade classroom during the 2006-2007 school year. This study also documented and described the influence of my roles as professional developer and literacy coach upon my understandings of those positions. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings, conclusions, and implications concerning the results of the study. The chapter begins with a summary of the study. It is followed by findings related to the research questions, a discussion of conclusions drawn from the findings, implications for further research and teaching practices, and a final discussion of the study's findings.

### **Summary of the Study**

To become lifelong readers, young children require instruction from teachers who integrate their knowledge of the reading process and expert instructional skills to support students' progress in reading and writing. Those teachers are entitled to support from professional development to assist their implementing instructional approaches, which lead to student achievement. Fountas and Pinnell (1999) write that good first teaching for beginning



literacy learners means a range of support for teachers such as quality materials and professional development to help them provide better instruction. Supporting teachers in implementing a balanced approach to their literacy instruction as a professional developer and as a literacy coach is upheld by Spiegel (1998) who states that balanced literacy approaches meet the needs of most children because the approach is not restricted to one way of developing literacy and provides children and teachers the best opportunities for success.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the impact of a year long balanced literacy professional development plan on K-2 teachers and their students. This study was conducted in a midwestern public school district during the 2006-2007 school year. The professional development began with ten 3-hour study sessions during June 2006 and continued to meet eight more times during the school year. Three participants volunteered to allow me to act as a literacy coach in their classrooms over the school year. This study intended to create a culture where teachers were comfortable taking on the theories of balanced literacy, trying new instructional skills, reflecting on practice, collaborating with a literacy coach, and working as a community of professional learners.

During the 2006-2007 school year, data were collected from the participant teachers, students, and the researcher. Teachers provided data from reflection logs, surveys, and interviews. Students provided data from informal assessments, artifact, and observations. The researcher's data came from fieldnotes, observations, and reflections. Data analysis began with the first day of the balanced literacy professional development study.

This study focused on the potential impact of on-going professional development and literacy coaching. It highlighted the changes in literacy instruction practices, the use of

assessment to inform instruction, the needs for professional development, and the changes brought about by my literacy coaching.

## **Findings**

This study focused on professional development and literacy coaching in the context of balanced literacy instruction in K-2 classrooms. The data collected were organized and analyzed to answer four research questions. An overarching question sought to find the impact of a year long balanced literacy professional development plan of K-2 teachers and their students. Findings for each of the four questions will be presented, and a discussion of the overarching question will follow.

### ***Research Question 1***

**How does participation in the professional development impact K-2 teachers' understandings about literacy learning processes?**

#### ***Professional Development Group Survey***

Participating teachers completed a survey adapted from Padak and Rasinski (2001) at the beginning of the balanced literacy professional development plan in June 2006 and at its conclusion in May 2007. The purpose of the survey was to gather information about their instructional practices, professional development experiences, and interest. Only one item on the survey related to literacy learning processing or a well-orchestrated internal network of interrelated information that works to construct meaning for a given text (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). That item read: *Word recognition instruction focuses on multiple sources of information (meaning, structure, visual information, and other information)*. From the 13 teachers who completed the pre- and post-surveys, 92% responded on the pre-survey that they always provide

word recognition focused on multiple sources of information. On the post-survey, 100% of the teachers responded that they always provide word recognition focused on multiple sources of information.

### ***The DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile***

DeFord's (1985) Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) was also given at the beginning of the balanced literacy professional development in June 2006 and at its conclusion in May 2007. There was a change in the teachers' orientations away from phonics instruction and closer to shared skills instruction. This finding relates to Johnson (1999) who writes that a balanced approach to reading should combine phonics instruction with the whole language approach to demonstrate skills and meaning and to meet the needs of individual children. The change in the TORP also reflects Pressley (2002) in *Reading Instruction That Works: The Case for Balanced Teaching*. Pressley states that good teachers "balance elements of whole language and systematic skills instruction" (p. 229).

### ***Impact on Teachers' Understanding of Literacy Processing***

The strongest evidence of the impact of the balanced literacy professional development and the literacy coaching on teachers' understandings of literacy learning processes comes from the classrooms of the three teachers. Each teacher was observed modeling strategies to her students to help them gain meaning for a text. They demonstrated Clay's (2001) theory that literacy processing constructed by the learner is strongly influenced by the practices of the teacher.

### ***Ms. Thomas***

Ms. Thomas aimed to expand her literacy instruction with more focused work on letters, letter sounds, and symbols. She was teaching the kindergarten students to orchestrate

interrelated information to construct meaning in their reading and writing. Her use of interactive writing during the school year supported the students to use their skills to strengthen problem-solving strategies. Ms. Thomas' comment in January 2007 reflected her understanding about literacy learning processes. *Instruction is more about children' understanding of literacy, and I am more aware that it is a process the each go through individually at their own pace* (Reflection Log #2, 2007). Ms. Thomas' reflection connected to Fountas and Pinnell (1996) when they wrote each element of balanced literacy requires differing levels of support from the teacher and respects the levels of independence of the students.

***Ms. Harper***

Ms. Harper provided evidence of growth in understanding literacy learning processes by developing explicit prompting language to help her first grade students solve unknown words. In November 2006, she reflected that she intended to be *more direct* in her instruction so there was less guessing of unknown words (Reflection Log #1). Ms. Harper's remark related to Pressley (2002) when he stated that supporting students is done best with systematic instruction of skills during reading and writing. In Reflection Log #1 entry, she recalled a discussion from the June 23, 2006 balanced literacy professional development study group. That discussion had focused on the use of explicit language for prompting students to cross-check the meaning of the text and the letter and sound relationships to problem solve. Included in that Reflection Log, she wrote of telling the students to *think about the story and start the word*. Ms. Harper shared later that using more explicit language had helped the students *take ownership of their work*. *They are more active, not just waiting for me* (Personal conversation, February 2007).

### ***Ms. Carter***

Ms. Carter indicated growth in her understandings of literacy learning processes by her practices in reading aloud to her second grade class. Early in the 2006-2007 school year, she used Pat Hutchins' (1989) *The Doorbell Rang* to teach the text structure of problem and solution. To extend that she read Mem Fox's (1986) *Hattie and the Fox*. By helping the students make connections from one text to another, she was strengthening comprehension skills. Ms. Carter shared that Miller's (2002) *Reading With Meaning* book which the balanced literacy professional development study group read had shown her how to make the text-to-text connection. Ms. Carter demonstrated as Walker (2004) stated that the read aloud component provides social interaction that supports learning. As the school year progressed, she continued to support her students' development networks of interrelated information to build literacy processing. Book introductions prior to reading aloud to the class were rich and drew from the students' schema and predictions.

### ***Summary of Research Question 1***

There were no defining instruments to indicate the impact of the balanced literacy professional development on teachers' understandings about literacy learning processes. There were, however, small indicators from the TORP that teachers had moved to a more shared skills orientation. The most meaningful findings, which indicated the impact of the balanced literacy professional development on teachers' understandings about literacy learning processes, came from the classrooms of the three case study teachers. Each teacher indicated understanding literacy learning processes and the instruction that supports the growth of those processes. The teachers were demonstrating the orchestration of multiple sources of information and using

explicit and strategic prompting language. They provided meaningful and relevant experience to help their students develop strategies across reading and writing. Killion (2003) writes that the content of literacy professional development programs fall along a continuum. At one end is content that focuses on implementing a particular literacy program. On the other end, the professional development content focuses on developing teachers' knowledge about literacy. The findings from the participation of the K-2 teachers in the balanced literacy professional development indicate that the study fell at the far end of Killion's continuum, which developed teachers' knowledge about literacy.

### ***Research Question 2***

**How does participation in the professional development influence K-2 classroom instruction?**

#### ***Influence on K-2 Classroom Instruction: Survey***

Participation in the balanced literacy professional development indicated changes in K-2 classroom literacy instruction. The survey from Padak and Rasinski (2001) which was completed by participating teachers in June 2006 and in May 2007 revealed changes over the time of the study in four categories: 1) instructional practices in reading and writing; 2) the use of assessment to inform instruction; 3) perceptions about classroom materials; and 4) expressed needs for professional development.

Changes in *instructional practices* appeared in survey items focusing on reading, writing, and spelling. The changes were:

- 100% move away from whole group literacy instruction for reading, writing, decoding, and spelling.
- Less time spent daily on spelling and decoding.

- Increased time in writing instruction.
- More opportunities provided for students to write.
- More teacher confidence in working with struggling readers and writers.
- Increased teacher confidence when working with the strongest readers and writers.
- More balance between skills and strategy instruction.

Changes in the *use of assessment to inform instruction* were noticeable over the length of the study. The changes were:

- 100% of teachers affirmed in the post-survey that they regularly assess and diagnose the reading needs of struggling readers.
- More teachers felt they had sufficient time and support students' reading needs.
- More teachers felt they possessed comprehensive strategies and skills to evaluate student growth in reading and writing.
- More teachers felt they were collecting information about the extent to which students achieved curricular goals in literacy.
- 100% of teachers believed assessment was an integral part of instruction in their classroom at the end of the study.

Changes in *perceptions about classroom materials* were noticed on the post-survey. The changes were:

- More teachers believed they had enough books and literacy materials in their classrooms.
- More teachers believed there were enough literacy materials in their school libraries.

- 100% of teachers believed instructional supplies needed to offer an effective literacy program.

Changes in expressed *needs for professional development* were also revealed in the post-survey. The changes were:

- Fewer teachers believed they had adequate opportunities to engage in professional conversations.
- More teachers believed they had adequate opportunities to visit and observe other teaching.
- Fewer teachers believed they had opportunities to reflect with colleagues upon student work and to problem solve issues relating to literacy instruction and learning.

The participating teachers were in their classroom teaching literacy over the duration of the balanced literacy professional development. They had opportunities to practice and reflect balanced literacy instruction with the support of the study group and the facilitator/coach. That experience can be described as embedded learning. Wood and McQuarrie (1999) defined that kind of learning as "the result of teachers sharing what they have learned from their teaching experiences, reflecting on specific work experiences to uncover new understanding, and listening to colleagues share best practices they have discovered while trying out new programs or planning and implementing a project" (p. 10). The teachers in the balanced literacy professional development had opportunities to learn by doing, to reflect on the experience, and to generate new insights and learning. The frequent study sessions offered support and chances to discuss in-depth the issues of implementation. The three case study teachers had the support of a literacy coach to scaffold their changes in instructional practices.



### ***Influence on K-2 Classroom Instruction: Three Teachers***

Participation in the balanced literacy professional development also indicated change in the observed teaching of the three teachers in the case study. Classroom observations and coaching visits during the 2006-2007 school year and the conversations that followed these experiences provided evidence of change in classroom instruction.

#### ***Ms. Thomas***

Ms. Thomas reflected that she believed her instruction had changed during the professional development study. During a conversation about teaching for independence, she said, *I'm teaching the kids to be problem solvers, so they can be independent. I'm trying to use what the kids know and what I've already taught. Now I know how to teach strategies to help them figure out new words* (Personal conversation, March 2007).

Ms. Thomas shared informal observation notes and assessment scores many times during the school year. In November she stated that she was using informal observations notes to plan her literacy lessons. In a final interview in May 2007, she said, *This professional development has made me even more aware of how formal and informal assessments need to drive my instruction, and that instruction needs to be differentiated for each child's needs.*

Reflecting on the lessons discussed in Chapter 4, changes in classroom writing instruction were observed. In the November 9, 2006 lesson, Ms. Thomas used a very scripted, structured framework for the children to write: *I like ....* In later lessons, she encouraged the use of the students' oral language and their prior knowledge to provide writing experiences. Her lessons became interactive which allowed the students to practice many early literacy concepts.

The students were engaged in hearing sounds in words, connecting with letters, constructing texts, increasing their spelling knowledge, and creating text that they could read independently.

Ms. Thomas' work in developing balanced literacy practices in her classroom extended over the 2006-2007 school year. For her the changes in instruction, the professional development, and literacy coaching focused on long-term goals. That allowed her to work with the other participating teachers and the literacy coach to engage in problem-solving on daily work which increased her understanding of literacy processing and instructional skills (Smylie, 1996).

### ***Ms. Harper***

The first grade instruction of Ms. Harper changed noticeably during the 2006-2007 school year in writing instruction, in using dynamic grouping for guided reading, and in teaching for strategies to problem solve new words. After the June 2006 professional development sessions, Ms. Harper shared that she had a goal to study what motivates young readers. By November 2006, she expanded that goal to include what motivates readers and writers. The balanced literacy professional development addressed the reciprocity of reading and writing processes, and Ms. Harper noticed that relationship. *I have definitely incorporated more writing in my daily routine than in years' past. It has let me see what they know in reading when they write.* (Personal conversation, November 2006). Her implementation of the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) allowed students more writing opportunities with its task of working on writing each day.

Another indication of change in classroom literacy instruction was evidenced in Ms. Harper's use of running records to keep the guided reading groups at the students' instructional levels. The use of running records had been an on-going topic with the balanced literacy

professional development. Several times during the year, she expressed concerns over students who were achieving beyond their assigned guided reading group and over students who were lagging behind their groups. By taking running records, Ms. Harper could analyze the students' reading behaviors and group the students at appropriate levels of text difficulty. Because she took running records and analyzed them on a regular basis, she was able to place students into groups by their literacy strengths and needs. In January 2007, she reflected, *Using running records helps me keep the kids active in reading groups, not frustrated.*

During the 26 observations and visits during the year, Ms. Harper demonstrated teaching for strategies to problem solve while reading and writing. During the professional development, the group studied and discussed the meaning definition of strategies as operations that allow the literacy learner to use meaning, language structure, and visual information from text to build networks of in the head, problem-solving activities (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). On December 13, 2006, Ms. Harper demonstrated in a mini-lesson explicit how to use cross-checking meaning, language structure, and visual information to problem solve new words. She used a big book version of Sue Williams' (2000) *Let's Go Visiting*. She covered one word from the text on each page and asked the students to look at the picture and to think about what word would make sense in the story. As the students suggested what the word might be, Ms. Harper moved the paper from left to right to reveal one letter at a time. Then she asked the students to think about what would make sense and look at the beginning of the word.

One brown \_\_\_\_\_ (foal) is read to play.

Annie said, *Horse*.

Susan said, *Baby*.

Ms. Harper moved the paper to reveal the first letter, "f".

Katie said, *Foal*.

Ms. Harper asked, *Are you right? Is she right? Let's see.* She moved the paper away from the word, and the class agreed "foal" was the right word.

The next page read: Two red \_\_\_\_\_ (calves) are ready to play.

Corey said, *Cows*.

Carl said, *Calves*.

Ms. Harper moved the paper to reveal the first letter, "c" and asked *Are you right? Do "cows" and "calves" start with "c"?*

Ms. Harper moved the paper to reveal the second letter, "a". She asked, *Could it be "calves"? Could it be "cows"?*

Ned said, *"Cattle"*.

The students agreed the word could not be "cows", and Ms. Harper moved to the third letter, "l". Carl proudly shouted, "Calves! I knew it!"

Ms Harper explained to the students that this was a strategy they could use when they read. She then said, *When you come to a word you don't know, you can check the picture, think what would make sense, and start the word.*

Ms. Harper and the students finished the book and practiced the strategy of cross-checking meaning, language structure, and visual information.

This lesson followed a conversation we had in November 2006 and reflected influence from the professional development. That conversation stated, *Here's a change I'm making in my classroom. I'm going to teach some mini-lessons on what to do with a word you don't know. I'll make a classroom chart and keep telling the kids to check it when they're reading* (Personal

communication, November 15, 2006). During my next visit after the *Let's Go Visiting* lesson, there was a large chart near the word wall with the strategy for problem-solving. It read:

*When you come to a word you don't know, you can*

- *Check the picture*
- *Think what would make sense*
- *Start the word*

From the example of Ms. Harper's teaching strategies for solving new words, the work of Joyce and Showers (1995) is illustrated. They wrote that professional development is most effective if it includes presentation of theory, demonstration or modeling, low-risk practice, and ongoing support through coaching or study groups. Ms. Harper had the benefits of all the recommendations of Joyce and Showers (1995). In addition, she was very reflective on her instruction and very attentive to the students' literacy behaviors.

### ***Ms. Carter***

In Ms. Carter's second grade classroom there were changes in literacy instruction that linked to the balanced literacy professional development and to the literacy coaching. Three areas that provided evidence of that connection were reading instruction in the framework of guided reading, working with words, and book introductions.

Because 12 of Ms. Carter's students had been her students the previous year as first graders, she was confident placing them in instructional groups for reading based on her knowledge of their abilities. I gave running records to the other ten students to identify their instructional reading levels. Ms. Carter began reading instruction with guided reading. The components of the guided reading lesson helped her and the students stay focused. *I know that I*

*have to give a book introductions with some help for new words, then listen to the kids read and ask some comprehension questions, and then work on words or do some writing* (Personal conversation, October 2006). Ms. Carter continued to say, *I used to worry the most about word recognition. Now I worry the most about the kids getting the meaning of the stories.*

As the 2006-2007 school year progressed, Ms. Carter's guided reading instruction became sporadic with all instructional groups. She believed that her schedule was too demanding to allow for daily lessons. *There just isn't time to meet with them everyday* (Personal conversation, March 8, 2006). We discussed how meeting daily with the struggling readers was necessary for their progress. In March 2007, Ms. Carter shared that she believed the lowest students were not getting the structure and strong vocabulary development they needed. She replaced the leveled guided reading books with reproducible books with controlled vocabularies, and she replaced making words with phonics worksheets. *I can do guided reading with the other kids, but it isn't working for these kids* (Personal conversation, 2007).

Working with words was another observable change in Ms. Carter's literacy instruction. She demonstrated how words work in mini-lessons to the whole class during the year as described in Chapter 4. Ms. Carter worked with words frequently with the lowest achieving readers. They worked with high frequency words to build sight vocabulary, and they worked with words to learn how to problem solve new words. With this group, Ms. Carter and the students manipulated magnetic letters to construct words. She wrote, *The word building activity is so effective. The kids are more successful in reading and writing words after I use the letters to make words* (Reflection Log #1, December 2006). Ms. Carter noticed that working with words made the struggling readers better at decoding words because *they know how to start the word, say it slowly and try it.*

By March 2007, Ms. Carter had abandoned making words to build reading and writing vocabularies. In place, she was using phonics worksheets. She believed that using worksheets helped her plan lessons more efficiently. When asked if she was taking and analyzing running records to know what the students needed, she replied, *There isn't time for me to do that* (Personal conversation, March 2007).

During her participation in the balanced literacy professional development, Ms. Carter's book introduction in guided reading and in read alouds changed from no introduction to a rich introduction. In September 2006, we had a conversation about getting the students to activate their prior knowledge and experiences before reading to them. Ms. Carter believed this was important and took time to plan and to present book introductions to her students. *After talking about it with you in class, I definitely try to encourage the kids to think about their schema* (Personal conversation, September 2006). She decided that the book introductions for guided reading groups were better if she held the book and gave the introduction before the students got the books. *They're not flipping through the book, and they can listen to my introduction to use their schema* (Personal conversation, October 2006). Later in the school year, Ms. Carter shared more about book introductions. *The book introductions even supported the kids' predictions and comprehension* (Reflection Log #2, January 2007). Ms. Carter continued to provide rich book introductions for read alouds throughout the school year.

Ms. Carter implemented several balanced literacy instructional techniques in her second grade classroom during the 2006-2007 school year. As discussed in Chapter 4, her frustration about her crowded classroom, the frequent interruptions, and the issues with time often overshadowed her instructional focus. She was unable to sustain the practices of taking frequent running records and making words to carry on effective guided reading support for her lowest

readers. The support of the balanced literacy professional development group and the literacy coaching did not outweigh the demands of her students' needs, the crowded classroom, the frequent interruptions, or the issues with time in her schedule.

### ***Summary of Research Question 2***

Evidence of influence from the balanced literacy professional development was seen in the Padak and Rasinski (2001) survey from the teachers in the study group and in the classroom literacy instruction of the three classroom teachers. All teachers indicated changes in instructional practices in reading and writing, in the use of assessment to inform instruction, in perceptions about classroom materials, and in needs for professional development. Classroom instructional practices were observed and reported from the three teachers in the case study. They all used instructional practices, which were new to their repertoires and had been topics of study in the balanced literacy professional development group. Ms. Thomas and Ms. Harper were able to sustain their changes in instructional practices over the 2006-2007 school year.

### ***Research Question 3***

**How does teachers' participation in the professional development influence K-2 students' literacy learning?**

The students of the three case study teachers provided evidence that their teacher's participation in the balanced literacy professional development influenced their literacy learning. Sparks (2002) stated that quality teaching makes a difference in students' learning and that teacher expertise is one of the most important variables affecting student achievement.

#### ***Ms. Thomas' Students***

In Ms. Thomas' kindergarten class all students were assessed with the Observations Survey (Clay, 2002) in January 2007 and in April 2007. Table 4.4 showed students' gains on the



literacy tasks with the exception of two students. Frank did not gain on writing vocabulary, and Mattie did not show growth on concepts about print. On the Dorn and Soffos (2001) reading and writing checklists, the four observed students showed growth at emergent levels of reading and writing. Ms. Thomas' remarked that the professional development and literacy coaching helped to make her *aware of how formal and informal assessment needs to drive instruction* (Final Interview, May 2007).

### ***Ms. Harper's Students***

The students in Ms. Harper's first grade classroom were assessed with the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002) in August 2006, January 2007, and May 2007. Table 4.6 showed that students gained or sustained their progress in letter identification, the sight word test, and concepts about print. In August 2006 the number of words written independently in ten minutes ranged from three to 32. By May 2007, the number of words written independently in ten minutes ranged from 27 to 83. In August 2006 the text reading level ranged from Level A to Level R. In May 2007, that measure ranged from Level D to Level W. In May, four students had an instructional reading level below H, the expected reading level for the end of first grade established by Fountas and Pinnell (2001).

A reading and writing checklist adapted from Dorn and Soffos (2001) was recorded on four students in September, November, February, and April. From August to April, all four students progressed from emergent readers and writers to levels of early reading and writing. The students had developed independence in self-monitoring their own reading and writing and in applying strategies to problem solve. Ms. Harper had studied and practiced teaching for strategies, which equipped her students to be independent in reading and writing.

Relating the topics studied in the balanced literacy professional development group, Ms. Harper used research-based instructional practices, which were associated with higher reading achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The on-going support of the literacy coaching allowed her to implement teaching for strategies and to sustain the students' achievement in problem solving to be independent readers and writers. Rodgers and Pinnell (2002) write that participating in continuing professional development enables teachers to implement best practices.

### *Ms. Carter's Students*

Ms. Carter had concerns for four students in her class who were lagging behind their second grade peers in reading and writing. She believed she needed a systematic way to identify what the students knew and what they needed to know to catch them up to the average of their class. Clay's (2002) Observation Survey was administered to these four students three times during the 2006-2007 school year, in August, January, and May. Table 4.8 showed growth for the four students on all components of the assessment. Two students, Dylan and David, were reading at mid-second grade levels in May. Lynn read at end of first grade level, and John read at mid-first grade level.

Using the reading and writing checklist from Dorn and Soffos (2001), three students were followed during the school year. Ginny began the year at the transitional level in reading and writing. Her guided reading level was I. By May 2007, she was observed as a fluent reader and was progressing as a writer composing and writing longer texts with accuracy and complexity. In May, her guided reading level was Q. Greg began second grade at an early level of reading, and over the year, he progressed to a transitional level. His guided reading levels grew from F to M. Although his writing did not progress as well as his reading, he learned to use classroom

resources for spelling and he became more fluent in writing high frequency words. John was the third student observed with the Dorn and Soffos' (2001) checklist. His reading and writing were at emergent levels at the beginning of the school year. By May, he was still at the emergent level, but his characteristics were stronger. His guided reading levels grew from B to E.

During her participation in the balanced literacy professional development and with literacy coaching, Ms. Carter's implementation of guided reading helped her students develop literacy concepts and skills. Her attention to making words and linking those skills to writing enabled Ginny and Greg to progress in reading and writing. All three observed students gained in using visual information to help them problem solve unknown words. Providing rich book introductions increased the students' use of meaning processing literacy.

Ms. Carter's participation in the balanced literacy professional development influenced her literacy instructional practices, which led and supported her students' achievement. The professional development had helped her develop instructional skills to implement guided reading. Walpole and McKenna (2004) describe such professional development as a balancing act between the development of knowledge and the development of instructional skills.

### ***Summary of Research Question 3***

Sparks (2002) states that powerful professional development must have an active teacher learning, collective participation, and coherence. The balanced literacy professional development integrated ongoing assessment and its influence on literacy instruction. Participants were involved in study and discussion of informal assessments and running records. The framework of balanced literacy encouraged teachers to notice what students' knew and what they needed to know. Ms. Thomas, Ms. Harper, and Ms. Carter reported using informal observations and running records to inform their teaching and to attend to the needs of all students, especially

the struggling readers. During the 2006-2007 school year, they had the opportunity to participate in on-going professional development, which encouraged them to become constructive learners of literacy, of the literacy learning process for their students, of various teaching strategies to develop their students' understandings and to provided the needed levels of support for their students to be successful.

#### ***Research Question 4***

**How do my roles as professional development facilitator and literacy coach influence my understanding of those positions?**

##### ***Professional Development Facilitator***

The K-2 balanced literacy professional development group intended to create a community of learners where teachers were comfortable to take risks, to examine their literacy instruction, and to consider implementing balanced literacy instruction. The goal was to create changes leading to teacher inquiry, collaboration, and collegiality, which would lead to positive outcomes for effective teaching and student achievement.

The design of the professional development followed Sparks (2002) characteristics of high-quality professional development:

- Focus on deepening teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills;
- Opportunities for practice, research, and reflection;
- Teachers' work related to professional development embedded in the school day;
- Sustainment over time of professional development project; and
- Established sense of collegiality and collaboration among teachers and between teachers.

Evaluations taken after the sessions in June 2006, in November 2006, and in April 2007 provided evidence of what the teachers' gained and valued from the professional development. Four characteristics were consistently revealed in all three evaluations by all the teachers which addressed my roles as professional development facilitator. Those areas were:

- Opportunities to study and share with colleagues among the professional development group and in elementary buildings;
- Opportunities to read and discuss recent reading research;
- Practical subjects and projects for classroom application; and
- Study over the school year to learn, discuss, share, and reflect upon balanced literacy instruction.

All teachers remarked about the opportunity to share together and discuss literacy instruction. One teacher shared that from the professional development group, a group of teachers in her building formed "*a support group*" (Evaluation, April 2007). That group talked and discussed during lunch periods and in the hallways about how guided reading lessons were developing in their classrooms. Courtland (1992) supports this finding by writing that collegial talk plays an important role as teachers attempt to make changes.

Reading and discussing recent research in reading was a second characteristic discussed by the participants. All the teachers made remarks over the school year that they appreciated the change to read research articles on literacy instruction and learning. One teacher shared that she copied the articles and shared them with colleagues in her building. The expressed interest in studying literacy research is recognized by Morrow (2005) who states that teachers need opportunities to learn about research-based strategies and pedagogy.

The third characteristic consistently mentioned by the participants was the practicality and application of the professional development topics. All the participants shared about trying components of balanced literacy instruction in their classrooms and enjoyed discussing how their implementation was progressing. Because the professional development occurred during the school year, teachers were able to study, apply and reflect on the literacy practices discussed in the sessions. Some teachers brought student work for the group to examine. Often running records were shared, and the group analyzed them to learn how they informed instruction. Those experiences relate to Killion's (2003) recommendations. She promotes professional development, which expands beyond training so teachers have many opportunities to examine student work, to analyze student assessment data, to participate in study groups, and to engage in instructional dialogue.

The fourth characteristic of the balanced literacy professional development that teachers consistently included in their evaluations was its duration over an entire school year. One teacher commented, *It makes sense to spend a whole year studying this. We never have the chance to really study anything for very long, and we never have a chance to practice and get feedback* (Evaluation, April, 2007). Another teacher remarked, *The best thing about this class it lasted over the whole year. I had a chance to try many of the ideas* (Evaluation, April 2007). This characteristic is supported by Kinnucan-Welsch (2006) by her stating that high-quality literacy professional development is continuous and ongoing.

As professional development facilitator, I targeted the balanced literacy professional development at the teachers' literacy instructional practices and asked them to consider the benefits of balanced literacy instruction in their classrooms. I relied upon what the teachers knew, what research provided in terms of theories, ideas, and methods (Richardson, 1990). In

line with the definition of professional development from the No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation, the balanced literacy professional development attempted to provide "ongoing support from colleagues and specialist, as well as regular opportunities for self-examination and reflections which are critical components of the career-long development of excellent teachers" (p.10). By establishing a community of learners, the teachers and I worked together with our experiences in classrooms to study research, theories, ideas, and methods.

The balanced literacy professional development was conducted as the research study proposed. One component which would have strengthened the study could have been classroom observations by the facilitator and by colleagues. That would have provided opportunities for collaboration and feedback, which would have benefited teachers and students.

### ***Literacy Coach***

This study also documented and described the impact of facilitating the professional development and acting as literacy coach upon my understandings and skills. As literacy coach, I provided sustained, on-site modeling of instructional strategies, provided feedback to teachers, examined student work, analyzed data, and helped to create interventions for low-performing students. In the role of literacy coach, my stated purpose aligned with the International Reading Association's (2004) definition of a reading coach as someone who provides additional support needed for teachers to implement various programs of practice.

### ***Ms. Thomas***

Coaching Ms. Thomas in her kindergarten class was a positive experience for my concept of myself as a literacy coach. There were 24 coaching and observation visits during the 2006-2007 school year. Twenty-two of those visits involved co-teaching and conversations about constructivist learning, balanced literacy components, problem-solving students' literacy issues,

and analyzing data. Each classroom visit, conversation, and email exchange contained her reflections on the results of her practice. The sustained time in her classroom allowed us to build a trusting, respectful relationship. In the relationship, we worked together to question, practice, and transfer knowledge to balanced literacy instruction. Ms. Thomas shared during the June 2006 that she looked forward to the sessions to come (Evaluation, June 2006). By November 2006, she believed that my modeling lessons, observing her teaching, and providing feedback had changed her teaching. *Suzanne has helped me learn to observe each one of the kids sometime during each day.. Now I understand how important it is do frequent assessment, even just noticing, to decide what to teach each child* (Evaluation, November 2006).

Ms. Thomas was the type of teacher who responded to the balanced literacy professional development and to the literacy coaching by questioning the theories. She frequently asked for suggestions for professional reading to find answers for herself. Ms. Thomas expressed her interests and appreciation for my sharing and for providing current reading research and professional literature. *May I borrow the video on reading you showed last week? You know the one from Arkansas. I want to watch it again to listen to the teacher's language during guided reading* (Email correspondence, December 2006).

As I consider the role I played as a literacy coach with Ms. Thomas, I go back to Toll's (2007) views. Toll believes these roles are influenced by the coach's and teacher's beliefs about how students may succeed, how teachers may change, and what it takes to assist the teacher. In Ms. Thomas' class I identify myself in three roles. I acted as *a technician* who passed on my knowledge and skills in balanced literacy in a way to help Ms. Thomas implement the instructional practices. Another role I assumed was one of *a service provider* who responded



when Ms. Thomas asked for help. This role was reinforcing to my literacy coaching stance because, she came to me with background knowledge we shared and wanted to expand that knowledge into practice. The third role I experienced in Ms. Thomas' class was being a coach as *a fresh alternative*. In this role I helped her instruction go in the direction she had chosen. She provided the content for coaching, and I helped her identify her goals. When I was in the role as a fresh alternative, Ms. Thomas and I were partners in listening and learning from one another.

### ***Ms. Harper***

From the beginning of the June 2006 sessions, Ms. Harper was eager to implement balanced literacy instruction in her first grade classroom. She organized a notebook for running records and began assessment with the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002). Her evaluation from the June sessions remarked about the opportunity to meet with *like minded teachers* and to work with a *knowledgeable teacher*. She expressed her enthusiasm for using balanced literacy practices with the instructional practices she implemented in her classroom. The 2006-2007 school year would be her first year as a first grade teacher, and she believed the professional development was timely. *I can't wait to get started. I have so many new ideas* (Personal conversation, June 2006).

Coaching Ms. Harper required me to draw more deeply from my repertoire of skills and knowledge. Because she was confident in her instruction, her questions and requests were never at the surface level or just aimed at procedures. They required me to take her into the texts we used in the professional development to support my coaching and to extend her understanding.

Ms. Harper was very sensitive to the students' responses to her instruction. Using her observations and assessment data led her to ask me to model a guided reading lesson for the first time in October 2006. That invitation impressed upon me the fact that effective coaching comes

through the teacher who recognizes a need in her teaching and the capability of the coach to assist.

Although I identified the same three roles as literacy coach with Ms. Thomas and Ms. Harper, coaching Ms. Harper required me to provide evidence from study and research to substantiate balanced literacy practices. Her reflection logs during the year helped me grow as a literacy coach. Specifically, her concerns and comments about grouping for guided reading made me draw from my teaching experiences, and we were able to develop better understandings of the dynamics of grouping. When I coached Ms. Harper, I believed I was working at both our edges of expertise which allowed us to collaborate to problem solve.

### ***Ms. Carter***

Coaching Ms. Carter reminded me that coaching adult learners was parallel to children's learning (Stein & D'Amico, 2002). The parallels were:

- Children learned to read by reading. Teachers learned to teach by teaching.
- The best way to help children learn to read was to provide appropriately challenging texts with the right amount of assistance. The best way to help teacher learn to teach was through the appropriate kind and amount of assistance with collaborations with staff developers and more expert teachers.
- Children needed models to learn to read and write. Teachers needed models and demonstrations of expert teaching.

I often applied the concept of scaffolding to coach Ms. Carter. I considered scaffolding as temporary support to help Ms. Carter extend her skills and understandings to a higher level of competence. The scaffold was designed to be just the right amount of support to enable her to take on the balanced literacy instruction. It was intended that as Ms. Carter's skills and

understandings increased, the scaffold would be removed, and my support would move to a higher level.

From the beginning of my 22 classroom visits, Ms. Carter came to me with requests for help. She placed me in the role of a service provider early in the school year. As the year progressed, she often asked me to work with groups on specific skills, so our relationship developed into co-workers. The issue was there was never time to truly debrief. Although I sent email correspondence after each coaching visit, she never responded to my comments.

Coaching Ms. Carter made me realize that although she applied some of the studied practices, she was looking for simple solutions. She listened and tried several of my suggestions concerning scheduling, guided reading, and working with the struggling students. However, the issues of a crowded classroom, little coherence with other staff involved with the instruction of the struggling students, and the belief that there was not enough time each day kept her from sustaining the changes she tried.

#### ***Summary of Research Question 4***

My role as facilitator of the balanced literacy professional group allowed me to share my knowledge and experience in balanced literacy instruction. The design, which aligned with Sparks' (2002) recommendations, provided for active teacher learning and collective participation. Those activities came from the book studies, teacher collaboration, and opportunities to problem-solve current classroom literacy issues. During this yearlong professional development, the participants were able to reflect with others who were working with similar goals. The positive effects of the professional development were indicated on the teachers' evaluations. They were:

- Opportunity to study and share with colleagues;

- Recent reading research;
- Practical topics for classroom application; and
- Ongoing professional development over the school year.

As literacy coach in one kindergarten classroom, in one first grade classroom, and in one second grade classroom, I had the opportunity to provide on-site coaching for balanced literacy instruction over the 2006-2007 school year. It was an opportunity to create and sustain changes in the teachers' literacy instruction. The teachers and I collaborated over literacy instruction, student achievement, student data, and the theoretical foundations underlying balanced literacy.

The role of literacy coach allowed me to:

- Provide onsite modeling of instructional strategies;
- Confer, observe, and debrief over instruction and student learning;
- Examine student work;
- Analyze data; and
- Assist in creating interventions for struggling students and extending learning opportunities for all students.

I believe that the teachers viewed themselves as effective participants in the learning process who shared their ideas and participated in problem solving. It was my responsibility to work with the teachers in their classrooms to support them as they began using balanced literacy teaching strategies. Together we worked to ensure student literacy achievement.

### *Overarching Research Question*

**What is the impact of a year long balanced literacy professional development plan on K-2 teacher and students?**

The balanced literacy professional development was conducted as proposed. Surveys from participating teachers indicated change to more balanced instructional practices in their classrooms. The DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile showed teachers' teaching orientations fell within the shared skills area on pre- and post-profiles. Evaluation taken three times during the duration of the professional development revealed that the teachers believed the professional development provided opportunities for collaboration with colleagues, for access to recent reading research, for learning practical techniques for classroom application, and for time to study and learn.

Acting as literacy coach in one kindergarten classroom, in one first grade classroom, and in one second grade classroom offered the best perspective into the impact of the professional development. The teachers and I were able to establish co-learner and co-teacher relationships, which observed the literacy behaviors of the students. Together we determined what students needed to learn next. As my roles as literacy coach took on different identities in all three classrooms over the year, I realized that I was responding to the levels of understandings of the teachers, to their willingness to take on new practices, and to our professional relationships.

The impact of the professional development was observed as teachers became more aware of the skills they already possessed. With the study and collaboration in the professional development group, the teachers began to see possibilities for using the knowledge and skills they had to implement balanced literacy. One teacher shared, *I knew about balanced literacy for years but didn't know how to get started* (November evaluation, 2006). Another teacher wrote, *I*

*had the Fountas and Pinnell book on my shelf for years and read it and applied it because of this class (Final evaluation, 2007). A Title 1 teacher emailed, *I have been inspired this year by our class. Each time I go back to my school I talk about our class with anyone who will listen. I've started a 'guided reading party' after school with some primary teachers.* (Personal correspondence, April 2007). One more teacher shared, *This class has validated what I do in my first grade classroom. Thank you* (Final evaluation, 2007).*

The impact of the professional development was observed in the literacy growth of the students in the three classrooms where I coached. In those classrooms there were changes in linking reading and writing, in guided reading lessons, in rich book introductions, and in using ongoing assessment to guide instruction. I acknowledge the potential the students had to grow without the coaching. Their Observation Survey (Clay, 2002) scores indicated growth in phonemic awareness, concepts about print, writing, and text reading. Student examples from Chapter 4 show students' using strategic problem solving to support their growing literacy behaviors.

The impact of the balanced literacy professional development reflected the conclusion of the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000). This balanced literacy professional development included the factors, which the NRP concluded were critical. NRP determined that teachers needed knowledge in understanding how students learn to read, knowledge in the difficulties some students experience and how to provide necessary support for those students, and knowledge of practices to effectively implement a variety of multi-level instruction. The balanced literacy professional development also included low-risk practice for teachers as recommended by Killian (2003).

The balanced literacy professional development provided a model of effective instruction. From that model teachers were able to engage in deep study and discussion around teaching and learning. The balanced literacy professional development helped teachers define balanced literacy instruction and how it looked in classrooms.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the results of this study, several conclusions may be drawn. The first conclusion is the design of the balanced literacy professional development is adequate to bring about impact on teachers' understandings about literacy learning processes, classroom instruction, and student learning. The design supported the purpose of the study, which was to observe and to describe changes in teachers as they participated in the professional development. The study identified with Sparks' (2002) characteristics of high-quality professional development;

- Focus on deepening teacher's content knowledge and pedagogical skills;
- Opportunities for practice, research, and reflection;
- Teachers' work related to professional development embedded in the school day;
- Sustainment over time of professional development project; and
- Established sense of collegiality and collaboration among teachers and between teachers.

A second conclusion is the content of the balanced literacy offered topics to explore balanced literacy instruction in-depth. Providing opportunities for professional book studies and to view professional videos of balanced literacy practices enriched the experience. The books and videos encouraged the participants to make connections to their students and to their

instruction. From those connections, the participants looked more carefully at the professional development books and developed deeper understandings.

That leads to a third conclusion. Teachers were able to transfer learning from the professional development to their classroom practices and offered evidence of that in surveys and in evaluations. The discussions at the professional development sessions were rich with teachers' sharing their experiences trying to implement balanced literacy practices. Those conversations led to teachers' sharing ideas, activities, and understandings.

A fourth conclusion is having teachers share examples of student work generated from the professional development promoted active learning. When teachers brought in running records to analyze collaboratively, their interest and inquiries increased. Focusing on authentic student learning strengthened the professional development sessions and coaching experiences. When the teachers' conversations focused on authentic student work, the teachers were more engaged and collaborative. During those times, the teachers frequently referred to the professional texts to seek answers and connections.

A fifth conclusion draws from the experience of literacy coaching. Teachers responded differently to my coaching. Some teachers were continually reflecting upon their practices while others were looking for simple solutions to teaching issues. It was their individual response that determined the role the coach assumed, and it was the situation in the classroom on any given day that determined the role the teacher required from the literacy coach.

A sixth conclusion is teachers and coaches grow and benefit from the opportunity to reflect upon their practices and student achievement. That kind of reflection leads to conversation, which focuses on authentic issues, shared ownership of problems and projects, and shared



understanding. When teacher reflect on student data, they can see the impact of their instruction and adapt practices to improve student achievement.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Literacy professional development in education has been criticized for being "one shot" events that do not connect to the daily work of teachers in their classrooms with their students. Professional development is often seen as something that teachers do or that is provided for them in the form of activities or workshops.

It is acknowledged by educators that there is not extensive research on literacy coaching showing clear links between professional development and student learning (Kinnucan-Welsch et al, 2006). It must be said that literacy coaching is a component of the current No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation. With that awareness, there is a likelihood that when the funding by federal money from No Child Left Behind disappears, the attention to literacy coaches will also disappear (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007). Although the education mandates from the federal government are important, there may be power lying with educators at the school, district, and university levels who support quality literacy coaching. If they can measure and account for literacy coaching's positive effects on teaching and learning and share their results, then they may be able to build support based on research for sustaining literacy coaching as an essential component of comprehensive literacy instruction. The following are suggestions for future research, based on the data gathered and analyzed for this study.

**Research on literacy professional development and literacy coaching must be collected from many settings.** This study worked with a small group of teachers in two elementary schools. Data collected from numerous teachers and schools can enrich the understandings of professional development and literacy coaching and its impact on teaching and

learning. By looking at teachers and student learning in differentiated settings , it may be possible to draw conclusions regarding literacy professional development and literacy coaching.

**Research on effective literacy professional development must be conducted in schools, which are organized for teacher learning.** In such schools, professional development is targeted and directly related to teachers' practices. It is integrated with a comprehensive change process. The data on the effectiveness of literacy professional development from such schools can be used to replicate the literacy professional development in schools trying to organized for teacher learning and student achievement.

**Research on the impact of literacy coaching must be measured in meaningful ways.** Linking student achievement to coaching is not an easy task. Using teacher reports on student achievement can be overshadowed by teachers' perceptions. Researchers, coaches, and teachers must develop and agree on ways to examine improvement in student outcomes. The methods for assessing the impact of literacy coaching must be diverse and include observations, reflections, and videotaping. Researchers need to create measures to assess teacher knowledge regarding the focus of the literacy coaching.

**Research on describing how effective literacy coaches coach must be identified.** This information begins by asking some questions: What do coaches do when they observe teaching? How do they make decisions about the quality of the teaching? Answers to such questions lead to more details about what works for coaching in different settings.

**Research to examine the short- and long-term benefits of literacy coaching is necessary.** If literacy coaching is limited to a brief period of time and teachers are not sustaining changes and students are not achieving, then it is not logical to assume that the coaching does not work. In the same way, if coaching is limited to primary classrooms and students are not

maintaining gains in intermediate grades, then it is not logical to assume that coaching does not work. Instead, some questions need to ask: Why aren't teachers implementing the change? Why couldn't the students maintain their gains in intermediate classrooms? Answers to questions like these influence considerations of the cost benefits of employing literacy coaching.

**Research needs to investigate what kind and how much ongoing teacher support is needed.** There are not detailed descriptions to answer these questions. Research questions such as the following address this issue: Are the type of support and who provides this support factors to be considered? Does the amount of time spent with teachers in literacy professional development and in literacy coaching play roles in how teachers respond? Do the students of teachers who receive more support from a professional development facilitator and/or a literacy coach do better than those who do not?

**Researchers need to focus on the sustainability of newly learned practices.** It is critical to consider what happens after a literacy professional development project ends. Providing support to teachers after initial professional development projects end is critical if the new knowledge and skills are to be sustained. Like students, teachers learn at different rates and apply new skills on individual at different levels of competency. Those teachers need the support of ongoing professional development to continue with their newly learned practices and to meet the needs of the each individual student. Findings from follow-up studies of effective, multiyear literacy professional development projects will be beneficial.

**Research needs access to the many literacy professional development projects throughout the United States and abroad.** Those conducting research in literacy professional development must be willing to share their research and findings at educational conferences. Professional development planners need to be specific in descriptions of projects, variables,

content, time lines, and details in written descriptions. Access to literacy professional development projects would inform educators of effective projects and practices and allow opportunities to develop effective and powerful learning for teachers. That would lead to effective and powerful teaching to increase students' literacy achievement.

### **Implications for Professional Development and Literacy Coaching**

The findings from this study in balanced literacy professional development and literacy coaching in K-2 classrooms point to several applications in school settings. From this study, the following recommendations for effective balanced literacy professional development and literacy coaching address successful implementation.

**A common vision of the goal for effective instruction must be developed.** Teachers need to be guided through professional development to define balanced literacy instruction and how it will look in their classrooms. Such vision building begins with observations, collaborative planning sessions, study groups, and book clubs (Sweeney, 2003).

**The balanced literacy professional development needs to continue for a period of three to five years.** During this time, teachers see themselves as learners working to raise the achievement of their students (Sweeney, 2003). Given that length of time, data may be collected to analyze teaching practices and their impact on student achievement gains. Data may reveal if student gains are sustained over time, and teachers will have opportunities to adjust their instructional practices to support student learning. Ongoing literacy professional development provides for systematic follow-up for sustainability.

**The balanced literacy professional development needs to include opportunities for the professional development facilitator to be asked into the participating teachers' classrooms.** Without observing instructional practices and classrooms organization, it is

difficult for a facilitator to assist a participant. As trust is established within a literacy professional development group, a community of learners grows which allows for transparency in observing practices and for sharing literacy issues.

**Instructional leaders need to participate in the literacy professional development.**

When instructional leaders gain the knowledge and understanding of literacy learning processes, they can better understand the implementation processes their teachers are applying. They extend the support for the teachers and ultimately, provide better understanding of student achievement. An administrator who understands balanced literacy instruction and its theory base will evaluate the program with more knowledge and realistic expectations. Such an administrator will have high expectations for effective teaching and for sustainable student gains.

**Participants in balanced literacy professional development need to be responsible for some assigned activities and share the resulting student artifacts.** The occasional assignments build on learning activities from the literacy professional development sessions and provide authentic student artifacts. This will create a culture of thinking and sharing about practices and student learning.

**The context for balanced literacy professional development needs to be interrelated to the Kansas Curricular Standards for Reading and Writing.** Linking the context of the literacy professional development to the Kansas Curricular Standard for Reading and Writing (Kansas Department of Education, 2004) will make the study relevant and applicable to instructional practices. This connection will add coherence to the professional development and to its implementation in classrooms.

**Professional development must have the support of instructional leaders in their educational systems and of principals in their school buildings.** The persons in these

positions should be involved in designing and implementing professional development that focuses on teaching which supports learning. These leaders organize the staff to create common goals for literacy teaching and learning. They are the ones who provide resources of time and materials for the professional development to be implemented successfully. In this balanced literacy professional development, the district elementary curriculum director attended some of the sessions and arranged for the meeting facility.

**Support staff needs to participate in the balanced literacy professional development.**

That will include Title 1 and special education teachers. With their participation, the literacy instruction for students will be connected across venues. Teachers will have common understandings of the balanced literacy model and share common language. The instruction from the classroom to the different venues can be seamless for the students.

**Teacher education programs need to incorporate in-depth studies of the literacy learning processes within their curriculums.** Courses focused on how the brain develops literacy networks, language and learning, assessment to inform instruction, and teaching to each child's needs empower pre-service teachers to successfully work with each student and to be discriminating consumers of educational programs and products.

**Teacher education programs need to provide more field experience for pre-service teachers.** Observing and collaborating with expert teachers provide opportunities to gain demonstrations of effective instructional practices.

**Literacy coaches must work with school principals and other administrators to create and sustain purposeful change.** With administrators providing time and materials, a literacy coach is able to present teachers with learning opportunities in professional development sessions and in the teachers' classrooms. The support of the administrators allows the intended

change to occur without gaps and presents to the teachers a clear definition and direction for the literacy goal. As literacy coach, I met the principals of Lakeview and Hillside Elementary Schools at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year to share my research study with them. However, we never discussed the study again. Neither principal visited in the classrooms during my coaching visits.

**Literacy coaches must work collaboratively with teachers' in their classrooms.** The literacy coaches are key to the job-embedded approach of professional learning. When teachers and coaches work together in a coaching context, they become colleagues, engage in collaborative problem solving and inquiry-oriented conversations. They rely and trust one another to provide support and skills they may need.

**Literacy coaches must work as co-learners.** They assist in shifting classroom teachers to better understand critical knowledge of pedagogy and the need for change based on evidence. Shifts in teaching are grounded in the literacy coach's knowledge of literacy processing and based on collegial trust.

**Literacy coaches must be comfortable with conflict, resistance, and multiple demands on their time.** They must be able to work in a collaborative, non-confrontational way and operate as colleagues. As leaders, they must be willing to model, reflective practice for teachers and be prepared to develop expertise.

## **Summary**

To become lifelong readers, children require instruction from teachers who integrate their knowledge of the reading process and expert instructional skills to support the students' growth in reading and writing. Teachers should have professional development to assist their implementing instructional approaches, which lead to student achievement. The words from

*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al, 1998) are a call to action for literacy professionals. "The quality of classroom instruction in the primary grades is the single best weapon against reading failure" (p. 343). Snow and her colleagues (1998) emphasize that "the focus of attention has shifted from the researchers' theories and data back to the teacher, alone in her classroom with a heterogeneous group of children all awaiting their passports to literacy" (p. iv).

Many literacy teachers and their students have been subjects of many literacy studies, which sought the perfect reading program. Spiegel (1998) calls that the "silver bullet, *the* answer to the literacy education for all children" (p. 114). A balanced literacy approach meets the needs of most children. That balance is found in instruction that is built upon research, views teachers as decision makers, and provides proportions of skills, strategies, guided reading, and social interactions that support learning.

Balanced literacy instruction requires rigorous professional development, which is embedded in the school day and sustained over time. Sparks (2002) reminds us that professional development experiences need to include opportunities for practice, research, and more practice. To implement and sustain literacy professional development programs, many schools employ literacy coaches. The International Reading Association describes a reading coach as a "staff member who provides ongoing, consistent support for implementation and instruction components in a non-threatening and non-evaluative manner" (2004, p. 2). Guidance from No Child Left Behind (2001) classifies coaching as one of the "practices and strategies for professional development that should be evident in an effective reading program" (p.7).

If Snow and her colleagues' (1998) statement about the quality of classroom instruction being the single best weapon against reading failure, then it can definitely be related to Darling-



Hammond (1996). "If a caring, qualified teacher for every child is the most important ingredient in educational reform, then it should no longer be the factor most frequently overlooked" ( p. 194).

This study integrated research and results from studies in professional development, literacy coaching, and balanced literacy to conduct a yearlong professional development project for a midwestern school district. Participants engaged in study sessions to expand their understandings of literacy learning processes, to read recent reading research, and to implement guided reading instruction as part a balanced literacy instructional approach. Three of those participants allowed me to act as literacy coach in their K-2 classrooms. It is my hope that the studied theories and research will serve as frameworks for the teachers' literacy instruction, which is designed by the needs of their students.

Results of this study suggest that teachers made changes in instructional practices, which aligned with balanced literacy practices. Teachers found during the year of the study that they were able to use the materials in their classrooms and in the school libraries more that than they had previously believed. Another change indicated by the teachers was their need for professional development. After the study, they considered visiting colleagues as a possible way to collaborate, and they strongly indicated desires to have more opportunities to reflect with colleagues on student work and to problem solve issues relating to literacy instruction and learning. The three teachers who worked with me as their literacy coach expressed positive remarks about the opportunity to collaborate in their classroom with a literacy coach. Modeling instructional strategies and working as co-learners with the students was very positive.

Results of the study reflect differences in teachers' responses to the professional development and to the literacy coaching. Even with trusting relationships, not all the teachers

became reflective and analytical. The daily routines of the classroom directed one teacher to search for simple solutions to her teaching issues.

While the findings of this study are limited to thirteen teachers, three classrooms, and one school year, there are implications for classroom practice, which may extend to other contexts. It is my hope that the participating teachers continue to explore the potential of balanced literacy instruction and to follow the instructional needs of the students based on ongoing assessment and observation. If those teachers persist in their balanced literacy instruction, perhaps they will work with district instructional leaders to develop more ongoing literacy professional development and to eventually employ literacy coaches. This ground-up movement has potential to improve classroom literacy instruction and learning for all students.

The findings of this study confirm and support the literature and research that show the literacy goals of all children can be met through a balanced literacy approach to instruction which is designed and guided by focused and sustained professional development to deepen teachers' understandings and skills. This study validated my beliefs and practices as a first year teacher in 1969. Using students' oral language, teaching from authentic children's literature, and supporting students' writing offer more literacy learning opportunities than any basal program. I was able to observe my students, assess their competencies and needs, and plan my instruction. I could integrate comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and fluency throughout my literacy teaching. For 28 years, I successfully applied these beliefs and practices in my classroom.

This study validated my knowledge and belief that teachers need and want relevant, ongoing professional development. If that professional development is embedded in the school day, linked to student learning, guided by student data, and supported by informed

administrators, then teachers accept the responsibilities and opportunities to learn and grow as teaching professionals. Teachers must feel that the goal of the professional development will be reached and sustained over time. Teachers need to know that the content of the professional development will be allowed time to be properly implemented and not dismissed when a new concept or program becomes popular. Teachers have often implemented new programs in their classrooms, and those programs are soon replaced by some newer program, which is highly touted and advertised by publishers. Often there is no evidence that the change is necessary or relevant to the needs of the students. Goals of professional development must be given time to succeed. Any implementation effort meets resistance and confusion at some point. Instructional leadership must focus the teachers to work through the difficulties and progress toward student achievement, which is the end goal of all professional development.

This study confirmed my belief that employing literacy coaches empowers teachers and schools to achieve literacy goals. When literacy coaches have the support of administrators, they can successfully work in classrooms to increase student literacy achievement. An effective coach offers long-term follow-up, long-term consistency, and a sense of trust, which results in teachers transferring enhanced knowledge and skills into their classroom practices to increase students' learning.

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## **Appendix A - Letters to District Participants**

PO Box 186  
Council Grove, KS 66846  
July 26, 2006

Dr. XYZ  
Unified School District # 123  
123 XYZ Avenue  
XYZ, KS 61234

Dear Dr. XYZ,

My name is Suzanne DeWeese, and I am a graduate student in the College of Education at Kansas State University. I am completing a doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in reading. I am writing to request your district's approval to study the impact of professional development for balanced literacy instruction on teaching and learning in kindergarten, first, and second classrooms at Hillside Elementary School and Lakeview Elementary School in USD 123, during the 2006-2007 school year.

The title of the study is "Professional Development and Literacy Coaching: A Case Study of Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade Balanced Literacy Classrooms ". The purpose of the study is to describe changes in knowledge and instructional practices of teachers as they participate in professional development to change literacy instruction and to notice changes over time in students' literacy achievement. I will conduct the on-site professional development as literacy coach. My responsibilities will be to present the balanced literacy theories and procedures, to model instructional strategies, to provide feedback to teachers, to examine student work and analyze data, and to help create interventions for low-performing students.

To fulfill the purposes of the research, I wish to conduct on-site professional development as literacy coach to three teachers. Within this capacity, I will present the balanced literacy theories and procedures, model instructional strategies, provide feedback to teachers, examine student work samples and analyze data, and help create interventions for low-

performing students. Data collection will occur through classroom observations, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, teacher reflection logs, classroom assessments and student artifacts gathered in the kindergarten, first and second grade targeted classrooms.

To begin the professional development initiative that forms the basis of my dissertation research, I will engage 13 participating USD 123 K-2 teachers in a professional book club from June 19-30, 2006, in ten consecutive two-hour sessions. The intent of the book study is to extend awareness of recent reading research and to link research findings to high quality classroom instruction for all students. Working in cooperation with Mrs. Jan Bowling, Director of Elementary Education, the two-week book study will be the beginning of a yearlong professional development project focusing on balanced literacy for K-2 teachers. District K-2 teacher participants will also have the option of enrolling in three graduate hours from Kansas State University.

I will conduct the remaining professional development sessions throughout the 2006-2007 school year beginning with an all day session on August 10, 2006 and continuing with seven after school sessions during fall and spring semesters. The components of the professional development program will include:

- Framework for balanced literacy
- Assessment
- Reading
- Writing
- Word work
- Literacy centers
- Classroom management

This project aims to create balance in literacy instruction in the K-2 classrooms, which focuses on teacher reflective decision-making and student centered activities for all students. Using recent reading research, teachers will gain knowledge and understanding of effective instruction, which includes the essential components of reading. They will receive

demonstrations in instructional practices, implementation of assessment strategies and classroom organization.

If you have questions about my request, please contact me (620-767-8406) or my major professor, Dr. Marjorie Hancock (785-532-5917).

Sincerely,

Suzanne DeWeese

PO Box 186  
Council Grove, KS 66846  
August XX, 2006

First Grade Parents  
Hillside Elementary School  
XYZ, KS 61234

Dear Parent,

I am writing to ask your permission to allow your child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in a research project titled, "Professional Development and Literacy Coaching: A Case Study of Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade Balanced Literacy Instruction". The purpose of this project is to describe changes in teachers' knowledge of the literacy process, literacy instruction, and student learning in first and second grade classrooms. Balanced literacy instruction refers to an instructional approach, which is research-based, comprehensive, integrated, and dynamic. It allows teachers to respond the individual assessed needs of the children in literacy learning.

The project will engage the teachers in a yearlong USD 123 professional development plan to examine balanced literacy instruction. I will facilitate the professional development sessions. In addition, I will act as literacy coach in one first grade and one second grade classroom twice a month to provide support as needed for teachers in the implementation of balanced literacy. Literacy lessons will be videotaped four times during the school year. The interactions in your child's classroom will be guided and assisted by Dr. Marjorie Hancock, my major professor in elementary education at Kansas State University.

The benefits to your child will be high-quality literacy instruction in a risk-free environment in order to become a life-long reader and writer. There is no cost to your family.

Because your child's participation is voluntary, you may withdraw your child at any time from the project during the 2006-2007 school year.

At the end of the project, I will provide you with a written report of the study. All information gathered will remain confidential. No part of the report will be shared in any form without your written consent. In the event of journal publication or conference presentation, neither the children's names nor location of the study will be revealed. Once the project is completed, you may contact me to view the videotapes.

Before the project may begin, you will need to sign the attached "Parental/guardian Informed Consent" form and return it to me in the closed envelope. If you have questions at any time during the course of the project, please do not hesitate to call me at my home (620-767-8406) or at my cell (6785-410-1021) or email me at [suzanne@tctelco.net](mailto:suzanne@tctelco.net). You may also contact Dr. Marjorie Hancock, (785-532-5917) or at [mrhanc@k-state.edu](mailto:mrhanc@k-state.edu)), my major professor. Additional if you have further questions about the rights of your child's participation in this project, you may contact Dr. Rich Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 1 Fairchild Hall, KSU, Manhattan, KS 66502, 785-532-3224.

Thank you for allowing your child to participate in this literacy learning project. I feel confident that your child's literacy learning will be enhanced.

Sincerely,

Suzanne DeWeese



## PARENTIAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read the foregoing letter from Suzanne DeWeese and understand the project in which she will be researching the implementation of balanced literacy instruction in K-2 classrooms during the 2006-2007 school year.

I voluntarily agree to allow my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in the study. It is my understanding that the purpose of the project is to describe the implementation of balanced literacy instruction in K-2 classrooms in terms of child-centered and teacher decision-making teaching. There will be no charge to my family. I also understand that I will receive a copy of the report and that the information in this report will be confidential and unpublished, unless further permission is granted by me. All videotapes will remain the property of Suzanne DeWeese and will not be published, presented, or downloaded to the Internet without my written consent. Once the project is completed, I may request to view the videotapes at Hillside Elementary School. In addition, it is my right to withdraw my child from the project at any time if I decide it is in his/her best interest. If I have any questions or concerns, I may contact Suzanne DeWeese at her home (620-767-8406) or on her cell phone (785-410-1021, or e-mail her at [suzanne@tctelco.net](mailto:suzanne@tctelco.net). I may also contact Dr. Marjorie Hancock at her office (785-532-5917) or by e-mail at [mrhanc@k-state.edu](mailto:mrhanc@k-state.edu). Furthermore, I may contact Dr. Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 213 Fairchild Hall, KSU, Manhattan, KS 66506 (785-532-3224).

Signature of Parent

Date

\_\_\_\_\_ I decline to allow my child to participate in the research project.

---

Signature of Parent

---

Date

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN STAMPED ENVELOPE PROVIDED**

## **Appendix B - Rights of Human Subjects Document**



University Research  
Compliance Office  
203 Fairchild Hall  
Lower Mezzanine  
Manhattan, KS 66506-1103  
785-532-3224  
Fax: 785-532-3278  
<http://www.ksu.edu/research/comply>

TO: Marjorie Hancock  
Elementary Education  
Bluemont Hall

Protocol Number: 3963

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

DATE: June 27, 2007

RE: Approval of Your Proposal Entitled, "Professional development for the implementation of balanced literacy instruction: A case study of K-2 classrooms."

Federal regulations stipulate that human subjects protocols can be approved by IRB's for only one year, and require "continuing review" and approval to continue past the expiration date.

On the basis of the IRB "continuing review," your project is classified as follows:

**Active.** The activity is pending or in progress, and there have been no changes that have occurred or are contemplated that would affect the status of human subjects.

**EXPIRATION DATE: 7/17/2007**

If the activity persists, it will be eligible for continuing review several months prior to the new expiration date.

## **Appendix C - Teaching Log**

### Teaching Log

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Part 1: Please complete Part 1 for each day of the week. Briefly describe the main focus of the day's reading lesson. Include details such as materials, grouping techniques, and activities carried out.

|   | What I did | What the students did |
|---|------------|-----------------------|
| Group: ____<br>Elapsed time: ____<br><br>Focus:<br><br>Materials: |            |                       |
| Group: ____<br>Elapsed time: ____<br><br>Focus:<br><br>Materials: |            |                       |
| Group: ____<br>Elapsed time: ____<br><br>Focus:<br><br>Materials: |            |                       |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|

Were there any of the reading theories and/or instructional strategies applied which were new to your instructional practices, which were learned during the Balanced Literacy Professional Development sessions?

I think today's lessons...

What worked well? Why?

What need attention? How?

How can I be more effective?



Part 2: After completing Part 1, please check the following focus area elements you used in your lesson for that given day. Please list the strategy, technique or method in the blank area if "other" is checked.

|                                     | <u>Mon</u> | <u>Tues</u> | <u>Wed</u> | <u>Thurs</u> | <u>Fri</u> |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| <b><u>Classroom Environment</u></b> |            |             |            |              |            |
| Flexible grouping strategies        |            |             |            |              |            |
| Morning meeting                     |            |             |            |              |            |
| Student work displayed              |            |             |            |              |            |
| Rubric/standards displayed          |            |             |            |              |            |
| Independent reading time            |            |             |            |              |            |
| Read alouds                         |            |             |            |              |            |
| Explicit instruction                |            |             |            |              |            |
| Modeling, demonstrating             |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
| <b><u>Emergent Literacy</u></b>     |            |             |            |              |            |
| Read alouds                         |            |             |            |              |            |
| Phonemic awareness                  |            |             |            |              |            |
| Alphabetic principle                |            |             |            |              |            |
| Focus on writing                    |            |             |            |              |            |
| Temporary spelling                  |            |             |            |              |            |
| other                               |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
| <b><u>Vocabulary</u></b>            |            |             |            |              |            |
| Word walls                          |            |             |            |              |            |
| Student made dictionaries           |            |             |            |              |            |
| Games                               |            |             |            |              |            |
| other                               |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
|                                     |            |             |            |              |            |
| <b><u>Word Work</u></b>             |            |             |            |              |            |
| Letter sound relationships          |            |             |            |              |            |
| Word building                       |            |             |            |              |            |
| Explicit instruction                |            |             |            |              |            |
| Modeling, demonstrating             |            |             |            |              |            |
| Practice opportunities              |            |             |            |              |            |
| other                               |            |             |            |              |            |

|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b><u>Fluency</u></b>            |  |  |  |  |  |
| Read alouds (teacher)            |  |  |  |  |  |
| Independent reading              |  |  |  |  |  |
| Rereading                        |  |  |  |  |  |
| Partner reading                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Choral reading                   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Readers' theatre                 |  |  |  |  |  |
| other                            |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b><u>Vocabulary</u></b>         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Connection to prior knowledge    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Explicit instruction             |  |  |  |  |  |
| Word-solving strategies          |  |  |  |  |  |
| other                            |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b><u>Comprehension</u></b>      |  |  |  |  |  |
| Prereading activities            |  |  |  |  |  |
| During reading activities        |  |  |  |  |  |
| After reading activities         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Connections to self, text, world |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fix-up strategies                |  |  |  |  |  |
| Higher order questions           |  |  |  |  |  |
| Discussions among students       |  |  |  |  |  |
| other                            |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b><u>Writing</u></b>            |  |  |  |  |  |
| Writing in response to prompt    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Teacher models writing           |  |  |  |  |  |
| Writing workshop                 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Conventions instruction          |  |  |  |  |  |
| Writing connection to reading    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other                            |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                  |  |  |  |  |  |

Adapted from A. Swan-Dagen, West Virginia University

## **Appendix D - Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile**

The DeFord  
Theoretical Orientation to Reading  
Profile (TORP)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read the following statements, and circle one of the responses that will indicate the relationship of the statement to your feelings about reading and reading instruction.

SA 2 3 4 SD

(Select one best answer that reflects the strength of agreement or disagreement).

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. A child needs to be able to verbalize the rules of phonics in order to assure proficiency in processing new words.       | <u>1</u> 2 3 4 <u>5</u><br>SA SD |
| 2. An increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension.   | <u>1</u> 2 3 4 <u>5</u><br>SA SD |
| 3. Dividing words into syllables according to rules is a helpful instructional practice for reading new words.              | <u>1</u> 2 3 4 <u>5</u><br>SA SD |
| 4. Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension.                             | <u>1</u> 2 3 4 <u>5</u><br>SA SD |
| 5. Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words and sentences. | <u>1</u> 2 3 4 <u>5</u><br>SA SD |
| 6. When children do not know a word, they should be   | <u>1</u> 2 3 4 <u>5</u>          |

- |  |                  |    |
|--|------------------|----|
| instructed to sound out its parts.   | SA               | SD |
| 7. It is a good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read.                                       | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | SD |
| 8. The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words.   | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | SD |
| 9. Reversals (e.g., saying "saw" for "was") are significant problems in the teaching of reading.   | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | SD |
| 10. It is a good practice to correct a child as soon as an oral reading mistake is made.   | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | S  |
| 11. It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to insure that it will become a part of sight vocabulary. | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | SD |
| 12. Paying close attention to punctuation marks is necessary to understanding story content.   | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | SD |
| 13. It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated.   | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | SD |
| 14. Being able to label words according to grammatical function (nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading.   | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | SD |
| 15. When coming to a word that's unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess   | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u> |    |
|  | SA               | SD |

- upon meaning and go on.
16. Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of words, (run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (running, longest). 1 2 3 4 5  
SA SD
17. It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read. 1 2 3 4 5  
SA SD
18. Flashcard drills with sightwords is an unnecessary form of practice in reading instruction. 1 2 3 4 5  
SA SD
19. Ability to use accent patterns in multisyllable words (pho ' to graph, ph to' gra phy, and pho to gra' phic) should be developed as part of reading instruction. 1 2 3 4 5  
SA SD
20. Controlling text through consistent spelling patterns (The fat cat ran back. The fat cat sat on a hat) is a means by which children can best learn to read. 1 2 3 4 5  
SA SD
21. Formal instruction in reading is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading. 1 2 3 4 5  
SA SD
22. Phonic analysis is the most important form of analysis used when meeting new words. 1 2 3 4 5  
SA SD
23. Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact 1 2 3 4 5  
SA SD

graphic representation.

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 24. Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition.                          | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u><br>SA SD |
| 25. It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.  | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u><br>SA SD |
| 26. If a child says "house" for the written word "home", the response should be left uncorrected.                     | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u><br>SA SD |
| 27. It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text.                                | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u><br>SA SD |
| 28. Some problems in reading are caused by readers dropping the inflectional endings from words (e.g., jumps, jumped) | <u>1 2 3 4 5</u><br>SA SD |

**DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Pre- and Post Reading Profile**

**Dependent Sample t-test**

|  | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | t      | df | Sig. (t-tailed) |
|--|---------|----------------|-----------------|---|--------|----|-----------------|
| Pair 1 Phonics Orientation Pre- Phonics Orientation Post               | -.2400  | .64104         | .17779          | -.62738/.14738                            | -1.350 | 12 | .202            |
| Pair 2 Whole Language Orientation Pre- Whole Language Orientation Post | -.04692 | .60146         | .16682          | -.41038/.31654                            | -.281  | 12 | .783            |
| Pair 3 Shared Skills Orientation Pre- Shared Skills Orientation Post   | -.00462 | .64887         | .17996          | -.39672/.38749                            | -.026  | 12 | .980            |

A dependent sample t-test showed a change in the teachers' orientation away from phonics instruction (phonics:  $t(12) = -1.350, p > .05$ ; whole language:  $t(12) = -.281, p > .05$ ; shared skills:  $t(12) = -.026, p > .05$ ). Taking that data, an effect size was computed to look for the impact of the balanced literacy professional development upon teacher's theoretical reading orientations:  $r = 0.363$ . Using Cohen's suggestions, there was a medium effect from the professional development Cohen, 1992).



## **Appendix E - Teacher Pre- and Post Surveys**

## Teacher Pre-Survey

This survey is part of a research project designed to describe literacy instruction in K-2 classrooms. The purpose of this survey is to gather information about your professional practice and professional development experiences and interests. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please answer as honestly as you can. This instrument will not be use to evaluate teaching effectiveness of any teacher. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Suzanne DeWeese    [suzanne@tctelco.net](mailto:suzanne@tctelco.net)

1. What is your current grade assignment?
  - A. Kindergarten
  - B. 1
  - C. 2
  
2. How many years have you taught? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How many years at your current grade level assignment? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. How many years have you taught in your current building? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Do you have a Master's Degree?    Yes \_\_\_\_    No \_\_\_\_
  
6. Please check any other certifications:  
Reading Specialist \_\_\_\_\_    ESL Endorsement \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Number of graduate semester hours in reading/language arts over the past 10 years:
- A. 0
  - B. 1-6
  - C. 7-13
  - D. 14+
8. Do you belong to any professional organizations? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_  
If yes, please list: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Type/Name of reading program used in your classroom: \_\_\_\_\_  
How long have you used this program in your classroom? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Name any other supplemental literacy materials/programs used: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. The reading instructional materials are written at an appropriate instructional level (i.e., neither too easy nor too difficult).
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
12. My reading group instruction is best described as:
- A. Whole group
  - B. Small group
  - C. Small groups that tend not to change
  - D. Individual instruction

13. My writing instruction is best described as:
- A. Whole group
  - B. Small groups that change often
  - C. Small groups that tend not to change
  - D. Individual instruction
14. My decoding/spelling program is best described as:
- A. Whole group
  - B. Small groups that change often
  - C. Small groups that tend not to change
  - D. Individual instruction
15. The total amount of time I spend on reading, writing, spelling, and other language arts instruction each day is:
- A. Less than 60 minutes
  - B. 60-90 minutes
  - C. 90-120 minutes
  - D. More than 120 minutes
16. The total amount of time I spend on phonemic awareness activities each day is:
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
17. The total amount of time I spend on decoding/spelling instruction each day is:
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes

18. The total amount of time I spend on self-selected or familiar reading each day is
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
19. The total amount of time I spend on guided reading (student reading materials chosen by the teacher, whether basals, leveled readers, or trade books with a focus on student comprehension, discussion, and response) each day is:
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
20. The total amount of time I spend on writing instruction each day is:
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
21. The total amount of time I spend on teacher read-alouds each day is:
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes

22. Instruction and practice with words is embedded in meaningful situations in my classroom.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
23. Word recognition instruction focuses on multiple sources of information (meaning, structure, visual information, and other information).
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
24. My word (or sound level) instruction is based on students' needs (as opposed to the sequence in the textbook).
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
25. I use word families to teach decoding.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever

26. My reading instruction focuses on fluency (oral reading that sounds like talking) development.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
27. My students read (or listen to) fiction
- A. Daily
  - B. 3-4 times per week
  - C. 1-2 times per week
  - D. Less than one time per week
28. My students read (or listen to) informational text
- A. Daily
  - B. 3-4 times per week
  - C. 1-2 times per week
  - D. Less than one time per week
29. My students read (or listen to) poetry
- A. Daily
  - B. 3-4 times per week
  - C. 1-2 times per week
  - D. Less than one time per week
30. My students read \_\_\_\_\_ books per week.
- A. 1
  - B. 2-3
  - C. 3-5
  - D. More than 5

31. Prediction and confirmation are important parts of my comprehension instruction.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
32. My comprehension instruction focuses on helping students construct the author's meaning.
- A. Always/Almost always
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  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
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- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
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34. My students write in response to what they read.
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35. My comprehension instruction focuses on similarities and differences.
- A. always/Almost always
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- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
39. Students in my classroom regularly write in a variety of genre (story, poem, essay, research report, letter, etc.)
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  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever

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  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
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- A. Always/Almost always
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  - C. Rarely
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43. My literacy program focuses on helping students become enthusiastic readers and writers.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever

44. The balance between skills (what students know) and strategies (how students use what they know) in my classroom is best described as:
- A. All/Almost all skills
  - B. Mostly skills, some strategies
  - C. Mostly strategies, some skills
  - D. All/Almost all strategies
45. I am certain that my literacy curriculum provides developmentally appropriate experiences for all of my students.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
46. My literacy program is effective for the strongest readers and writers in the classroom.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
47. My literacy program is effective for the weakest readers and writers in the classroom.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree

48. My instruction for struggling readers and writers is based on their diagnosed needs.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
49. I feel comfortable and proficient in planning integrated instruction (e.g., linking reading and writing, teaching skills in context).
- A. Strongly agree
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  - B. Agree
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52. My students use technology (e.g., educational software) to support and extend their learning.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
53. I use informal evaluation techniques (e.g., running records, checklist, etc.) to determine students' reading achievement and progress.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
54. I know how to diagnose the reading needs of the weakest readers in my classroom.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
55. I regularly assess and diagnose the reading needs of the weakest readers in my room.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree

56. I have enough time and support to diagnose my students' reading needs.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
57. My strategies for evaluating student growth in reading and writing are comprehensive (they examine all aspects of the students' reading and writing such as comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and attitudes toward reading).
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
58. I regularly collect information about the extent to which students are achieving curricular goals in literacy.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
59. Assessment is an integral part of instruction in my classroom.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree

60. I have a strong sense of the benchmark literacy abilities for students in my classroom.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
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  - D. Strongly disagree
61. Parents are well informed about my classroom literacy program.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
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  - D. Strongly disagree
62. In my classroom my students' parents are partners in their children's education.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
63. I have an ongoing, definite program of parental involvement at home.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
64. I have enough books and other literacy materials in my classroom library.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree

65. We have enough books and other literacy materials in our school library.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
66. I have the instructional supplies I need to offer an effective literacy program.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
67. My classroom has a special reading area for students.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
68. My classroom has a listening center.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
69. My classroom has a writing center.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
70. My students' writing is displayed in my classroom.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes'
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever



71. I regularly read professional books or journals
- A. Yes
  - B. No
72. In the past month I have discussed a professional book or journal article with a colleague at my school.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
73. My knowledge of children's literature is current.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
74. My colleagues and I have adequate opportunities to engage in professional conversations (e.g., discuss articles or books).
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
75. My colleagues and I have adequate opportunities to visit and observe each other teaching.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree

76. My colleagues and I have adequate opportunities to reflect on student work and solve particular problems related to literacy instruction and learning.

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly disagree

77. There are opportunities for me to engage in professional development through my school or district.

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly disagree

Please elaborate in writing on any item.

Thank you.

Sources:

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Adapted from N. Padak and T. Rasinski, Kent State University

## Teacher Post Survey

This survey is part of a research project designed to describe literacy instruction in K-2 classrooms. The purpose of this survey is to gather information about your professional practice and professional development experiences and interests. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please answer as honestly as you can. This instrument will not be used to evaluate teaching effectiveness of any teacher. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Suzanne DeWeese    [suzanne@tctelco.net](mailto:suzanne@tctelco.net)

1. The reading instructional materials are written at an appropriate instructional level (i.e., neither too easy nor too difficult).
  - A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
  
2. My reading group instruction is best described as:
  - A. Whole group
  - B. Small groups that change often
  - C. Small groups that tend not to change
  - D. Individual instruction
  
3. My writing instruction is best described as:
  - A. Whole group
  - B. Small groups that change often
  - C. Small groups that tend not to change
  - D. Individual instruction

4. My decoding/spelling program is best described as:
  - A. Whole group
  - B. Small groups that change often
  - C. Small groups that tend not to change
  - D. Individual instruction
  
5. The total amount of time I spend on reading, writing, spelling, and other language arts instruction each day is:
  - A. Less than 60 minutes
  - B. 60-90 minutes
  - C. 90-120 minutes
  - D. More than 120 minutes
  
6. The total amount of time I spend on phonemic awareness activities each day is:
  - A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
  
7. The total amount of time I spend on decoding/spelling instruction each day is:
  - A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
  
8. The total amount of time I spend on self-selected or familiar reading each day is:
  - A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes

9. The total amount of time I spend on guided reading (student reading materials chosen by the teacher, whether basals, leveled reader, or trade books with a focus on student comprehension, discussion, and response) each day is:
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
10. The total amount of time I spend on writing instruction each day is:
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
11. The total amount of time I spend on teacher read-alouds each day is:
- A. Less than 15 minutes
  - B. 15-30 minutes
  - C. 30-45 minutes
  - D. More than 45 minutes
12. Instruction and practice with words is embedded in meaningful situations in my classroom.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever

13. Word recognition instruction focuses on multiple sources of information (meaning, structure, visual information, and other information).
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Hardly ever
14. My word (or sound level) instruction is based on students' needs (as opposed to the sequence in the textbooks).
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
15. I use word families to teach decoding.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
16. My reading instruction focuses on fluency (oral reading that sounds like talking) development.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever

17. My students read (or listen to) fiction
- A. Daily
  - B. 3-4 times per week
  - C. 1-2 times per week
  - D. Less than one time per week
18. My students read (or listen to) informational text
- A. Daily
  - B. 3-4 times per week
  - C. 1-2 times per week
  - D. Less than one time per week
19. My students read (or listen to) poetry
- A. Daily
  - B. 3-4 times per week
  - C. 1-2 times per week
  - D. Less than one time per week
20. My students read \_\_\_\_ books per week.
- A. 1
  - B. 2-3
  - C. 3-5
  - D. More than 5
21. Prediction and confirmation are important parts of my comprehension instruction.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever



22. My comprehension instruction focuses on helping students construct the author's
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
23. My comprehension instruction encourages students to elaborate on, respond to, or create meaning related to but beyond the text.
- A. Always/Almost always
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever
24. My students write in response to what they read.
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  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
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25. My comprehension instruction focuses on similarities and differences.
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  - C. Rarely
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26. My comprehension instruction focuses on summarizing;.
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  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Rarely
  - D. Never/Hardly ever

27. Students have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes.
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  - C. Rarely
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28. Students have opportunities to write for a variety of audiences.
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31. I am a model of a reader for my students (my students see me read regularly and know that reading is an important part of my life).
- A. Always/Almost always
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34. The balance between skills (what students know) and strategies (how students use what they know) in my classroom is best described as:
- A. All/Almost all skills
  - B. Mostly skills, some strategies
  - C. Mostly strategies, some skills
  - D. All/Almost all strategies

35. I am certain that my literacy curriculum provides developmentally appropriate experiences for all of my students.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
36. My literacy program is effective for the strongest readers and writers in the classroom.
- A. Strongly agree
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  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
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- A. Strongly agree
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45. I regularly assess and diagnose the reading needs of the weakest readers in my room.
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47. My strategies for evaluating student growth in reading and writing are comprehensive (they examine all aspects of the students' reading and writing such as comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and attitudes toward reading).
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66. My colleagues and I have adequate opportunities to reflect on student work and solve particular problems related to literacy instruction and learning.

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly disagree

67. There are opportunities for me to engage in professional development through my school or district.

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly disagree

Please elaborate on any ite.

Thank you.

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Adapted from N. Padak and T. Rasinski, Kent State University

## **Appendix F - Pre and Post Interviews**

### **Pre Interview Questions**

1. Describe the students you teach. (characteristics, problems, concerns about teaching them to read).
2. Describe your reading class (time, materials, and activities).
3. In what ways do you use grouping? How?
4. What types of reading assessments do you administer?
5. Is there a school reading specialist? What role if any does your school's reading specialist play with your instruction?
6. What do you think is the most important component in your literacy instruction?
7. What are the factors that distinguish a successful reader from an struggling reader?
8. What are the expectations of USD 383 regarding this balanced literacy professional development?
9. What changes do you want to make as part of your participation of this project?
10. How do you describe the nature of professional development in your school/district (who's in charge, when, duration)?
11. Are there any other ongoing professional development projects going on at this time?

## Post Interview Questions

1. Describe your reading class (time, materials, activities).
2. What do you think is the most important component in your reading instruction?
3. Were there changes in your use of formal and informal assessment this year?
4. What changes made this year will you maintain as part of your literacy instruction?
5. What are the factors that distinguish a successful reader from a struggling reader?
6. Can all children learn to read?
7. What impact has the balanced literacy professional development had on
  - your knowledge and skill
  - your instruction
8. What part of the balanced literacy professional development project was the most significant to you and your classroom?

## **Appendix G - June, Mid-Year, and Final Evaluations**



## Balanced Literacy Professional Development

June 19 - June 30, 2006

Thank you for joining me in this book study. In order to provide you with quality professional development, please take a few minutes to complete the following survey. Please rate the following statements from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree).

1. The framework of the book study was clear and meaningful. 5 4 3 2 1  
Comment/Suggestion:

2. The handouts were useful to me and my colleagues. 5 4 3 2 1  
Commnet/Suggestion:

3. I will use information from this workshop in my classroom. 5 4 3 2 1  
Comment/Suggestion:

4. As a result of this book study, my knowledge of balanced literacy instruction has increased. 5 4 3 2 1  
Comment/Suggestion:

5. The book study influenced me to think more deeply about literacy instruction in my classroom practices. 5 4 3 2 1  
Comment/Suggestion:

6. What I liked best about this book study was:

**Balanced Literacy Balanced Literacy Mid-Year Evaluation**  
November, 17, 2006

- 1 .Have you changed any of your views of the reading/writing processes as a result of this professional development?
  
2. Have you considered changing or changed any of your instructional practices in literacy instruction?
  
3. What is puzzling you about implementing balanced literacy?
  
4. Have you let go of some other instructional practices to allow for a more balanced approach?
  
5. Have you spent time collaborating with others in the professional development group?
  
6. What can I do to support your implementation of balanced literacy?

## **Balanced Literacy Professional Development Evaluation**

April 2007

| Circle only one response<br>for each question  | Strongly<br>Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly<br>Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| 1.. As a result of this professional development, my view of literacy learning has changed.                                |                      |          |         |       |                   |
| 2. I have made changes in my literacy instruction as a result of this professional development.                            |                      |          |         |       |                   |
| 3. I have noticed changes in student literacy learning as an outcome of my participation in this professional development. |                      |          |         |       |                   |
| 4. The facilitator contributed to changes in my literacy instructional understandings and practices.                       |                      |          |         |       |                   |

Please add any details, which will describe and explain the influences of this professional development upon your classroom instruction.

What were the best aspects of this professional development?

How can this professional development be improved?

Please add any additional comments. Use the reverse side

## **Appendix H - Dorn and Soffos Checklists**

## Reading and Writing at the Emergent Level

Student \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Reading</b>  | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>April</b> |
|---|-------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Attends to print using some known letters.  |             |            |            |              |
| Points to words in a one-to-one match throughout one to three lines of patterned text.  |             |            |            |              |
| Recognizes link between known letters and related sounds; articulates first letter in unknown word.   |             |            |            |              |
| Uses a special key word from ABC chart of letter book to help with solving unknown words.   |             |            |            |              |
| Fluently reads some high-frequency words in easy texts; begins to acquire a reading vocabulary of about twenty frequently encountered words.  |             |            |            |              |
| Self-monitors using high-frequency words and other known visual cues; rereads to cross-check first letter against meaning and structure cues. |             |            |            |              |
| Notices unknown words and guesses at the meaning from pictures of how the words are used.   |             |            |            |              |
| <b>Writing</b>  |             |            |            |              |
| Writes known letters with correct formation.  |             |            |            |              |
| Uses spaces between words with greater accuracy.  |             |            |            |              |
| Recognizes link between known sounds and related letters; slowly articulates word with blended sounds.  |             |            |            |              |
| Uses ABC chart and letter books as resources for sound-letter links.  |             |            |            |              |
| Writes a few high-frequency words with accuracy; begins to acquire a writing vocabulary that reflects attention to print during reading.      |             |            |            |              |
| Uses first part of known words to help write parts of an unknown word.  |             |            |            |              |
| Includes new words from reading experiences in writing of texts.  |             |            |            |              |

Adapted from Dorn & Soffos, *Shaping Literate Minds*

## Reading and Writing at the Early Level

Student \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Reading</b>  | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>April</b> |
|---|-------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Self-monitors reading with greater ease; uses known words and patterns to check on reading; notices words within words; begins to acquire a reading vocabulary of about 150 words from easy and familiar texts. |             |            |            |              |
| Searches through words in a left-to-right sequence; blends letters into sounds; repeats word as if to confirm identity.   |             |            |            |              |
| Takes words apart at the larger unit of analysis (consonant digraphs, inflectional endings, onset and rime patterns, blends).   |             |            |            |              |
| Reading high-frequency words fast, fluently and automatically.  |             |            |            |              |
| Becomes faster at noticing errors and initiates multiple attempts to self-correct.  |             |            |            |              |
| <b>Writing</b>  |             |            |            |              |
| Begins to notice common misspellings in writing and searches through a simple dictionary for corrections; uses resources and checklists; acquires a writing vocabulary that reflects reading experience.        |             |            |            |              |
| Analyzes sequence of sounds and records corresponding letters; segments and blends sounds in words with increasing ease.  |             |            |            |              |
| Constructs words using larger units of sound-to-letter patterns; faster and more efficient at writing words.  |             |            |            |              |
| Constructs words using larger units of sound-to-letter patterns; faster and more efficient at writing words.  |             |            |            |              |
| Applies knowledge of onset and rime patterns for writing unknown words.   |             |            |            |              |
| Notices similarities between word patterns (mother, father, over).  |             |            |            |              |

Adapted from Dorn & Soffos, *Shaping Literate Minds*

## Reading and Writing at the Transitional Level

Student \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Reading</b>   | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>April</b> |
|--|-------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Expands reading vocabulary; shows interest in unfamiliar words that are read to them.  |             |            |            |              |
| Solves multisyllabic words by noticing parts within the words.   |             |            |            |              |
| Quickly takes words apart on the run while reading.  |             |            |            |              |
| Reads longer texts with greater accuracy and fluency.  |             |            |            |              |
| Uses word meanings to solve problems (prefixes, suffixes, roots, compound parts).  |             |            |            |              |
| Preprocesses error before making a mistake.  |             |            |            |              |
| <b>Writing</b>   |             |            |            |              |
| Expands writing vocabulary; includes new and unusual words.  |             |            |            |              |
| Attends to syllables when writing words.   |             |            |            |              |
| Problem-solves with greater ease and fluency.  |             |            |            |              |
| Writes increasingly longer texts with greater accuracy and speed.  |             |            |            |              |
| Shows flexibility with word choice; tries out different ways of saying a message with the same meaning; revises word choices in writing process; uses a thesaurus as a resource. |             |            |            |              |
| Uses dictionaries, editing checklist, and other resources to self-correct writing.   |             |            |            |              |

Adapted from Dorn & Soffos, *Shaping Literate Minds*

## Reading and Writing at the Fluent Level

**Student** \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Reading</b>  | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>April</b> |
|---|-------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Has an extensive reading vocabulary; reads longer texts with specialized content and unusual words; learns new words daily.   |             |            |            |              |
| Applies knowledge of word meaning to reading texts with more complex language structures.   |             |            |            |              |
| Responds to reading at many different levels; applies knowledge about word meaning across different texts; makes predictions about word meanings and checks within texts; refines word knowledge. |             |            |            |              |
| <b>Writing</b>  |             |            |            |              |
| Has an extensive writing vocabulary; writes longer texts with good word choices; uses new words from reading.   |             |            |            |              |
| Uses figurative language (similes, metaphors) and descriptive phrases to enhance message.   |             |            |            |              |
| Uses a range of resources, including thesaurus, dictionary, encyclopedia, and other research materials to plan and inform writing.  |             |            |            |              |

Adapted from Dorn & Soffos, *Shaping Literate Minds*



## **Appendix I - The Reading Lesson Observation Framework**

## The Reading Lesson Observation Framework

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Observer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Classroom Climate</b>   |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| A. Many different types of authentic reading materials such as magazines, newspapers, novels, and nonfiction works are displayed and are available for children to read independently.   |  |  |  |  |
| B. The classroom has a reading area such as a corner or classroom library, where children are encouraged to go to read for enjoyment.  |  |  |  |  |
| C. An area is available for small-group reading instruction.   |  |  |  |  |
| D. Active participation and social interaction are integral parts of reading instruction in this classroom.  |  |  |  |  |
| E. The classroom environment indicates that reading and writing are valued and actively promoted (e.g., purposeful writing is displayed, journals are maintained, Word Walls are used, book talks and read-alouds by teacher occur regularly). |  |  |  |  |
| F.   |  |  |  |  |
| G.   |  |  |  |  |

| <b>Prereading Phase</b>  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| A. During the prereading discussion, the teacher asked the children to preview the text by having them read the title of the selection, look at the illustrations, and then discuss the possible contents of the text. |  |  |  |  |
| B. Children were encouraged to activate their background knowledge through the use of K-W-L charts, webs, anticipation guides, personal responses, etc.  |  |  |  |  |
| C. By generating a discussion about the topic before reading the selection, the teacher created an interest in the reading.  |  |  |  |  |
| D. The teacher introduced and discussed the new vocabulary words in a meaningful context, focusing on those new words that were central to the understanding of the story.   |  |  |  |  |
| E. The children were encouraged to state or write predictions related to the topic of the reading selection.   |  |  |  |  |
| F. Before reading occurred, the teacher helped the children identify the type of material that was to be read to determine what their purpose should be for reading it.  |  |  |  |  |
| G. The objective for the reading lesson was clearly identified for the children along with how that objective related to previous lessons.   |  |  |  |  |
| H. The teacher continually assessed children's prereading discussion and made appropriate adjustments.   |  |  |  |  |
| I.   |  |  |  |  |
| J.   |  |  |  |  |

| <b>Guided Reading Phase</b>  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| A. At appropriate points during the reading of the selection, the children were asked to evaluate their initial predictions.                     |  |  |  |  |
| B. The children were asked to identify or read aloud portions of text that confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about the selection. |  |  |  |  |
| C. The comprehension discussion focused on the purposes that were established for reading the selection.   |  |  |  |  |
| D. An appropriate mix of factual and higher level thinking questions were incorporated into the comprehension discussion.                        |  |  |  |  |
| E. During the reading lesson, the teacher modeled fluent reading and then encouraged the children to read fluently and with expression.          |  |  |  |  |

| <b>Guided Reading Phase (continued)</b>  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| F. The teacher encouraged the children to adjust their reading rate to fit the material.   |  |  |  |  |
| G. The teacher monitored the children and gave proper assistance and feedback while they read or completed practice activities.    |  |  |  |  |
| H. The teacher modeled and encouraged the use of new vocabulary during discussion.   |  |  |  |  |
| I. The children were encouraged to use a variety of word study strategies to decipher the meaning of unknown words as appropriate. |  |  |  |  |
| J. The children were encouraged to use appropriate comprehension monitoring and self-correction strategies during reading.         |  |  |  |  |
| K. The teacher reminded the children to make use of their knowledge of text structure.   |  |  |  |  |
| L. The teacher periodically assessed the children's ability to monitor meaning.  |  |  |  |  |
| M.   |  |  |  |  |
| N.   |  |  |  |  |

| <b>Postreading Phase</b>   |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| A. During the postreading discussion, the children were asked to read aloud sections of the text that substantiated answers to questions and confirmed or disproved predictions they had made about the selection. |  |  |  |  |
| B. The teacher asked the children to retell the material they had read, concentrating on major events or concepts.   |  |  |  |  |
| C. The children were asked to explain their opinions and critical judgments.   |  |  |  |  |
| D. The teacher had the children provide a written response to the reading (retelling, summarization, evaluation).  |  |  |  |  |
| E. Children were encouraged to use new vocabulary in written responses. Examples and modeling were provided by the teacher.  |  |  |  |  |
| F. Writing was used as a natural extension of reading tasks.   |  |  |  |  |
| G. The teacher continually monitored children's comprehension and provided appropriate feedback.   |  |  |  |  |
| H.   |  |  |  |  |
| I.   |  |  |  |  |

| <b>Skill and Strategy Instruction</b>   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| A. The teacher provided a clear explanation about the structure of the skill or strategy to be learned and described when and how it could be used. |  |  |  |  |
| B. The teacher modeled the use of the skill or strategy so children were able to see how it would be used in an appropriate situation.              |  |  |  |  |
| C. Any direct teaching of a phonemic element was immediately followed by children using the skill in a meaningful context.                          |  |  |  |  |
| D. Explicit skill and strategy instruction was provided and applied in the context of the reading selection.  |  |  |  |  |
| E. The children were encouraged to use before, during, and after reading strategies as appropriate.   |  |  |  |  |
| F. Reading skill and strategy instruction moved children toward independent use through scaffolding.  |  |  |  |  |
| G.  |  |  |  |  |
| H.  |  |  |  |  |

| <b>Materials and Tasks of the Lesson</b>   |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| A. The selections used for the reading lesson were appropriate for children of this ability and grade level. |  |  |  |  |
| B. The reading materials represented authentic types of texts.   |  |  |  |  |
| C. Reading materials and tasks reflected a sensitivity to the diverse learning needs of                      |  |  |  |  |

|   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| the children.   |  |  |  |  |
| D. The amount and type of independent work was appropriate for the level of the children and instructional goals it was designed to achieve.  |  |  |  |  |
| E. Independent work often contained open-ended questions that encouraged children to enhance and extend their understanding of the selection. |  |  |  |  |
| F. The literacy tasks the children were asked to perform during the lesson were meaningful and relevant.                                      |  |  |  |  |
| G. The children engaged in various modes of reading during the lesson (e.g., silent, oral, guided, shared).                                   |  |  |  |  |
| H. The teacher provided opportunities for the children to read for enjoyment.   |  |  |  |  |
| I. Children were encouraged to respond personally or creatively to the reading material.  |  |  |  |  |
| J. A balance existed in the reading lesson between teacher-initiated and student-initiated activities.  |  |  |  |  |
| K. Reading materials and tasks were organized around themes when appropriate.   |  |  |  |  |
| L.  |  |  |  |  |
| M.  |  |  |  |  |

|   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Teacher Practices</b>  |  |  |  |  |
| A. The teacher focused on reading as a meaningful process.  |  |  |  |  |
| B. The instructional techniques used by the teacher and the ways they were executed reflected an awareness of recommended practices.            |  |  |  |  |
| C. Children were grouped appropriately and flexibly.  |  |  |  |  |
| D. The teacher's management of the reading lesson provided for active student engagement.   |  |  |  |  |
| E. The pace and flow of the various phases of the reading lesson represented an effective use of time.  |  |  |  |  |
| F. The teacher's instruction was sensitive to the diversity of children's experiences and their social, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic needs. |  |  |  |  |
| G. The teacher actively promoted the integration of the language arts in this lesson.   |  |  |  |  |
| H. The teacher encouraged the children to take informed risks and promoted safe failure.  |  |  |  |  |
| I. The teacher's conferences with children were timely, focused, and positive in nature.  |  |  |  |  |
| J. Authentic assessment practices were used in this lesson.   |  |  |  |  |
| K. The teacher's planned goals, actual instruction, and assessment practices were aligned.  |  |  |  |  |
| L.  |  |  |  |  |
| M.  |  |  |  |  |

Key to checklist:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| O = Observed       | This component was observed and was judged to be of satisfactory quality.      |
| C = Commendation   | This component was observed and was judged to be of very high quality.         |
| R = Recommendation | This component was not observed or was judged to be of unsatisfactory quality. |
| N = Not applicable | This component was not observed because it was not appropriate for the lesson. |

Adapted from W.A. Henk, J. C. Moore, B. A. Marinak, & B. W. Tomasetti

## **Appendix J - Timelines and June 2006 Agenda**

### Balanced Literacy PD Timeline

| Date                    | Time           | Topic  |
|-------------------------|----------------|--|
| June 19 - June 30, 2006 | 1:00-3:00 p.m. | Professional book club for K-2 classroom teachers:<br><i>What Really Matters to Struggling Readers</i> and <i>Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children</i> |
| August 10, 2006         | 8:30-3:30 p.m. | Link to book study;<br>Framework for Balanced Literacy Instruction;<br>Organizing and Managing the Classroom; Observation survey, Running Records and Assessment Walls |
| August 31, 2006         | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Reading components of Balanced Literacy; Using Assessment Walls; Running Record coding and analysis review   |
| October 5, 2006         | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Reciprocity of Reading and Writing; Writing components of Balanced Literacy; Running Record review   |
| November 2, 2006        | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Word Work; Technology and Early Literacy   |
| January 25, 2007        | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Professional book club:<br><i>Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades</i> ;<br>Phonemic Awareness and Phonics                               |
| March 1, 2007           | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Professional book club;<br>Fluency and Comprehension   |
| April 5, 2007           | 4:40-6:30 p.m. | Professional book club;<br>Vocabulary and Oral Language  |
| April 26, 2007          | 4:30-6:30 p.m. | Organizing for the Future; evaluation  |

### Data Collection Timeframe

|                                 | June | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May |
|---------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Reflection Log                  |      |     |      |     | X   |     | X   |     |     | X   |     |
| TORP                            | X    |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |
| Teacher Survey                  | X    |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |
| Teacher Interview               | X    |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |
| Classroom Visits/Fieldnotes     |      | X   | X    | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |
| Teacher Observation             |      |     | X    |     | X   |     |     | X   |     | X   |     |
| Student's Observation Survey    |      | X   |      |     |     |     | X   |     |     | X   |     |
| Reading and Writing Observation |      |     | X    |     | X   |     |     | X   |     | X   |     |

**Balanced Literacy Professional Development  
June 19 - June 30, 2006**

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| June 19 | <p>*Intros and registration</p> <p>*<i>Struggling Reader (SR)</i>: Chapter 1, "Reading Instruction in American Schools" - jigsaw 3 parts (p. 1-11, 11-24, 24-32)</p> <p>* Balanced Literacy - defined</p> <p>*<i>Guided Reading (GR)</i>: Chapter 1 "What is it?"</p> <p>*<i>GR</i>: Chapter 3, "Guided Reading within a Balanced Literacy Program"</p>  |
| June 20 | <p>*Define literacy processing: <i>COT</i>, p.124</p> <p>*<i>GR</i>: Chapters 1-3; review intro to each chapter - GR, early learning, GR in bal lit...review, discuss, share</p> <p>*Dorn video: "Learning About Reading"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relate <i>GR</i>, Chapter 11, book intros, "Selecting and Introducing Books"</li> <li>- relate <i>GR</i>, Chapter 12, "Teaching for Strategies"</li> </ul> <p>Key points: book introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T's language, explicit, strategic</li> <li>Physical setting</li> <li>Attending to meaning</li> <li>Word work</li> <li>C's individual needs</li> </ul> |
| June 21 | <p>*<i>SR</i>: Chapter 2 - "Kids Need to Read a Lot": key points, personal connections regarding time, materials</p> <p>*Laminack: Read Alouds handout</p> <p>*<i>SR</i>: Chapter 3 - "Kids Need Books They Can Read"</p> <p>*Pressley article - "Effective Literacy Teachers"</p> <p>*Book level descriptions - handout</p> <p>*<i>GR</i>: Chapter 11 - book selection and introduction</p> <p>* Model and practice introductions</p>   |
| June 22 | <p>*<i>GR</i>: Chapters 11, "Selecting and Introducing Books"</p> <p>Chapter 12, "Teaching for Strategies"</p> <p>Chapter 13, "Learning about Letters and Words"</p> <p>Chapter 14, "Shifts Over Time"</p> <p>...review, discuss, share</p> <p>*Dorn video: "Learning About Writing"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relate to <i>GR</i>, Chapter 8 ("Dynamic Grouping"), Chapter 9 ("Creating a Text Gradient"), Chapter 10 ("Using Leveled Books"), Chapter 6 ("Using Assessment to Inform Teaching")</li> </ul> <p>*Discuss planning for guided reading by grade levels</p>  |
| June 23 | <p>*<i>SR</i>: Chapter 4, "Kids Need to Learn to Read Fluently" ...after reading, find partner, summarize, question, make personal connections</p> <p>*Share ways to develop fluency</p> <p>*Read and discuss Briggs and Forbes article</p> <p>* <i>GR</i>: p. 81, fluency rubric</p>  |



|         |  |
|---------|--|
| June 26 | <p>*GR: Chapter 3, "Guided Reading Within a Balanced Literacy Program"<br/> ...review, discuss, share</p> <p>* Dorn video: "Organizing the Classroom"<br/> - relate to GR: Chapter 5, "Managing the Classroom"<br/> - connect to teaching schedules<br/> - GR: p. 63-64, "The First Six Weeks: Getting Started With Guided Reading"</p> <p>* Work in grade level groups to discuss getting started</p>   |
| June 27 | <p>*SR: Chapter 5, "Kids Need to Develop Thoughtful Literacy";<br/> jigsaw - p. 109-120, 120-128, 128-139<br/> ...share big ideas</p> <p>* Model and practice making activating prior knowledge, making connections, summarizing, visualizing, questioning, thinking aloud</p> <p>* Miller video - "Happy Reading: Explicit Teaching, Portraits from Readers' Workshop"</p> <p>*Model read aloud to demonstrate reading strategies, practice</p>   |
| June 28 | <p>*GR:Chapter 4,"Designing and Organizing the Learning Environments"<br/> Chapter 5, "Managing the Classroom"<br/> Chapter 13, "Learning About Letters and Words"<br/> ...review, discuss, share</p> <p>*Review Dorn video: "Organizing the Classroom"</p> <p>* Plan classroom arrangement for balanced literacy instruction</p> <p>*Consider materials in classroom and possibilities for instructional use</p> <p>*Plan literacy centers</p> <p>*Dorn video: "Learning About Words"</p> <p>*Plan centers for working with letters and words</p> |
| June 29 | <p>*SR: Chapter 6, "Where to Begin: Instruction for Struggling Readers:"</p> <p>*Look at research (Pressley, Taylor, NRP)</p> <p>*Lyons, <i>Struggling Readers</i>, Overview</p>   |
| June 30 | <p>*Running Record conventions and analysis practice</p> <p>*Literacy Task Cards</p> <p>*Evaluation</p>  |

## **Appendix K - Daily 5 Checklist**




**Daily 5 Checklist**  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Read to Self**

I read these books:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Reflect on your reading today:

**Read to Partner**




My partner read this book to me:

- 1.

I read this book to my partner:

- 1.

Reflect on your reading with your partner




  

**Working on Writing**

I used:

|   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| Finger spaces-  | Yes | No |
| Capitals for names of special places, people and times- | Yes | No |
| Ending punctuation ( . ? ! )-                           | Yes | No |
| Neat handwriting-                                       | Yes | No |

Reflect on your writing:

### Working with Words

Reflect on your work with words:

e i n r t w

1. Spell

In tin win twin net wet rent tire wire

2. Read to Self

3. Sort

in

et

ent

ire

### Listen to Reading

I listened to:

1.

2.

Reflect on your listening:



## **Appendix L - Transcript of Ms. Harper's Classroom Observations**

### August 16

Asks for help with assessment  
...commented that pd was not "hit and miss" and well organized

C's folder...FROG...fully responsible, organized and great

Classroom is attractive, organized into defined work areas, gerbils, fish, desks arranged in U shape...space for whole group activities

### August 23

Gave OS

### August 31

Gave OS

### Sept 21

T scheduled with Corkins to come read Mar 5 for Dr. Seuss Day

Gave OS to 5 students

Daily 5; read to self/30 min, writing/9 min, read to someone else/8 min

Family reading plan: Read It, Love It, Share It...for more involvement and accountability

Sept 28...17 C, some cleaning desks, some writing, T dealing with 2 boys and discipline, soft music in background...12:45

"5,4,3,2,1" to seats, clear desks, put heads on desks

Jack to time out

"Get out reading books (spiral notebook), starts with R, find first empty page, make list of pictures or words of farm animals"

...T stamped good work with date, eventually all work...Jack: " I messed up"

All C to reading area at back of room (T addressed behavior, threatened loss of D5 centers and stressed responsibility)

T pulls sticks with C's names written on them, C names animals they included in their lists...horse, pig, cow, lamb, owls...Good orientation for big book

*Let's Go Visiting/Sue Williams*

,,T used lg pointer, T read whole book

...hear rhyming words?

...Can you read it to me?

...C read, T Can you predict next #?

The class next door had substitute who was showing a Halloween movie: Can we watch a movie?

What rhymes with hay?...say, play

T reread...good listening...C get to act out book (Ethan to time out)

How many animals? 6 fingers...other combinations?

This is good opportunity for HF word work

Predict: get to 7 animals?...thumbs up/thumbs down

Followup: acting...sit in rainbow state

List of characters: (uses white board)

6 puppies

one foal

four piglets - Jack: "not piglets, lollipops"...to time out

two calves

three kittens

one big dog

one boy

five ducklings

T with C totaled characters...24...17 in class...pulled sticks for characters...Jack: "i don't want to be a girl dog"..cried, turned back on class...Tim: "I don't want to be a boy"

1:40...Acting

...T read book, characters stood up when their part came, Madison wouldn't participate

10 min recess

2:00 Art

3:05 Centers but

...T read poem from big chart...Hot Diggity Hot Dogs...C followed very well

...with ML...hat to ham to hat to ham to tam to ham to hat to tap to pat?????????????

Reviewed with flash cards: words for word wall: to, it, I, of, am, me good

Centers: Listen to reading, writing (letters to penpals at nursing home), read to self, read to someone

...T went to work board and read center assignments

GR...Sara, Rob, Madison, Carl, Ned

*Good Bye Fox*, Level B/C, Harcourt Brace Instant Reader

Introduction: Overview...main idea in two or three statements...very good

...T held book and directed C to take "picture walk"

...began with picture on cover

..."read pictures"

...repeated important words in story...mud, gate, cat, rocks

...wrote and discussed "over" on white board...might ask "what do you expect to see at beginning of "over"?"

T read story to group while pointing. C put thumbs up when they heard "over"...loss opportunity for M, focused on "over"

C read to selves first in "whisper phones", put heads down when finished,, group read as whole

T asks questions:

1. Why did dog chase fox?
  - a. Madison - so fox doesn't chase animals away
  - b. Ned - dog want fox out of farm
  - c. Sarah - dog wants to keep farm
  - d. Rob - because he like to chase
  
2. Why did dog say "good-bye"?
  - a. He was leaving
  - b. The fox was his friend

Next time bring reading journals and pretend the dog is yours and write a story

Can I model GR lesson?

### **October 5**

T requested I model a guided reading lesson...

GR: Ned, Madison, Carl, Rob, and Sara

...*The Little Red Hen*, Level D (B. Barton, 1998)

...intro: heard before?...LRH making cake...who will help her?...not cat, dog, mouse...

check picture

...use book lang....locate "will" ...predict "who" with first two letters

...Madison- "w"...got it...find on more pages

...C read independently...

...Rob could not repeat patterns, gave up

...but Rob could tell plot of story...I read along with him to finish



Follow up: how did animals feel?

...Carl: mad

Ned: sad

Rob: yeah, real mad

Sara: they should have helped

C wrote in response journal about what might happen if the LRH makes another cake

T and I talked....she noticed the amount of time I spent on intro (F&P/book introductions...

...she knew about activating prior knowledge but was interested in learning about locating known words and predicting new words

...practicing book language

...T noticed C cross-checking visual information against meaning

### **October 19**

Drop in visit about grouping...looked through running records...T had been reading F&P about grouping...encouraged ongoing monitoring and running records

T said she'd take more frequent running records

### **October 24**

Hat Day

Jack: at desk but shouting out

"give me an 'l', 'i', 't', 't', 'l' 'e'...what does it spell? Little...what letter do you not hear?

...T went through Zoo Phonics' motions

...C added 'little' to "word rings" (index cards on ring with HF words, which are also on Word Wall and in student dictionaries

...C add "little" to word rings...given 2 minutes...read them all and put your heads down "reflect on how you did then put your thumbs up or down"

Tim: "You need to talk to Sara, She slows me down"

T: "talk to her not me"

T called C to rug by rows 1-4

Complimented C for good behavior with hats

Tongue Twisters (from 4-Blocks)... for review of consonants

...Susan: "they have same letter at beginning of every word"  
...T: "How do we tell which words are names?"...read fast  
...Lauren likes licking lemon lollipops...read slowly with T...read faster  
...How would you illustrate? ...lollipop, girl  
...My mom makes marvelous macaroni  
,,C paired off (T pulled sticks to get working pairs to illustrate)  
...shared with class

Jack melt down, to T: "I hate you. Leave me alone"

2:00 Recess

2:10 3 KSU inservice teachers for science...weather, seasons, temperature, thermometers, 2 worksheets

C are very needy today

But during group work with KSU students, C were very attentive which indicates behavior expectations were well established with T

Ethan had lots of background knowledge

GR: Madison, Rob, Carl, Ned, Sara

...in previous lesson with this book, C read and made lists of -ip words

Follow up with *One Little Slip*, decodable book from Harcourt-Brace

-When little Hippo took a trip,  
she began to slip.

-When Mother Hippo took a flip,  
she began to dip.

-When Father Hippo took a sip,  
-he began to tip.

-Dip, dip, dip

**Concern:** this text has no text to use M, consider scholastic books at appropriate levels...these C need to increase HF vocab in reading and writing

What is happening with Jack, Colton, and Tim?...daily GR lessons?

Consider: do all C need some of the basic PA work you're doing?

## November 2

"Gimme a G-E-T...Y-O-U...M-A-K-E"

...HF words...value of spelling words?...**rationale?**

all C to reading area...noisy..."reflect upon how you moved back to reading area...lost one minute of recess"

T put ML on wht board...for hands...one letter at a time...**hands**

...whisper the word to neighbor

...C not attentive

**Suggestion:** consider doing this in small groups

Find word within the word "hands"

...and, snd, sand (Ned), has (Alexis), sad (Eli)

"Get with reading partner"...T passed out word builder (zip lock bag with paper letters and small pocket strip)

...make "hands"

T whispered instructions to get C's attention...effective?

C did not understand task....too many letters

**T reflection: "rethink" plan**

T: pick out vowels...a, u/n

...with partner, put only "a" in pocket

**Suggestion: use ML or tiles**

T: one letter word...a

...two letter word...an..."what sound is that?" **Suggestion:** say, "add something to the end of an to make and"

...three letter word...and

...four letter word...sand..."**add something to beginning of and to make sand**"

T has C spell...**BUT it's about hearing sounds**

Recess and art

3:00...D

## November 15

Whole class with overhead projector and ML...**Consider:** does whole class need this?

...am (C chosen with sticks...chooses letter to add to beginning

...fam...all C record word in writing journals

...am

...sam

...am

...nam...T) you see a word like that on all your papers...T added e to end

**Suggestion:** teach only one concept at a time

...yam

.,,ram (Katie ran finger under to check...good)

...bam

.,,dam

...jam

...ham

...pam

...sam

...tam

T: think about "marvelous blends" - gr, bl, br, cr, pr, fl, st, sl ...on chart paper

**Suggeston:** link to known

Add blend to -am

Tim: spam

Rob: flam

T changed am to and (?)

Mary: band

Madison: tand

Eli: land

Alexis: gand

Colton: lcand...didn't understand task...T: cland

Annie: thand, spand

Ned: grand

Jack: bland

**Consider explicit language: "first part, last part"...not letter name**

**Consider integrating word work in GR and/or writing mini-lessons**

**-more relevant**

**-less demanding on fidgety ones**

Recess

Back to reading area: opposite of "stop"

-Susan, go

ML: s, a, p, l, g..."what is first letter in 'go'?"

Listen for g sound at beginning, middle, end

Use Zoo Phonics for Gordo Gorilla symbol - banana peeling...when you hear "g" sound  
...frog, hog, (C grunted guh), man, gown, gift

T made LAP with ML

...replace l or p with a g

...Riley: gap "There's a gap in my mouth"-Ethan

Sara: gal

Tim: gas

T always exhibits great energy and composure

ME: running records; Harcourt Instant Reader: Benchmark book; *The Strongest One of All*, Level H??????? two weeks ago, level D

...did overview and picture walk

...rehearsed book language

Ned: 87.5%, SC 1:16

Carl: 87.5%, SC 1: 5

Madison: 96%, SC nil

Sara: 89%, SC 1:4

Rob: not doable

Low group: Level B

Rob: 87.5%, SC nil

Corey: 100%, SC nil

Colton: 91%, SC 1:3

Tim: 100%, SC nil

Jack: 100%, SC nil

Reflection: great

...working with 2 low groups daily...T is doing it 3/week for 20 min each and 2/week for 30 min...change, showing improvement

...concern for Rob's beh, acting out against other C, parent contact but not good

**Suggestion: have him dictate story which T records and he reads back to build confidence**

Discussed language for problem solving: What do you do when you come to a tricky word?

- think about story
- check picture
- start word

Running records provide evidence for need to teach problem solving (# of Tolds)

Conversation was genuine...sincere....supported by following email.

**Email...11-15: I cannot thank you enough for your dedication to my professional development. After taking in your suggestions, I feel like even though some of these kids have a long way to go, I can get them there. It is nice to have someone offering such direct and goal oriented advise. So many times, all I hear is "how good of a teacher" I am. While appreciate such kind words, I know that I have things that I can be working on."**

Bingo....real, honest, open ...coaching high-spot

Later email....asked for source of handwriting language....Shaping Literate Minds(Dorn and Sofos)...wanted to share with other first grade teachers at AA...helped her get the book

\*\*\*\*\*

Concern.....NO safety net for lowest kids  
 ....aids working with most at-risk....is it aligned with classroom instruction?

Can T work with C and curriculum with divided attention?....does curr drive instruction or do C?

**Nov 30**

Whole class at desks practicing letter formation with language (Dorn and Sofos)

...T used overhead...l i t c a o

...C traced letters on practice sheet

**Consider: using white boards, unlined paper and markers...it's about the form not the size, lines, etc**

|     |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| l   | l | i | i | i | t | t | lit |
| c   | c | c | c | c | c | c | c   |
| a   | a | a | a | a | a | a | a   |
| o   | o | o | o | o | o | o | o   |
| cot |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |
| cat |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |

C traced while T passed out stickers But she did say "run your finger under it and read it"

ON "rainbow" carpet  
...T passed out dry erase board  
...sit knee to knee, T modeled with Rob  
...while Katie passed out markers, she said "You get what you get and you don't throw a  
fit"  
...many "thank you's", especially from Jack  
...C shared work with partners  
...a, ap, slap, map, flap, an, plan, plant

**Consider: requesting U-shaped table for GR**

**Concern: C are not getting daily GR lessons...too much whole group...not to C but to T's comfort zone...**

**How do I communicate this to her?**

**December 7**

OS to Colton and to Carl

Conversation: T is looking more at each C, using running records to regroup GR  
...we discussed what processing means, prompts, how to teach for strategies  
GOOD

**Consider...going back to balanced literacy...rdg and wtg  
...alouds, shared, inst, independent**

**Key point in research.....change takes time.....3-5 years**

**Vygotsky...thought precedes change....study**

**December 13**

Whole group- from Harcourt anthology ...C at desks  
...Daniel's Mystery Egg by Alma Flor Ada

Name characters: Daniel, Meg, Alex, Chick

T: put finger on egg, mystery, Daniel (from title)

C not attentive

T: put your heads down

T:1-2-3, class read and pointed to text

Tim; not looking, up for a drink'

Colton and Corey...drinking from water bottles

Jack...head on desk

Rob" I don't know words"

**This would be good for Reader's Theater, good opportunities for word work...for discussing and practicing reading punctuation**

\*\*\*\*\*

Whole group on rug

Review chart: Guess the covered word?"...what makes sense? Look at beginning of word

Used Let's go Visiting by Sue Williams (big book)

(T put sticky note over word)

One brown \_\_\_\_\_ is ready to play (high picture support)

Katie: foal ("fowl")

Annie: horse

Susan: baby

T moved sticky note one letter at a time to show beginning letters

Two red \_\_\_\_\_ are ready to play

Riley: cows

Carl: calves

Susan: babies

Ned: cattle

Three black \_\_\_\_\_ are ready to play

Mary: kittens

Eli: cats

?: kitties

Four pink \_\_\_\_\_ are ready to play.

Piglets



Pigs  
Piggies

T: you can use this when you're reading, check picture  
Ask: What else do you ask?...What's going on?

**Excellent lesson:**

**Use explicit language..."what letter/2 letters do you expect to see at the beginning of xyz?"**

**....as you're modeling like this, keep providing the rationale to the C**

\*\*\*\*\*

on overhead T writes i f t g s

- if- ift - sift - gift
- it if
- fit fif
- sit sif Eli: " it could be fifthe except there's no th at the end"

**Eli's comment is evidence that this should be happening in GR groups...different levels of knowing and applying**

**This is what i think: Lit coach needs adm backing and understanding...needs some authority to say it must look this way**

**January 11**

Gave part of OS to Jordan (new student)

Whole gp...revising, " part of writing process"

-T ask C to model finding a partner (look directly into someone's eyes and nod yes or no)

T's story:

Once there were three gerbils named RoCKY, YO-yo and Coco.

They lived in a cage in classroom.

at night, they came out of their cage and ran around the classroom.

One night RoCKY found some food in desk in he ate it all.

he was so sick

His friends Coco and Yo-yo helped him back to the cage.

T read sample of her story

-asked if C noticed spelling or letters or punctuation that she needed to go back and look

at

Susa - threeE...capital

T-"don't erase. I want to see your thinking" **Great!**

**(it was interesting that the C couldn't verbalize errors at this point but needed to point it out)...developmental?**

Colton - RoCKY - there's another capital

Katie - there's another RoCKY

Susan - "into cage" does not make sense **"sound right"**

Tim - needs the

T modeled the use of carat

Activity:

Find your partner with your eyes

Read story to partner

Keep your eyes on the paper while he's reading

After reading, "compliment, to help with revisions

Alexis" in friendly way point out mistakes"

Jack "don't yell"

Without much fuss, C found partners and started reading. **Evidence of modeling, practice, expectation**

**Conferences? Post "writing process" in room...look at Scaffolding Appendix C 78 and 84**

T ask C to reflect on how the work with partners went....**teaching personal responsibility**

**While C were at art:**

**-discussed writing process from Scaffolding**

**-Guest reader...Cummins (gone), Gov no but maybe Lt gov...now in email, Ron**

**Prince**

**\_AT trip**

**-prompting language...going well, explicit**

GR/D5...Carl buddied with Jordan to help him build "stamina" in read to self...they did great job

GR: Billy, Eli, Susan, Katir, Mary, Alexis

T wrapped scarf around neck to indicate she is not to be disturbed

Review genre - non-fiction

-How do you know?...Katie: i've seen bats; Susan: these are real, the book is the truth:

Billy- real pictures

T: we're going to practice read to self

-what do you do with tricky word?

-Eli: sound it out

-Katie: sound it out and check pictures

T: check the picture...what 3 questions do you ask yourself with a tricky word?

-Ben: LR? SR? MS?

C used whisper phones (PVC pipes glued together in C shape...C read in to phones in whisper soft voices)...very engaged

T listen to each C read BUT Eli didn't want to keep rereading

So

**Consider: in another journal**

**-having C write what story makes them think of**

- **what he noticed about the story**

- **-questions about the story**

- **new, unfamiliar words**

- **nonfiction...3 facts**

- **3 questions**

**This provides evidence for what you need to teach next, what went well, what needs revision**

The teaching after reading was great...imitate....from observing C's reading

...Susan - imitate

...Billy - horseshoe...I suggested looking for something you know in an unfamiliar word

**Ms. Harper..allowed C to problem solve...provided adjustable scaffolding**

### **January 18**

T asked me to model read aloud...*Sod Houses on the Great Plains*...used ELMO...C at desks

Overview...how people live in KS a long time ago...no trees, not bricks...used what they had...sod...

...talked through books...C engaged, offered comments about pictures...read book..."visits from wild life"...big hit

T acknowledge use of introduction to engage students and set purpose for reading...shift in understanding?

### **January 24**

Whole group: *Little White Dog*, Harcourt, big book

- T covers word, ask C to guess word, shows one letter at a time
- Little green bug on the lawn, leaves so green. Where have you \_\_\_\_? (gone)
- **This is not about guessing, it's about orchestrating strategies, M/V and S**
- **It's about patterns**
- Colton...it's a counting book, went up and down...**T Validated his discovery**
- Carl...it's a circle story

Word building...in wtg journal

Letters: h o s t a r k p c l f...T pointed to letters and C identified them

- on overhead T made "lot"...**ask C to construct**
- T: make "cot"
- Ethan: "kot"/SC with T prompt..."**read a C runs his finger under word**"
- -T: "-ost" word; Ben: cost
- T: change one letter...**be more explicit**
- T: colt...Macy (**it's a different principle**)
- Colt
- Rot
- Frost...too much

Then moved to "r controlled vowels"...spelling words...art, part, park star

C put hands on heads except when writing

**This may have more impact if done in GR groups working at C's instructional levels**

### Writing Workshop

Whole group

Prethink: list of ideas, story map, web  
Class had made list of possible characters  
Prewriting worksheet: Character questions:...modeled  
For example: What do people want to learn about Frog and Toad?  
Jack: What do they eat?  
**T used "audience"...good**  
Ned: Where do they live?  
Corey: What do they do together?  
Jack: Do they hop? How?  
Tim: Are they friends?

C chose character from list with picture and took worksheet to desks.  
(worksheet had number 1-5 for questions)  
...most C worked with someone sitting near them and did a pretty good job

GR...Susan, Eli, Alexis, Mary, Billy  
T: in your reading journals, find the next empty page  
-last week we read 2 books, Bats and Flies...made Venn diagram...how are they alike?  
-today we'll read about something else that flies...what could that be? Woodpecker, horse,  
airplane

*Tell Me Why Planes Have Wings*, by Shelly Wells, Level L, Whiz Kids publishing  
T: discusses table of contents, read as a group  
T: called attention to print layout...small print had more information...**excellent**  
T: group read pages 2-3 aloud together...**WHY?**

T: MS? C must ask self...does it MS?

**T discusses reading non-fiction and how readers ask questions while reading**

Susan made a text to world connection, T validated her

C asked to read pages 1-13 at seats and in reading journal, write question for each chapter...homework...warned not to copy from book

Word work: y e s t l l  
T: find spelling word that starts with "y"  
...sound of y...yuh  
...middle of yes?...eh  
...end of yes?...ssss

Change yes to yell...**use more explicit language**  
Yet, tell, shell

**Good to do this in GR group, but does this group need this?**

\*\*\*\*\*

**At lg group pd following this observation, Erin shared that she could tell by the look in the above groups' eyes, they didn't need this type of word work...that they are beyond it...YES!**

### **February 7**

Class is taking books to publishing about super heroes

T models how to work from rough draft; 5 questions for super hero

C went to desk and work, mostly independently...did not use spelling resources in room

**I modeled shared reading with book to accompany the pioneer unit:  
Sod Houses on the Great Plains by Glen Rounds, 1995, Holiday House Publishing  
...used Elmo BUT should have had C on rug  
...good disussion,  
...C were engaged and made connecitons**

**during D5: Riley and Sara: read to partner  
"i like the way you read. You read fast"  
"thank you"  
"i like the way you read. It sounded fluent."...WOW**

### **February 21**

1:00

"Read aloud" ...Eric Carle's *From Head to Toe*  
...repetition...meaning?...Billy/information?...Eli/pictures of real things...Ned/picture book...T responded positively to each C

T..."i'll repeat myself as i read along"

Susan..."book copies from another author and illustrator"  
Eli..."say the same thing lots of the tiime"

NO intro

T points wile reading/sticky note over word...C guess from M  
...C not attentive (**tired of this routine?**)  
..."1-2-3" C read while T points

**This is not about guessing but using sources of information** but T did ask if the guesses made sense and this does require cross-checking

**Is this appropriate for all of C?**

"I am a \_\_\_\_ (seal) and I \_\_\_\_\_ (clap) my hands"

Wtg Workshop

Yesterday...made list of presidents and word that describe them, then a list of words that rhyme with describing words

Benjamin Harrison, Zachary Taylor, Teddy Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, Geo Bush, Geo Washington

Brave/save fair/care/share good/could job/know nice/advice  
careful/respectful

T's model: B Harrison was good and turned on the lightbulb he could

2:00

Recess

2:15

Daily 5

**GR:** Jack, Carl, Sara with writing journal

.....*Watch Me Plant a Garden*, Scholastic Welcome Books, Level F

**ML:** them, myself, use, plant grow...make, mix, write, pass on to next C

**Orientation:** T drew attention to cover  
"garden"...T talked "r controlled vowel"

**PW...**page by page

T did use book language AND C connected with plant in classroom

T lang: check pic, LR?, SR?, MS?

When done reading...list steps to planting a garden in writing journals

Jack: I/in...SC; reread for S and V; does not realize that problem solving is his responsibility, just wants T to tell him word

Sara: fairly independent

**In intro, predict high utility words which are generative: ie: near, also**

**It's okay to just tell the C the word...i.e.; sure**

**Good strategy talk but T**

### **March 1**

Gave OS to two students

### **March 28**

1:00...Harcourt anthology, *Lilly's Busy Day*, Verne

T:read aloud while C followed along in books shared with partner..."for fluent reading"  
gave purpose

...T's reading had insertions, omissions, substitutions

...referred to pic (sand box)

...using comp questions from anthology "think about it"

\*who had harder had?

\*have you spent time with crabby person?...elicit prior experience

\*what did you learn about Lilly and Katie?...T: fact? - class focus for comp ...**good to guide to teaching focus and to acknowledge Susana's inference (they both liked parks)**

1:15 Wtg workshop...T shared poem she'd written:

I like to read a good book

Especially those that teach me how to cook.

Just open it up and take a look.

I like to read lots of books

T discussed rhyming words...C connected to Mother Goose, "Jack and Jill"

After being reminded not to shout out...Jack turned to me and said, "she's really getting under my skin"

Magnetic letter on white board...cat to hat to fat to rat...C moved letters to make new words that rhymed

C asked to write rhyming poem in journals

Colton:



My drt bike is so fast.  
I am never lasst.  
My seet is blue.  
I don not kunw/no if it will do.

Alexis:  
I like my dog.  
She looks like a hog  
She chaes frogs.  
She drinks egg nog.  
She sits on logs  
My dog likes to jog.  
I love my dog

Julie wrote:  
I have a car from mars.  
It's shapte like a marshmallow and  
It is brite and yellow.

1:45 Recess

2:10...snails/Katie..."fresh from the soil on the playground" ...authentic conversation,  
Katie got notes she's gotten off internet and read to class...**authentic teachable moment**  
...discussion of parasites, T "in your body"; Ethan "not in your privates"

### **Good example of detour for teaching**

2:20...compliment for Corey for working independently  
T shared his letter with class, using his voice

Passed out D5 checklist

### **GR**

2 groups to work on concept of fact  
*Gingerbread Man*, Level I and *Book About Skeleton*, Level M (Katie, Susan, Mary,  
Alexis, Eli, Billy AND Ned, Annie, Riley, Madison)

Review definition of fact:  
Billy - give information  
Madison - true  
Others- you can learn, in books, non-fiction, from pictures, from reading

KSU aid with Gingerbread group

Whole group whisper read while C attends to each child individually  
-use sticky notes to copy fact and stick on page

T chose team leader for each group - Annie and Billy: Team leader had two questions for each team member:

1. were there any tricky words?
2. tell me a fact you found

Katie: tricky work/vertebrae

T: what did you try?

Katie: sound it out and **used words around it...great example of your teaching!**

T scaffolded children with difficulty

2:55 ...to Rainbow Rug

Discussed how D5 went...thumbs up/down

Letter sound- long e

Tim - ee

Billy- y

Eli - ie

Katie - ea

Riley - with ML, made **up** with letters from T...T gave words

Susan - pup

Ned - puppy

Colton - puppies

Madison - guppies

Annie - guppys for guppy

Corey - happy

Alexis - bunnies

**If all C had white boards and markers they could be participating and self-monitoring**

3:10 D5

**GR...**Corey, Colton, Tim

T gave ML to build most, carry, about

*City Life and Country Life*, level E, Scholastic

(Colton had bloody tooth, towel to mess with, not to worry)

T: what do you see in country?

CS: gardner snakes  
Th: tall grass

T: what do you see in city?  
CS: at night lots of cars  
Th: traffic jam  
CB: like "Rampage" (video game)...cable cars and building  
SC: tons of pigeon

### **Excellent to call up prior KN**

Intro: boy and girl...live different lives in different places; gave names of characters, Maria and Carlos...Colton: like Carlos O'Kellys  
....**planted main idea**

**pw: T: what do you see at the end of 'building'? CS-"ing"**

Read some sentences together  
-focus on initial consonants

**consider making this shorter, invest time in actual reading with your scaffolding**

### **April 5**

1:00pm....handwriting practice "xyz"  
-T modeled x,y,z, **using language**...on board, in air with C "slant down, slant across" ...in air, on knee, on carpet, on desk, on worksheet  
-Coolton suggested "slant down, slant up"  
-T told him letters start at top...**YES**

"Be a moose, hands on your head so i'll know you're finished"

On board:

Peter Cottontail baked 6 cookies in one day. The next day, he baked more. When he was all done, he had 9 cookies. How many cookies did he bake the second day?

1:15...to rug for Poetry Study (rhyming)  
-T read poems written by former first graders "What is a rhyming poem?", C could not answer  
-T read Shel Silverstein..."rhyming?" (wheat/beat, talk/chalk)

**Consider using Jack Prelusky or Mother Goose for very obvious rhymes**

T's poem:

I like to read a good book.

Especially those that teach me how to cook.

Just open it up and take a look

I like to read lots of books even those

About a pirate named Captain Hook

I can read a book written by my cool friend Corey

I can read about Nemo and Marlin's friend Dory

T retold how C had shared revision ideas for poems

T modeled how it works with team, most C found editing point

Ned gave suggestion for final line

**C worked in teams but it was clear that only a few understood task of creating final line**

Indoor Recess...4 corners

While C were in art:

T shared her concern for Rob's low achievement

Guest reader program (parent, other T, principal)

Book Day, in class C share good book which he recommends to class

T shared Dolch work for lowest GR group...in groups of 20, C practice reading words in isolation from list of 20, at home and at school

-she had created a word search for words.

**-I suggested that was confusing for C who are not looking at words properly left to right, in serial order...they need to construct words through varied means**

GR/D5

*All Around Our Country*, Level E, Scholastic

-Connected to text, self, world

-Overview...**good, C made connections** (Grand canyon-Tim, Wheatfields-Colton, canyon-Rob)

**-introduction needs to go through entire book with focus on what C needs to read successfully the first time**

-ask C to locate known words for "islands of certainty

**April 23**

Class taking turns cranking ice cream maker...for good behavior

T modeled using worksheet how to write recipe for sundaes

...

I want to put my ice cream in a \_\_\_\_\_

(circle one)

Waffle bowl                  cup

I want scoops of \_\_\_\_\_ ice cream.

(choose 2)

chocolate                  vanilla                  strawberry

I want to add these three toppings.

(choose 3)

gummy bears                  yougart cranberries                  sprinkles  
bananas                  strawberries                  chocolate syrup

I want to top it off with \_\_\_\_\_

(choose one)

chocolate whipped cream                  regular whipped cream                  nothing

C went to desk to write recipes

...T stressed that spelling must be correct

...C were not using words from worksheet, even top students

**This is first time i've heard her insist on correct spelling...C did not seem aware of resources available (worksheet)**

**...Rob and Colton really struggled, high school helper worked with Ryan, i helped Cooper**

**I gave OS to some**

**After students left, T showed me how she'd arranged the ML, letter tiles for C to access during word work without disturbing her....and writing paper...she spoke of it in terms of helping them to be independent....GOOD**