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A CASE STUDY OF SECOND-GRADE TEACHERS' COMPREHENSION
INSTRUCTION

by

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the graduate faculty of The University of Alabama at Birmingham
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

2012

A CASE STUDY OF SECOND-GRADE TEACHERS' COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

REBECCA BURDETTE MCKAY

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The dilemma of reconciling developmentally appropriate, constructivist reading instruction with mandated high-stakes tests was confronted by four second-grade teachers through their selection of two active professional development methods. To continue and deepen their use of an interactive model of reading focused on comprehension, the teachers worked as a professional community to renegotiate and reconstruct their professional knowledge and adapt their pedagogy to the school context. The goal of this research was to investigate how the teachers described their comprehension instruction as well as how they developed and reflected upon it. The qualitative research design, selected to investigate the research goals, was well suited to capture the teachers' descriptions of their comprehension instruction and their self-initiated active professional development using lesson link, a process similar to Japanese lesson study, and adult book clubs.

Four themes and numerous subthemes emerged. The data affirmed that the teachers as a group had a passion for teaching, worked as a professional community, were committed to comprehension strategy instruction, and built adaptive scholarship through the interaction of adult book clubs with lesson link. The findings indicated that the teachers developed the following: adaptive scholarship that enabled the groups' advocacy of comprehension strategy instruction; a deeper understanding of pedagogy and comprehension, particularly declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge about

comprehension strategies; and culturally relevant pedagogy. After considering the findings, implications and recommendations were identified. Further targeted research to investigate active professional development models, like those of the second-grade teachers, would add to a scant body of research on professional development to support comprehension instruction. More case study research is needed to determine how professional development models support teachers' instruction of comprehension, particularly in diverse school settings.

DEDICATION

First, to my family, then to my colleagues and the children, all enrich my life daily.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“I am a success today because I had a friend who believed in me and I didn't have the heart to let him down...”

Abraham Lincoln

This quotation expresses the story of my graduate work at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. Many people believed in me and I did not have the heart to let them down. My first friends in the Early Childhood Education Department included Dr. Maryann Manning who believed that I could and should pursue and finish this degree. Dr. Jerry Aldridge faithfully supported me, emotionally and intellectually, and Dr. Lynn Kirkland introduced me to critical literacy and gave a name and a deep understanding of my life long passion, a fair opportunity for all children. Their commitment to me has never changed.

In the middle of my study, my life took a change as I joined a literacy initiative that required daily travel and I struggled to continue my graduate work. I was fortunate enough to find new friends and they were Dr. Lois Christensen, Dr. Kathleen Martin, and Dr. Deborah Strevy. My heart is full when I think of the trust they have in me since I was not fortunate enough to study with them in formal coursework. Dr. Christensen has been a guide for me as I renegotiated my path to finish my research. She has been faithful with suggestions that moved me forward. Dr. Martin has been unwavering in reading drafts and offering suggestions that made my writing clearer. As Dr. Strevy agreed to serve on my committee, I discovered that we share a passion for excellent literacy instruction for all children.

I cannot say enough about the teachers who trusted me to tell their story and Dr. Janet Cumbee who led our school to a place of which I had only dreamed. Her support of my work has been inspirational. She believed in me when I doubted I could do this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Research Problem	14
Purpose of the Study	22
Significance of the Study	23
Research Questions	24
Limitations	24
Assumptions.....	25
Definition of Terms.....	25
Organization of the Study	30
CHAPTER	
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	32
Child Development	34
School Reform	42
Culture and Diversity	76
Critical Literacy	94
Teacher Expertise.....	95
The Interactive Model of Reading	103
Comprehension Strategy Work.....	107
Summary of the Review.....	142

CHAPTER

3 METHOD 147

- Qualitative Inquiry and the Research Approach 147
- Case Study Method in Context 150
- Participants..... 154
 - Description of Participants..... 155
- Data Set..... 157
 - Data Analysis 160
- Transcription 163
- Predicted Pattern 165
- Test of Theoretical Propositions and Rival Explanations 168
- Reliability and Validity..... 168
- Philosophical Assumptions and Theoretical Framework 172
- Role of the Researcher 176
- Summary..... 179

CHAPTER

4 FINDINGS..... 182

- Introduction..... 182
- Themes..... 183
- Teacher Interviews..... 184
 - Passion for Teaching..... 184
 - Professional Community..... 190
 - Commitment to Strategy Instruction..... 193
 - Adaptive Scholarship 197
 - Summary of Teacher Interviews..... 202
- The Research Frame 202
 - Predominate Role..... 202
 - Motivation..... 212
 - Whole Process Enthusiasts and Big Picture Advocates..... 212
 - Reteach..... 218
 - Personalizers and Connectors. 218
 - Relationship to Students 223
 - Listeners and Conference Focused. 223
 - Classroom Qualities 231
 - Creators of Learning Environments and Users of Pragmatics..... 232
 - Lesson Characteristics. 244
 - Creative Differentiators 244
 - Summary of the Research Frame..... 251
- Review of Themes and Subthemes..... 252

Findings	253
Review of Theoretical Propositions and Rival Explanations.	253
Theoretical Proposition One and the Rival Explanation.....	254
Theoretical Proposition Two and the Rival Explanation.....	255
Theoretical Proposition Three and the Rival Explanation.....	256
Summary of the Findings.....	260
CHAPTER	
5 DISCUSSION	262
Overview of the Study	262
Data Analysis	264
Findings	265
Discussion of the Themes and Findings	266
Passion for Teaching.....	266
Professional Learning Community	268
Commitment to Strategy Instruction.....	270
Adaptive Scholarship	272
Implications.....	274
Recommendations for Future Research	276
Conclusion	278
REFERENCES	282
APPENDIX	
A INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS	329
B IRB PROTOCOL	331
C TEACHER VIGNETTES	333

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table</i>	<i>Page</i>
1 Themes and Subthemes of Case Study	183
2 Phases of Comprehension Strategy Instruction	246

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure</i>	<i>Page</i>
1 Lesson link cycle for second-grade study	207

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Literacy can be taught in a way that either empowers or disempowers.

(Au, 2011, p. 14)

Understanding the development of children has historically offered a pathway for making a difference in teaching children at every stage and age of development from all cultures and ethnic backgrounds (Spencer, 2008a; Bergin & Bergin, 2011; Berk, 2011). Child development has supported teachers improving their daily instruction as well as in their interactions with children. Bergin and Bergin (2011) offered this advice to teachers desiring to become outstanding: “learn the science of child development and know how to apply it in the classroom” (p. xxii).

Child development provided a theoretical orientation for this research study. Building on Bronfenbrenner’s work, Margaret Beale Spencer named context and perception as critical elements in human development (Spencer, 2008 a). Her work on inter-subjectivity or how humans perceive and act upon their context enriched this study and organized my literature review by building an awareness of the bioecological systems surrounding children, teachers, and schools.

The bioecological model of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) demonstrated how biology and environment intersected and comingled to support human development. The model itself, often represented with circles placed in a concentric manner, had the child in the center. Each circle represented a system or the ecology surrounding the child as a

biological being influenced by interactions within the systems. The child was represented as powerful with the ability to influence the surrounding systems. Social, political, economic as well as biological influences created the context for children as they grew. The model was represented as a nest of systems with each system as an ecological level. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) stated that the systems changed with interaction of the child's traits with the systems.

The systems in closest proximity to the child were the microsystem and the mesosystem. The child was encircled by the microsystem first with all influences within this system physically connected to the child (Berk, 2011). The mesosystem rested next within the concentric circles of influence. Described as a system comprised of two or more microsystems, a mesosystem might be built from two microsystems of home and school. The exosystem represented in a third circle of influence referred to links between two settings. Of the two systems, one setting was not directly touching the child yet it influenced the child indirectly.

The macrosystem referred to culture and contained patterns of the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. Bergin and Bergin (2011) listed public policy as a macrosystem. Finally, the chronosystem qualified the child's development over time. A key component of the bioecological model rested in the fact that the child and the environment influenced all the systems (Bergin & Bergin, 2011).

I organized my study using this model as the guiding feature of my review of literature and started the review by framing Chapter II in the bioecological systems model described above. Building this strong theoretical orientation for the research, I then reviewed the literature using a funnel approach.

First, I framed the literature within child development theory of ecological systems. I proceeded to review the literature with the broad influences of public policy located at the greatest distance from the child's reading development and funneled down to the way children are taught comprehension strategies and to teacher development for strategy instruction, thus narrowing to the circle of greatest contact with the child. The impact of teachers on student achievement has been described as noteworthy and specifically, "...the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher" (Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997, p. 63).

Swanson and Barlage (2006) listed two organizations, the U. S. Congress and the U. S. Department of Education as having the most influence on education and, therefore, children. These organizations resided in the macrosystem of school children and the groups surrounded and influenced decisions about reading instruction. These two influences will be reviewed further in Chapter II.

From the macrosystem of public policy impacting children and teachers, Pressley (2006) lamented the influence of the *National Reading Panel Report* and the way the panel presented reading comprehension strategy instruction. He stated that the transactional strategies instruction research was ignored for many years. Unfortunately, some in 2000 paid little attention to the research progress, for example, the individuals responsible for the main comprehension section of the National Reading Panel Report (NICHD, 2000). The panel basically generated a long list of comprehension strategies that they believed enjoyed experimental support (Pressley, 2006, p. 17).

Others supported public policy and the National Reading Panel Report. Timothy Shanahan, a member of the panel, explained that the report was useful because teachers

did not have easy access to the research, and teachers could be presented the research through someone who had limited awareness and understanding of the body of research on a particular topic. Shanahan iterated that the report was intended to present the information to schools so that they had a dependable source (Shanahan, 2006).

Another example of a macrosystem influence filling the public policy arena during the time period of this research was the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. This law impacted the schooling of America's children to a great and sometimes controversial extent. The influences of NCLB on children and the development of reading comprehension was a driving force of school reform saturating education. I reviewed studies of school reform with professional development and literacy at their core. I considered this school reform piece as a macrosystem because of the culture it created in public schools.

A second component of the research review, school reform, followed the literature review's framing within ecological systems theory. School reform was prevalent during the time period of this study and was an important part of the macrosystem of American school children. There were many initiatives operating in schools including the *Cornerstone Literacy Initiative* and the *Alabama Reading Initiative* (ARI).

Key findings in the review on school reform using professional development as the driving force identified critical elements. Teacher development in reading instruction was the critical element. Other elements included change in school organization toward collaborative communities, strong shared leadership, use of data, whole school involvement, focus on individual teacher change, curriculum coherence, and balanced

reading instruction. Motivation and provision for complex thinking in the curriculum were other elements (Timperley & Parr, 2007; Taylor, 2005; Taylor, Raphael & Au, 2011; Taylor, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005; Fisher & Frey, 2007; McNaughton, MacDonald., Amituanai-Tolosa, Lai, MacDonald, & Farry, 2006; Lipson, Mosenthal, Mekkelson, & Russ, 2004).

In a third section of the literature review, culture and diversity of children were considered. Culture and diversity were part of the school reform research as many reform efforts targeted closing gaps in achievement for underserved children from diverse populations (Taylor *et al.*, 2011; Economic Policy Institute, 2010). Researchers stated the need for awareness of culture and diversity coupled with high standards for all children regardless of race or ethnicity (Ball, 2009; Wiley, 2005; Cohen, 2009; Morrell, 2011).

Cohen (2009) defined culture as values, beliefs, institutions, and behaviors that developed in patterns that were embraced and shared by groups of people. The macrosystem, or outer circle of influence on the child, driven by cultural beliefs, values, and laws, created a system of significant impact on children even though Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) considered culture as a distal system (Bergin & Bergin, 2011; Berk, 2011).

Fairbanks, Cooper, Masterson, and Webb (2009) conducted a salient review of culturally relevant pedagogy and reading comprehension. The review opened by stating that culture and reading comprehension were closely linked and comingled. They outlined what must be done to make certain that diverse readers learn to read effectively

and critically. The review findings included, molding school to the child, believing in diverse students' critical thinking ability, and utilizing student culture as curriculum.

Classroom interactions that allowed socially constructed understanding such as student led discussions fed by students' lived experiences were important for successful comprehension. Conversations were significant because readers used their own language and culture to bear on comprehension of texts (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009; Raphael & McMahon, 1994; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001; Reninger & Wilkinson 2010; Soter, Wilkinson, Murphy, Rudge, Reninger, & Edwards, 2008; Wilkerson, 2010; Wilkerson & Son, 2010). Fairbanks *et al.* (2009) declared that more reading comprehension research should be conducted to provide a fresh look at the role culture plays. More research conducted in schools to show how culturally responsive instruction impacted students' comprehension would strengthen existing qualitative research findings. In the summary of the review the authors stated the following: "...how individuals come to their comprehension of texts is inextricably linked with their social and cultural identities" (p. 601).

Background knowledge, considered as critical for comprehension, also allowed students' cultures to support them during reading events. The role of culturally relevant reading instruction relied on teaching readers to use and consciously exploit their funds of knowledge as tools for comprehension (Moll, 1998). Background knowledge and schema theory supported the significance of culture and social identity (Anderson, 1977; Rummelhart, 1980; Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

Paris and Ball (2009), declared the 1990's and the period of Moll's seminal studies as the "golden age of resource pedagogies" (p. 380). The focus of this research

era was equity and access for non-dominant cultures with a move away from viewing these cultures as deficit. This era of research was based upon the premise that what students brought to school was a resource to be valued and nurtured.

Researchers named the first tenet, bringing students' cultures into schools. Ladson-Billings offered three related practices for culturally relevant pedagogy. They included focus on students' academic achievement, focus on developing students' cultural competence, and focus on creating a climate where students were change agents who could impact the social order (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Ladson-Billings (2001) coined the term "culturally relevant pedagogy" during this era. Early research focused heavily on achievement that did not short change students' culture, on bridging home and school for achievement support and on teachers developing connections in instructional planning (Tharp, 1997a; 1997b, 1998, 1982; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Au, 1998; Moll, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Lee, 1993, 1995).

Critical literacy research was a fourth section in the literature review. The critical literacy movement was built upon seminal studies and created affirmation of early resource pedagogy research, particularly the funds of knowledge work by Luis Moll (1998). Multiple literacies instruction, appropriate texts including web-based and digital texts, and reflection with literature response grew from this early golden era (Galda & Beach, 2001; Luke & Dooley, 2011; Tatum, 2011; Behrman, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2010; Delpit, 2010). According to Paris and Ball (2009), schooling moved forward when the research and pedagogy aligned.

In a fifth section of Chapter II, research on teachers and their expertise was reviewed. Moving in closer proximity to the child, a microsystem of great influence

included teachers and their expertise (Bergin & Bergin, 2011). A body of research on exemplary teachers spanned many years and received ongoing attention (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001c). Dedicated studies to discover teacher characteristics necessary for using research-based reading instruction related to comprehension and exemplary teacher qualities were found in the literature (Block & Mangieri, 2009; Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2002a; Block, Oaker, Hurt, 2002b; Block, Schaller, Joy, & Gaine, 2002c). However, the research on teachers of comprehension strategies and comprehension was sparse (Sailors, 2009).

Exemplary literacy teachers first viewed children's experiences and backgrounds as a resource while guiding their readers to influence and question the world and the school. These same teachers possessed an attitude of pushing beyond the limits of possibilities to make certain all students received instruction that moved them to the highest levels of thinking (Paris & Ball, 2009; Delpit, 1995; Duffy, 1997; Pressley & El Dinary, 1997; Almasi, 2003; Au, 1998; Au, 2005; Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Others wrote about specific content to be utilized in reading classrooms: motivation; vocabulary, active comprehension; background knowledge; and active reading while carefully orchestrating instruction to include surface structure skills (Ruddell, 1997; International Reading Association, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley, El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, and Brown, 1992a). Motivation and the use of background knowledge were ignored in the reading research guiding federal legislation and the Reading First Initiative

developed from the National Reading Panel report (Pressley, 2006). Researchers noted these omissions as problematic (Goodman, 1998; Pearson, 2000).

Reasearchers provided a descriptive database on teacher expertise (Block *et al*, 2002b). Listed as the most powerful classroom force, even beyond materials, were exemplary teachers. The skills these exemplary teachers exhibited included being flexible, thoughtful, collaborative, and adaptive (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, & Zelchner, 2005; Hatana & Oura, 2003; Block & Mangieri, 2009; Hiebert, Gallimore, Garnier, Givvin, Hollingsworth, Jacobs, Chiu, Wearne, Smith, Kersting, Mariaster, Tseng, Etterbeek, Manaster, Gonzales, & Stigler, 2003; Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002; Hiebert, Gallimore, Stigler, 2002; Lewis, 2003; McNaughton & Lai, 2010).

A sixth section of the literature review examined reading theory and the interactive model of reading. Models of reading and theory reviewed for my study were part of the child's microsystem. The reader, the text, and the context were components of the *Cornerstone's* theoretical model of literacy and were compatible with Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (2006) child development theory since the child was in control of his/her reading. The interactive model of reading utilized skill and strategy instruction; both were named as critical for developing successful readers (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008). *The Cornerstone Framework*, written by Ellin Oliver Keene, was created with the tenets of an interactive model of reading. Reading researchers took note of Keene's work and suggested formal study of the model (Pressley, 2002).

Curriculum developed from the interactive model of reading was written to consider the child as a reader first. The reading curriculum based on an interaction of

cueing systems created multiple ways for children to read and understand at the word, sentence, and whole text level. Children received instruction that included a multiple cueing system approach to literacy; the child controlled the choice of system and its use (Rummelhart, 2004).

In the seventh section of the literature review, comprehension research was surveyed. Paris, Lipson, and Wixson (1983) examined the process of becoming a strategic reader to develop self-direction. The researchers suggested three kinds of knowledge about strategies were essential: declarative, procedural, and conditional. Identifying these important characteristics of strategic reading, the researchers found that students' independent strategy use was intentional and perceptive. Much depended on the learner's attributions in regard to strategy work. Readers who were strategic had purposeful actions and intentionality. Paris *et al.* (1983) defined strategies as "skills under consideration" (p. 295).

The knowledge and skills of beginning readers are the cornerstones of more sophisticated comprehension skills. These researchers named monitoring for meaning or the ability to know when reading goes wrong and fix it as the seminal component of proficient reading. (Paris *et al.*, 1983, p. 300)

Comprehension strategy work progressed through four waves of research.

Starting in the 1970's and early 1980's, research on strategy instruction focused on single strategy instruction and the students' benefit from this single strategy teaching (Pressley, 1998a; Wilkinson & Son, 2010). The most powerful result of research in this first wave of studies was the success in teaching the strategies. Many of the early studies were conducted with special student populations, particularly struggling readers and English language learners (Pearson & Dole, 1987; Pearson & Fielding, 1991). Strategy use was validated for before, during, and after reading (Pressley, 1998b). The first wave research

studies also looked at activating background knowledge, main idea, mental images, story grammar and structure, questioning, and summarizing (Pressley, 1998b; Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992).

The second wave of research was based upon the use of multiple strategies for effective comprehension (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Duffy & Roehler, 1987). Direct strategy instruction research conducted by Duffy and colleagues made a significant impact on the instruction of reading (Dewitz, Carr, & Patberg, 1987; Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996; Duffy, Roehler, Meloth, Vavrus, Book, Putnam, & Wesselman, 1986b; Pressley *et al.*, 1992a). The technique of direct instruction included modeling. Teacher control was varied during this second wave of research. The transaction of strategies demonstrated increased student achievement (Pressley, 1998a).

The third wave of comprehension strategy instruction was dominated by transactional strategy instruction (Pressley, Schuder, SAIL, Bergman, & El-Dinary, 1992b). With this approach, small clusters of strategies were explained to readers. The strategies included activating prior knowledge, questioning, clarifying, using mental imagery, connecting, and summarizing. Comprehension, interpretation, and text memory were the goals for the use of strategies (El-Dinary, Pressley, & Schuder, 1992; Brown & Coy-Ogan, 1993; Gaskins, Anderson, Pressley, Cunicelli, & Satlow, 1993).

The third wave of strategy research was characterized by instruction with direct explanation and by coaching students. Students often demonstrated for their peers the use of strategies by thinking out loud. Teachers continually encouraged flexibility in strategy use (Pressley, 1998a). These early studies were descriptive and were later

validated by experimental and quasi-experimental studies (Brown, Pressley, Van Merter & Schuder, 1996; Block, 1991; Anderson & Roit, 1993).

The fourth wave of research was comprehension with influence and support of conversations. Concerns proliferated about strategy instruction since strategies became the end point instead of deep comprehension (Hacker & Tenet, 2002; Reutzel, Smith & Fawson, 2005; Garcia, Taylor, Pearson, Stahl, & Bauer, 2007). Mechanized comprehension strategy instruction offered by teachers who were stuck in overly focused strategy instruction proved counter-productive (Garcia, Pearson, Taylor, Bauer, & Stahl, 2011). Teachers who moved beyond control and emphasized talk and interaction created successful strategy instruction that was linked to generative comprehension and flexible strategy use (Wilkinson & Son, 2010).

Teachers translating reading comprehension research into enacted curriculum positioned comprehension research within the microsystem of school children with daily instruction and support for students' thinking about their reading. The choice of translating comprehension research into instructional practices placed curriculum in the students' microsystem of daily interaction that featured metacognitive awareness or personal knowledge of thinking. This research based instruction touched children every day as teachers presented comprehension strategy instruction, particularly through the read aloud and think aloud protocols (Baumann, 1986; Baumann, Jones & Seifert-Kessell, 1993; Loxterman, Beck, & McKeown, 1994) using high-quality children's picture books (Sipe, 1998; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007; Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011).

Teachers' development of strategy instruction proved to be difficult and time consuming (El-Dinary *et al.*, 1992; El-Dinary, 2002; Duffy, 1997; Duffy, 1993a; Duffy, 1993b; Duffy, 2005; Almasi, 2003). Teaching with less teacher domination and more student control, teaching several strategies together, and using teaching time effectively were hurdles that could be circumvented by extensive staff development (Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; El-Dinary, 2002). Researchers using observational research concluded that few teachers were actually teaching strategies (Berkeley, Scrugs, & Mastropieri, 2010).

Some researchers and staff developers argued for teachers using their own reading as a model for instruction particularly in book clubs (Keene, 1997; Keene, 2002; Commeyras, Bisplinghoff, & Olsen, 2003), and other research supported book clubs as a community for generating teaching practice (Kooy, 2006 and 2007; Kooy & van Veen, 2012; Massey, 2006). Few studies were available on the use of personal reading as a support for reading comprehension instruction, and very few demonstrated how teachers developed themselves with the exception of the studies on the practice of lesson study and lesson link (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Watanabe, 2002 and 2007; Lewis & Hurd, 2011; Kratzer & Teplin, 2007). Sailors (2009) recently reviewed research on professional development for teachers of comprehension, and she reported that there were no studies. She stated that more research on teachers' continued learning, conditions supportive of their learning, stages in their learning, and the impact on students' comprehension were needed.

Statement of the Research Problem

The years prior and during this study were influenced by the legislation enacted in the United States under the name of research-based reading instruction. President Bill Clinton signed *The Reading Excellence Act* in 1998 with the goal of helping at-risk children achieve reading skills. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (Public Law 107-110, 2001) (*NCLB*) signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2001, continued the trend of federal involvement in literacy instruction. Rules governing allocation of federal funding were contingent upon meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). States used various assessments to measure their progress.

Since 2002, the Alabama State Board of Education has used the Stanford 10 and the companion Otis-Lennon School Ability Test, Eighth Edition (OLSAT 8), for annual assessment of students in Grades 3-8 as a measure of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Alabama also measured kindergarten, first, and second-grade students using DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). Disagreements developed among researchers particularly about DIBELS testing and its impact on curriculum and school culture (Pearson, 2006; Goodman, 2006, Riedel, 2007). Goodman (2006) and Manzo (2005) refuted the use of this assessment as an adequate measure of comprehension. Pearson (2010) stated that there is still time for a change in the way we assess reading comprehension as measured by the DIBELS test of fluency. This was significant since comprehension continued to be the goal of reading.

Riedel (2007) examined the time spent on the DIBELS testing to determine if it was a valuable tool for predicting comprehension. He found DIBELS ORF (Oral Reading Fluency) was a good predictor of comprehension at the end of first-grade and

second-grade. However, Riedel stated this about the other DIBELS measures: “the minimal gains do not justify the time and effort.” Samuels (2006) refuted DIBELS as a measure of fluency.

A sense of urgency existed regarding schools labeled as high poverty and low performing (Fiester, 2010; Kannapel & Clements, 2005) particularly since success in reading comprehension included high standards as set forth in the research on comprehension instruction (Paris *et al.*, 1983; Almasi, 2003; Block & Duffy, 2008; Lai, McNaughton, Amituanai-Toloa, Turner, & Hsiao, 2009). This sense of urgency created challenges for teachers. (Smith, 1991; Pelletier & Sharp, 2009; Berk, 2011). The problem increased due to summative high-stakes testing, and the labeling of schools based upon their test scores. Tests to measure AYP such as Alabama’s Stanford 10 were high-stakes due to the consequences for schools, children, and teachers (Au, 2007). Some opponents labeled high-stakes testing and other stringent school policies as the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Open Societies Foundation, 2011). While others such as Snowman, McCown, and Biehler (2011) reported the positive nature of standardized testing and concluded that the assessments benefit teachers and students. Wang, Gulabहार, and Brown (2006) took a neutral position with recommendations for continued research on accountability as it related to high-stakes testing.

Berk (2011) expressed concern about the narrowing of curriculum as the result of high-stakes tests as did Goodman (2006). Darling-Hammond (2010) and Ravitch (2010) discussed the movement away from rich curriculum and student learning opportunities such as the in-depth comprehension work prescribed by researchers (Paris *et al.*, 1983; Almasi, 2003; Block & Duffy, 2008; Lai *et al.*, 2009). Recently, Linda Darling-

Hammond (2010) and Diane Ravitch (2010) noted that classroom time was devoted to the basics and preparation for high-stakes tests.

Paris (2000) wrote about the dangers of high-stakes testing such as the DIBELS assessment. He argued that this type of assessment alongside other standardized measures had a negative influence on children, particularly those of minority races living in high poverty. Paris (2000) described the use of timed fluency tests and how it created an ethos of low-level thinking that differed with research supporting comprehension strategy instruction (Duffy, 2002a; *RAND*, 2002; Pressley, 2006; Block & Duffy, 2008). Paris and colleagues suggested that data demonstrated moderate negative or no correlations between high fluency and high comprehension with any positive relationship being limited to young or beginning readers (Paris, Carpenter, Paris, & Hamilton, 2005). In another response to DIBELS, researchers, Pressley and Hilden (2005), charged that the instrument was being too widely disseminated with an absence of extensive validation studies.

Constrained skills such as those measured by DIBELS included letter knowledge, grapho-phonics, and other surface structure skills, which were listed by researchers as short-term measures of early-attained skills. While unconstrained skills such as vocabulary development and comprehension developed over a reader's lifetime and varied from reader to reader. These unconstrained skills represented worthy instructional practices over the long term (Paris, 2005).

In Alabama, DIBELS, a measure of constrained reading skills such as rapid reading of words, became the sole indicator of reading achievement for kindergarten,

first, and second-grade students. Seay (2006), a faculty member at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, wrote:

Findings from this study suggest that testing students on how fast they can read is not leading students in this district to higher test scores, and is clearly not leading to meaningful reading. When speed becomes the goal of reading instruction, rather than meaning and purpose, students lose. (pp. 62 and 63)

Goodman (2006) also noted a narrowing of curriculum as a result of testing, specifically testing with DIBELS. Goodman feared that the test would become curriculum and others agreed (Pearson, 2010). Some reported that high stakes testing was a factor for spoiling the culture of schools (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). The view of the impact of testing on teaching and what gets taught was recently expressed from a content perspective. “What gets measured, gets taught,” stated Sue Blanchette, president-elect of the National Council for Social Studies in an interview by Banchemo (2011) for the *Wall Street Journal*.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303714704576385370840592218.html>

Disagreement in the research and national policy about reading assessments continued around teacher autonomy and professionalism especially about the assessment of students’ comprehension (Tierney & Thome, 2006). Some school reform initiatives included a mismatched set of expectations about teachers’ professional judgment of reading achievement and timed tests like DIBELS and measures of constrained skills (Paris, 2005; Salinger, 2005; Paris, 2010; Pearson, 2006; Pearson, 2010). Research based reform efforts like the early years of the Alabama Reading Initiative and the *Cornerstone Literacy Initiative* encouraged teachers to build their instructional expertise upon an existing body of comprehension research found in the work of highly regarded researchers (Pearson *et al.*, 1992; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997;

Taylor, Critchley, Paulsen, MacDonald, Miron, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005).

Teachers' were encouraged to use reflective analysis of their comprehension instruction through study of their personal reading in book clubs, professional development sessions, and study in professional communities (Harvey & Gouvdis, 2000; Miller, 2002; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997 and 2007; Commeyras *et al.*, 2003; Ruurs, 2006; Kooy, 2007; Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

Other works such as the *RAND* Reading Study Group (2002) positioned teachers as seminal leaders in guiding the discussions about improvement of comprehension instruction and placed teachers in an empowered position of decision-making. The *RAND* group further posed that it was a failure when researchers did not build on teachers' capacity to contribute to their research efforts. According to the *RAND* group, this lack of recognition about teacher expertise demonstrated a shortsighted view.

(2002). However, techniques such as lesson study (Stiegler & Hiebert, 1999; Richardson, 2004; Lewis & Hurd, 2011) and video sharing (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003; Derry, 2007) utilized the capacity of teachers as researchers of student achievement and positioned teachers as collaborative equals in solving problems of teaching practice.

Within the same time period of innovative methods such as lesson study and video sharing, top down pressures for mandated scientifically based programs and assessments (Pearson, 2006; Tierney & Thome, 2006) were increased, while the politics of reading often presented teachers as inept and too poorly trained to teach reading (Allington, 2002). A researcher sympathetic to schools, Nel Noddings (2004), suggested that reading was corrupted by reduction to pronouncing nonsense words under timed

conditions. Noddings stated that in reality reading comprehension was actually declining.

The reductionist testing methods continued and more schools and teachers were required to measure reading achievement based on constrained skills (Pearson, 2006) even though some researchers suggested holistic assessments such as running records and the benchmarking of reading progress with developmental reading assessments (Ransford-Kaldon, Flynt, Ross, Franceschini, Zoblotsky, Huang, & Gallagher, 2010; Beaver, 2001; Ross, 2004; Clay, 1993). P. D. Pearson commented about the measures of constrained skills tested by DIBELS.

I have built a reputation for taking positions characterized as situated in ‘the radical middle.’ Not so on DIBELS. I have decided to join that group convinced that DIBELS is the worst thing to happen to the teaching of reading since the development of flash cards. (2006, p. v)

Even though the measure of constrained skills proliferated policy agendas, researchers placed emphasis on metacognitive strategy instruction and on balanced reading models (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). There was a focus on adherence to using students’ backgrounds as a support for literacy learning (Beck, Omansen, & McKeown, 1982; McKeown, Beck, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1992; Graves, Cook, & LaBerge, 1983). Assessments of students’ reading of whole texts (Clay, 1993) and the use of a workshop model with an instructional framework based on the gradual release of responsibility were key elements during this time (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fisher & Frey, 2008).

The need to study the unconstrained skills such as those taught in explicit metacognitive strategy instruction (Waters & Kunnmann, 2010; McNamara, Ozuru, Best, & O’Reilly, 2007; Cromley, 2005), comprehension instruction (Sailors, 2009) and the

impact on young struggling readers was labeled as urgent (Duffy, 2002b; *RAND*, 2002; Pressley, 2006). Agreement among reading scholars was strong concerning the significance of metacognition to reading comprehension (Baker & Brown, 1984; Garner, 1987; Gourgey, 1998; Hacker, 1998; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; Mayer, 1998; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Schraw, 1998). Two national committees concluded that metacognition and comprehension monitoring should be promoted in comprehension training and in instruction. These conclusions were based on the most current empirical research available at the time (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Snow *et al.*, (1998) surmised that children needed opportunities to develop and enhance their language and metacognitive skills. The researchers reported that appropriate reading progress required work beyond the surface structure of reading into reader control over the monitoring of comprehension. Snow *et al.*, (1998) also suggested that training in metacognitive skills was effective for improving reading comprehension and for improving monitoring skills. This information was especially salient when instructing populations of children in high poverty. Having high expectations for exemplary reading instruction, particularly comprehension instruction was urgent for young children of poverty (Block & Duffy, 2008; Lai *et al.*, 2009; Fiester, 2010; Taylor *et al.*, 2011). Teachers learning and using comprehension strategies required extended professional development over a long period of time (El-Dinary *et al.*, 1992; El-Dinary, 2002; Duffy, 1997; Duffy, 1993a; Duffy, 1993b; Duffy, 2005; Almasi, 2003).

Recently a disconnect between researchers and policy makers concerning assessments designed to measure unconstrained skills such as vocabulary and strategy

use was addressed. P. D. Pearson referred to Constrained Skills Theory (CST) (Paris, 2005) in a plenary address to the 2010 World Reading Congress in New Zealand. Pearson agreed with Paris and cautioned that heavy reliance on the testing of constrained skills through measures such as DIBELS led to a curriculum driven by those skills. (Pearson, 2010; Paris, 2010). Thus, the disagreement among researchers continued around how students' reading was assessed and the value of measuring constrained skills. Researchers debated how a focus on early and quickly mastered skills often resulted in a narrow curriculum that contradicted comprehension strategy instruction. They also debated the amount of time required to prepare teachers for such instruction (Pearson, 2006; Pearson, 2010; Paris, 2010).

Researchers agreed on the findings that teachers and good instruction were the critical elements necessary for student success. Partial correlations affirmed a strong relationship between teacher quality and student achievement even after controls for poverty and language (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Block *et al.*, (2002a) stated that good instruction was the most powerful means of ensuring the development of proficient readers who comprehend and surpass reading comprehension difficulties. Gordon, Kane, and Staiger (2006) wrote about effective teachers who closed the black-white achievement gap and offered a plan for identifying effective teachers. Wilson (2009) reported in *Teacher Quality: Education Policy White Paper*, "good teaching matters" (p. 1). Most recently Kooy and van Veen (2012) reported the critical significance of highly skilled teachers as the driving force for supporting student achievement.

The burden of the testing, policy mandates, and mismatched expectations continued (Pelletier & Sharp, 2009; Berk, 2011). Cynthia Coburn and Mary Stein (2010)

wrote about the challenges educators faced when participating in school renewal efforts. As unyielding as the pressure seemed, successes increased. Stein and Coburn stated that over 1000 schools succeeded in teaching students to read by third-grade. They reported that little was known about the “inner workings” of the success stories in school renewal (Coburn & Stein, 2010, p. 2). The researchers stated that the manner in which research connected with practice to accelerate positive growth and change must be understood if more success stories were to develop. The paucity of research on success stories created a need for telling the story of teachers especially the teachers in this case study.

Sailors (2009) addressed the lack of research on teachers’ professional development related to comprehension instruction. Sailors stated:

...it is unclear under what conditions teachers best learn to improve their practices and those features of professional development that are helpful to children in improving their comprehension. Simply stated, the importance of the professional development of preservice and inservice teachers is evident in policy, but simply has not been addressed in research. (p. 645)

A paucity of research existed in three areas: case study research explaining the success stories of school reform (Stein & Coburn, 2010), teacher professional development in reading comprehension (Sailors, 2009), and research on the measures of reading comprehension related to culturally relevant pedagogy. In summary, Duke and Carlisle (2011) identified a problem facing the reading field as the critical need to develop teachers’ ability to design, plan, and implement purposeful comprehension instruction with consideration for differentiation of students’ needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to determine how four second-grade teachers in a rural high poverty school implemented two reform initiatives while working in a system focused on constrained skills. One of the reform initiatives utilized an interactive

model of reading incorporating metacognitive strategy instruction with authentic text in place of a commercial reading program. This initiative focused on unconstrained skills. The other initiative encouraged balanced literacy instruction and the testing of constrained skills. This study sought to determine the “inner workings” of the second-grade teachers’ success stories (Coburn & Stein, 2010, p. 2) and how they worked through dilemmas and problems to develop themselves as reading comprehension teachers using adult book clubs and lesson link.

Significance of the Study

Studying the second-grade teachers and how they improved their metacognitive comprehension strategy instruction by analyzing their personal reading strategies in adult book clubs and by practicing lesson link to refine their strategy instruction might expand the knowledge base on comprehension instruction in the early years particularly in rural Title I schools. The data gathered from this study related to comprehension instruction and teachers’ developing their teaching expertise could extend the existing research base built by a small group of scholars committed to case study research of exemplary teaching practices (Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Taylor & Pearson, 2005).

The *RAND Study* (2002) reported a need for reading comprehension research. The group made an important query: How can teacher quality increase along with expertise in reading comprehension instruction? Sailors (2009) found no studies on professional development for reading comprehension teachers. This study offers qualitative research on teachers’ continued learning, a need listed by Sailors (2009). By

tapping into the “inner workings” (Coburn & Stein, 2010, p. 2) of the second-grade teachers at Stanmore, their adaptive expertise, and entrepreneurial use of instructional methods (Duffy, 1997; Duffy, 2002a; Hammerness *et al.*, 2005; Taylor *et al.*, 2011) a deeper understanding of their literacy instruction and self-initiated professional development might support a bridge between research and practice. (Coburn & Stein, 2010).

Research Questions

How do four second-grade teachers at Stanmore Elementary describe their comprehension strategy instruction and reflect about their teaching? How, why, and with what influences do the teachers engage in professional development to improve their comprehension instruction?

Limitations

This study was qualitative and took place over one school year. A limitation and dilemma in my research was my inexperience in the difficult task of winnowing the important variables into a succinct written case. Yin iterated that the “writing of case studies is more crucial to their communication than the writing of other types of research” (Yin, 2009, p. xi). A careful literature review and outside readers helped to address this limitation.

A lack of rigor was the cause for case study research being considered soft (Yin, 2009). Using Yin’s suggestions for validity and reliability such as multiple data sources, a case study database, and cross-reference techniques, I used rigorous strategies including

logic of design and theoretical propositions to strengthen this qualitative study. Bias was another limiting factor in this study. I worked closely with the teachers that I observed for many years and collected data through participant observation (Spradley, 1980). To circumvent bias, I attempted to avoid generalizations that were not genuine, and I sought to base interpretation on the triangulation of multiple data sources. Another technique used to avoid bias was to seek a critical colleague to provide alternative explanations and new ways of viewing the data (Yin, 2009). A critical colleague, the former principal of Stanmore, served in this role for my study.

Assumptions

Assumptions of the study were:

1. Participants took part in this study of their own free will.
2. Participants offered their reflections and opinions in a truthful manner during interviews and other communications.
3. The data collected and the report of the information will be significant to the school and teachers involved in this study. Findings might be useful to others outside this immediate community who wish to transfer the report to their own settings.

Definition of Terms

Adaptive Experts: “Adaptive experts continue to learn throughout their lifetimes.

Adaptive experts are likely to change their core competencies and continue to expand the breadth and depth of their expertise” (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, Hammerness, & Beckett, 2005, p. 48-49).

Bioecological Systems Theory: Bioecological Systems Theory is a theory of child development that operates within the context of relationships forming the child's world. The child's biology fuels development along with external environmental factors. The circles of influence surrounding the child were labeled as a set of concentric structures called the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The systems in this theory are listed following this definition.

Microsystem: "The microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

Mesosystem: "The mesosystem is a set of interrelations between two or more settings in which the developing person becomes an active participant" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 209).

Exosystem: "The exosystem has been defined as consisting of one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in that setting" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 237).

Macrosystem: The macrosystem refers to "the consistencies in the form and content of lower order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26).

Book Club: Book club is the reading and discussion of books with a group of people. "The center of education is communication around books and ideas. Communication

implies community” (Kooy, 2006, p. ix). “The potential for interactive dialogue and sustained learning through community experiences make the book club a viable and dynamic site for teacher inquiry and learning” (Kooy, 2006, p. 13).

Case Study Research: “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Comprehension Strategy Instruction: Comprehension strategy instruction is a plan for teaching comprehension honoring comprehension as “a complex process involving interactions between readers and texts for various purposes” (Pearson *et al.*, 1992, p. 6). Seven strategies were recommended by Pearson *et al.* (1992) and Dole, Duffy, Roehler, and Pearson (1991). The strategies recommended were monitoring for meaning, repairing problems, asking questions, inferring, synthesizing, determining importance, and making connections.

Constrained Skills Theory (CST): “Some [CST] reading skills are universally mastered in a relatively brief developmental time span, and thus they should not be regarded conceptually or methodologically as normally distributed skills.” (Paris, 2005, p. 199)

Cornerstone Continuous Professional Development Model: This is a professional development model using four cycles of adult learning. Participants explore the research-based practice, experience the practice as an adult learner, observe the practice in action by video or classroom observation, and plan for implementation of research-based teaching practices. (*Cornerstone Toolkit*, 2003)

Cornerstone Literacy Framework: The literacy framework is a comprehensive research-based framework that defines essential elements of literacy learning, ensures depth and

focus on what matters most for children's learning, assumes high levels of intellectual development for all children, is designed to accommodate state standards, and helps teachers focus on content most crucial to their students' literacy learning. (*Cornerstone Toolkit*, 2003)

Critical Literacy: Critical literacy is "Learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson & Irvine, 1993, p. 82).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: This pedagogy is based on "A theoretical model that addresses student achievement, helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 469).

Gradual Release of Responsibility: The gradual release of responsibility is "... a cycle of instructional events-explanation, guided practice, corrective feedback, independent practice and application. It is the entire instructional framework which integrates all these components for students that leads to effective and independent strategy use" (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983, p. 28).

High-stakes Tests: "Tests whose scores have a direct impact on a person's life options and opportunities are considered to have high stakes" (Moses & Manna, 2007, p. 56).

Interactive Model of Reading: "In Rummelhart's Interactive Model a variety of processors converges on visual information simultaneously, rather than in a linear process" Tracey & Morrow, 2006, pp. 138-139).

Lesson Study & Lesson Link : The process of lesson study and lesson link are "... a teaching improvement and knowledge building process that has origins in Japanese

elementary education. In Japanese lesson study teachers work in small teams to plan, teach, observe, analyze, and refine individual class lessons, called research lessons” (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006, p. 250).

Metacognitive Strategy Instruction: Metacognitive strategy instruction is a type of comprehension instruction “... endeavoring to teach students to plan, implement, and evaluate strategic approaches to learning and problem solving” (Palinscar, 1986, p. 118).

Participant Observation: Participant observation “...is a methodology that assumes immersion in a setting (along with observation, reflection, and interpretation) and is the best way to develop knowledge of others’ ways of thinking and acting” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 219).

Professional Learning Community: “Teachers work to overcome tight resources, isolation, time constraints, and other obstacles they commonly encounter in today’s schools. Teachers work collectively to set and enforce standards of instruction and learning” (Kruse, Louis, Byrk, 1994, p. 4).

Transactional Strategies Instruction or TSI: This instruction is a complex process for teaching readers to use multiple comprehension strategies in a flexible and interactive manner. Readers self-regulate the strategies used as well as their text comprehension to learn content. (Pressley *et al.*, 1992b)

Workshop Model: “The workshop approach follows a gradual release model where children are presented with clear demonstrations and guided practice for learning a specific task” (Dorn & Soffos, 2005, p.72). The following components of the model are found in the *Cornerstone Framework*.

Crafting: A time when the teacher and the whole class sit together while the teacher teaches an intention explicitly through modeling, thinking aloud, a child's strategy or an author's writing with the expectation that students will emulate the model as needed. It often involves talking about how a student can think through a task. (*Cornerstone Toolkit*, 2003)

Composing Meaning: A time when readers and writers work independently to apply what has been taught. Teachers confer with individuals and conduct invitational groups. Students occasionally work in pairs, trios, meet in book clubs and/or share their work in progress with peers. (*Cornerstone Toolkit*, 2003)

Invitational Groups: A meeting of a small group of children identified by the teacher for in-depth instruction on a shared need. The groups meet for a limited time until their learning need is met and then the groups change based on individual student needs. Children can join an invitational group if they believe they share the need being addressed. (*Cornerstone Toolkit*, 2003)

Reflection: This is time in which a few children share successful attempts at a recently taught concept or strategy. Teachers model ways in which readers share and extend insights gained during composing meaning. During this time, students assume responsibility for "teaching" their peers about the learning outcomes they have recently applied (*Cornerstone Toolkit*, 2003).

Organization of the Study

Five chapters organized this study. Chapter I opened by introducing and framing the study. Chapter II presented the literature review with a funnel approach. The review

was organized using a broad framework based on Bronfenbrenner and Morris' Bioecological Systems Theory (2006). The review started with research and policy that were the greatest distance from the child, classrooms, and teachers and then funneled to research that impacted the daily world of children through the comprehension strategy instruction delivered by teachers. Very broad in scope, the literature review built a theoretical frame for my study and supported refinement of my research questions. Chapter III described case study as the methodological frame for my research and included the methods and the reason for their use. Findings from my study were presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V included a discussion of my findings and their implications. Future research recommendations were also listed.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

With regard to daily life, theories are explanations that people turn to when they are trying to understand what has happened to them in the present or past, or what might happen to them in the future. (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 3)

This chapter included a review of the following areas related to my study: child development, school reform, diversity and critical literacy, teacher expertise, interactive model of reading, and comprehension strategy work. In the tradition of qualitative research, I provided a literature and theoretical orientation as a frame for the problem, the research questions, and the data analysis (Yin, 2009). I took the approach of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems to organize the review, looking at the different areas of influence on the child from the most distal topic to the topics that were in closest proximity to the child.

Initial questions posed in this study about teachers' comprehension instruction created the necessity to review the literature from numerous perspectives. I used the review to sharpen and refine my research questions. The "twin influences" of context and perception (Spencer, 2008b, p. 258) were particularly helpful in the data analysis phase of this study.

Diversity and critical literacy were important topics for the review since the context of the teachers and students was diverse. There is a paucity of research linking reading comprehension to culturally relevant pedagogy (Fairbanks *et al.* 2009).

Reviewing the literature on diversity and critical literacy began with seminal research,

including the early work conducted by Roland Tharp (1982) and additional research conducted by Lee, (1993), Au (1998), Raphael and McMahon (1994), Ladson-Billings (1994), Delpit (2002), Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalas (2005), Luke and Freebody (1999), and Tatum (2011).

A review of schools as whole entities in literacy instruction and reform efforts was included (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Knapp, 1995; Lipson *et al.*, 2004; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999 and 2000; Block *et al.*, 2002b; Snow *et al.* 2005). Research conducted in eight literacy reform efforts that impacted reading achievement provided the basis for the review on school reform.

The research of Snow *et al.* (2005) and their suggested model for teachers supported other studies that included case study research on exemplary teachers. A search for descriptive research on teacher expertise was conducted. The work of Pressley (2001b) and colleagues conducted as case study reports on exemplary literacy teachers were included along with Ruddell's (1997) interview research on exemplary reading teachers.

Block *et al.* (2002b) and Block and Mangieri (2009) were seminal in my data analysis of the second-grade teachers' instructional practices. Block and Mangieri (2009) researched exemplary practices of 20,000 teachers participating in their professional development sessions. Their publications provided a broad view of literacy teachers' craft by grade level, as well as longitudinal data on the development of craft.

The interactive model of reading was included in the review since the case study teachers used this model to guide their instruction. To answer the research questions, it

was necessary to review seminal comprehension studies and the work of the pioneers in strategy work such as Pearson, Pressley, Duffy, Block, and Almasi. These early studies built a foundation for the newer and very specific comprehension strategy techniques. Valli and Chamblis described recent comprehension studies as “fine-grained” (2007, p. 57). Researchers Block and Duffy (2008), Block, Parris, Reed, Whiteley, and Cleveland (2009) led the field in new ways to think about comprehension instruction.

In summary, this literature review was framed in the ecological systems theory. Using the funnel process for the review and a child development frame (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I included areas with the broadest influences on students’ comprehension instruction to the fine grain of classroom instruction that had the greatest impact on the child and his/her comprehension.

Child Development

The child development theoretical stance I chose to frame the review was ecological systems theory based on Urie Bronfenbrenner’s work. This theorist asserted that the child’s ability to learn to read in the primary grades was dependent on home-school bonds. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), these bonds were as important as the method used to teach the child to read.

Ecological Systems Theory acquired a new label in 2006, Bioecological Systems Theory. Bronfenbrenner and Morris described the child’s biology as the ultimate environment for development. This model supported the concept that human genetic development can move child growth into unrealized potential with appropriate social policy supports. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)

Bronfenbrenner's theory explained the child's interactions with his environment and offered educators a view of their role (Thomas, 1996). Bronfenbrenner described the ecological system as a set of structures, one resting within the other. The center level structure has the greatest impact on the child's development. The home and classroom were components of this level. It was, however, the relationships among these components that were of seminal importance to the child's development. The interconnections were the decisive element as much as the independent events in the child's surroundings. The environment impacted the child and vice versa; the child impacted the environment.

The interactions between the three microsystems of school, home, and peer group were the essence of ecological systems theory. These three microsystems were lumped together in a mesosystem. Within the mesosystem, the lens for studying development was broadened to define social and psychological factors and conditions occurring in the closest layer of the microsystem. The next layer of influence on the child was the exosystem that included parents' workplaces, school board and other governmental agencies' decisions, as well as the friends of the family. These systems were encircled by the macrosystem or cultural milieu. (Thomas, 1996)

Extending the parameters to another circle of influence, the chronosystem opened a dimension of growth over time encompassing the child's history. Again, the interactions between all the systems were the decisive factor in the child's development (Thomas, 1996). This new dimension, the chronosystem or time dimension, occurred as the child aged.

Bronfenbrenner's theory was influenced by Piaget's research on children's construction of their own reality (Ginsburg & Opper, 1988). He believed that children continually constructed a reality that was not observable directly but was inferred from activities and patterns that were created in nonverbal as well as verbal forms. By close study of the activities and relations, including roles children absorbed, inferences of reality construction were built. These activities, relations, and roles constituted the elements of the child's microsystem. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Research of the mesosystem and the interaction of school, home and peer group within human development were characteristics of the theory. A recurring theme from his work included the resilience of children, obvious when the systems in the environment worked together to support the child's development. When all systems worked together, then the child's resilience, strength and capability were manifest and the child became a contributing member to the ethos of the school and home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner wrote from a theoretical viewpoint about the isolation of schools and American homes. As schools were located farther away from other community populations, they became larger, more isolated, and impersonal. The school personnel were drawn from greater distances from the community, thereby, making it difficult for parents and teachers to gather in informal neighborhood meetings. He described schools as physically and socially isolated compounds that separated children from real life connections by segregating them in age-designated grade levels. Even greater alienation was created when the children were changed in grade level groups each year. Very little community was built in such a context that provided few opportunities for adults to

become a part of the school world or for children to interact over time with the same peer group. All of these factors increased opportunities for divisive elements that influenced schools.

The teachers and administrators in isolated schools were in many cases from a different race, culture, and socio-economic level than the student population. It was within this context that Bronfenbrenner suggested a scenario where the only adults who entered these isolated compounds called schools were those who held college degrees. Highly educated, but nonetheless lacking backgrounds that mirrored differences that were full of the world experiences of the communities they served, these adults had a totally different set of schema for life in the school community. Bronfenbrenner described this state of affairs as one of the most potent stimulants for the alienation in American society. He attributed the continual decline in standardized achievement tests scores to this phenomenon (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's theory was particularly salient with regard to schools' current struggle with testing programs.

The idea that belief systems impacted an individual's development was a part of the larger body of Bronfenbrenner's work. The indications were that parental, peer, teacher, and mentors' beliefs had a strong impact and influence on the manner and direction in which children grew. Bronfenbrenner's theoretical model connected to the current literacy work of Tracey and Morrow (2002). Tracey and Morrow built a similar case for laying the foundation for young readers by listing key points for preparing children for comprehension success. These researchers suggested that development was influenced by socioeconomics, school, home, and other factors related to the individual

child. The description of these key points for best comprehension instruction as concentric circles correlated with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

Bronfenbrenner suggested "a breakdown of the interconnections between the important elements of students' lives" (1979, p. 231). High poverty rural schools where many circles or systems of influence impacted the child were an example. The alienation of the children and community was a potent part of troubles that plagued the teaching community, the parents, and the children; this situation was further compounded by the fact that the government labeled such schools as failing. Bronfenbrenner stated that research in high poverty settings was a social responsibility that offered a unique opportunity to study the interconnections that influenced child development.

From Bronfenbrenner's perspective, interactions among adults and children through various contexts and the child's perception of these interactions were influential in the child's development. Margaret Beal Spencer, a human development specialist, developed Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) as a framework that added an intersubjective perspective to Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. This intersubjective perspective allowed the children's perceptions of experiences to inform the ecological systems (Spencer, 2008a).

Spencer integrated findings from her clinical studies and child development research through the perspective of individual, context-specific, and context-dependent experiences. Spencer emphasized the child's self-perceptions of the multiple environmental systems that Bronfenbrenner described. Spencer's model was not based on any one race or culture. Since the model allowed for investigation of the children's perceptions of the environment and experiences surrounding them, it served marginalized

youth well. Spencer's work included all ethnicities, races, and cultures and aligned with Bronfenbrenner's theory (Spencer, 2008a).

The premise that relationships existed between environment, experiences, and self-perception was critical in the development of Spencer's PVEST framework. Spencer's work about how people made meaning of their experiences built upon intersubjectivity or experiencing life through and with others. PVEST was a framework for the study of children, their vulnerabilities, protective factors or supports, and the manner in which coping occurred. This phenomenological research created a framework for delving into the differences in how children made meaning across lived experiences and time. This framework made the detection of student learning outcomes transparent (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997).

In the Wallace Foundation Distinguished Lecture, Spencer iterated that detecting learning attitudes in all children involved acknowledging their vulnerabilities, risks, and resiliency (<http://www.softconference.com/llc/player.asp?PVQ=GJJH&fVQ=FEJHJK&OcNff=wqU5GFM5uWUjRVo0QvFrupz5XYG4uWqMG4Dxfss0pXUQM9Gr47XW7VjqsvrMvGwxG>). The continual message presented in this lecture was that differentiated interventions to meet all children's needs could be met by careful study of children through the PVEST framework. Centered on data from three of Spencer's studies, the lecture presented evidence that understanding the learning needs of all children required a cultural lens for meeting children where they were and providing supports. Spencer reiterated that all humans were vulnerable and all had supports not necessarily related to specific cultures or race. For educators schooling diverse populations, the framework provided a route to identify children who had the greatest need.

Spencer delivered an earlier address in the 2007 Fourth Annual Brown Lecture at the American Educational Research Association (<http://www.cmcgc.com/aera/2008/full.htm>). The address was published in a document in *Educational Researcher* in 2008. Spencer discussed the effects of policy and the research agenda that left a gap in work impacting all American children, particularly those who were most vulnerable.

In the lecture, Spencer outlined her most recent research and listed opportunities for children that society often missed. These opportunities were suggestions for a positive approach to address problems faced by children and families, regardless of race or culture. The first opportunity was the inclusion of a normal human development theme for research and policy and a move away from studying children of color through a lens of pathology. A second suggestion was the inclusion of a human development perspective to guide the public policy and research agenda. Third, Spencer challenged policy makers to use the microsystem of family and community, the most influential support and resiliency builder, as part of the solution. She reasoned the use of the microsystem created a context without reliance on exosystem policies or magic bullets.

Spencer's fourth suggestion addressed the need to ameliorate white privilege. A fifth solution was the acknowledgment of devalued groups as equal members in the human race, as well as users of normal human processing. Spencer also noted that resiliency was an earned attribute and a powerful protective factor for children. Careful consideration of how children perceived their experiences over their maturation was an important way to take advantage of an opportunity to support all children. Spencer also suggested that an open and honest admission that "America is not a color-blind society" (Spencer, 2008b, p. 264) should be considered. Finally, Spencer suggested that all youth

are the most valuable asset and the value of children could ensure the greatest move forward for America (Spencer, 2008b).

Spencer's PVEST research created a model to narrow achievement gaps by providing specific scaffolds for children at four different risk factor levels. Each component of the model presented an opportunity for supporting children with the right amount of assistance to negotiate successfully their environment. The ultimate stated goal of Spencer's model was to identify and support resiliency and the achievement of positive results for children, even within the contexts of high risk.

The PVEST framework was dimensional in regard to environment. Deepening Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Spencer maintained that viewpoint matters as much as anything when studying development (Spencer, 2008a). Context and perception are equally important influences. As children's identity developed, they perceived context through their own lens and built their own interpretations. From these influences of context and perception, children constructed their world-views (Spencer, 2008b).

In summary, reviewing the research through an ecological systems lens, I placed my study in the context of the existing climate of reading instruction and sought to contextualize my study within an existing body of knowledge. As a technique to funnel my review, I used an increasingly narrow lens and reviewed the research on school reform, culture and diversity, critical literacy, teacher expertise, the interactive model of reading, and the comprehension strategy work.

School Reform

The context of this study and the challenges facing the second-grade teachers at Stanmore were influenced by school change, literacy reform, and the self-renewal of Stanmore, a school in trouble because of test scores. The following review demonstrates the connections between school reform and literacy research.

The basic premise of the work on self-renewing schools found in the work of scholars such as Joyce, Wolf, and Calhoun (1993) was a core idea that the interests of educators as learners and children as learners were actually commingled with one another. Interests of educators and children were literally wrapped in and around each other. The renewal process stimulated faculties while enhancing the environment of the students. The seminal idea in current literature on school change has been the concept of teachers caring for students, themselves, and their colleagues. This attitude influenced best teaching practices with basic assumptions that children were our future and human life was too significant to be neglected in any manner (Joyce *et al.* (1993).

The quality of children's lives will be diminished if they cannot read and advance through the school grading system in a successful, progressive manner (Allington & Walmsley, 1995). Children failing a grade typically fail another with an end to their public school career. Social promotion for children further compounded the problem (Shepard & Smith, 1989).

Joyce *et al.* (1993) analyzed the school reform movement and found the following. As educators created a better learning environment for themselves and students through study, the result was educational improvement for children and the creation of an active state of learning for everyone. Greater activity and intellectual

growth of students stimulated educators to engage in more study and created vigorous learning environments for everyone. Human energy was the required element to build this context. The major problems faced in literacy instruction were frequently self-imposed by educators. By moving into a phase where the school culture readily accepted fruitful change, the self-imposed problems could be eliminated. When this happened, a spiral was created that flowed through the school and created enrichment for all stakeholders.

Researchers suggested that the essence of a school rested on morality. The researchers indicated that the types of education, either poor or enriched, depended upon the socio-economic status of the families served by the schools. A sense of urgency to address quality education for all children was required. Included in the reform requirements was the ideal of rigorous literacy teaching and high standards for all children no matter what their socio-economic status. This ideal required the use of American wealth to bring equitable literacy teaching and learning to all children while building world knowledge and an attitude of success where no one was allowed to fail. This ideal included the development of a worldview where students were offered the opportunity to use cutting edge technology to connect with others (Joyce *et al.*, 1993).

School effects research ranged from views such as an environment only impact on learning to the most current research that positioned schools and teachers as having the most influence on learning. The environment only research was in clear disagreement with the current successful school change initiatives (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). The new approaches to school change were based on the premise that schools and teachers greatly influenced student achievement. Studies that were particularly contradictory to this

paradigm included the work of Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972). Studies by Bronfenbrenner (1979) on ecological systems contradicted the premise that schools had little effect on student achievement.

Coleman and Jenks argued that student academic achievement was based on factors such as home, neighborhood, and peer group, all well beyond the control of the school. Home, cultural environment, and socioeconomic status were the defining elements to explain student achievement (Teddlie & Stringfellow, 1993). Although the effects of these studies continued to influence the field for forty years, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. The new direction is shown in the federal legislation of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (Public Law 107-110, 2001) and the many successful professional development literacy initiatives that made an impact on student achievement (Au, Raphael, & Mooney, 2008; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Lai *et al.*, 2009; Lipson *et al.*, 2004; McNaughton & Lai, 2010; Mosenthal, Lipson, Sortino, Russ, & Mekklesen, 2002; Raphael, 2010; Taylor *et al.*, 2000; Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2002, Taylor *et al.*, 2003; Timperley & Parr, 2007).

In a 2010 National Reading Conference (NRC) address, Taffy Raphael synthesized the way she, Barbara Taylor, and Kathryn Au organized the first and only school reform chapter in the *Handbook of Reading Research*. In her NRC address, Raphael praised the professional development efforts because they expanded the vision of school reform over time. Until this point, the connections between school reform and literacy research were few.

The Taylor *et al.* (2011) review of reform efforts included three strands: effective schools, curriculum-based reforms such as comprehensive school reform programs

(*Success for All* and *America's Choice*), and professional development reform efforts.

Their chapter provided a framework for the review of school reform. Their stance of professional development for teachers as opposed to scripted programs, theoretically positioned the authors in a constructivist paradigm. Quoting from Taylor *et al.* (2011):

Successful reform in reading must address in systematic ways the development of teachers' professional knowledge and practice and not be limited by the false hopes and unrealistic expectations that often accompany a school's adoption of a packaged program. (Taylor *et al.*, 2011, p. 623)

The Taylor *et al.* (2011) review on reform efforts based on professional development described how to move struggling schools to effective schools and was supported by the authors as the best hope for changing schools and literacy instruction for the better. Taylor *et al.* demonstrated the powerful use of frameworks in the place of scripted programs. Professional development studies reviewed included the *Standards-Based Change Process*, *School Change in Reading Framework*, *Literacy Professional Development Model*, *Acceleration of Achievement in Diverse Schools Project*, *Successful Schools in Vermont*, and a final review on middle and high school study not included in this review (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

The effective schools review in Taylor *et al.* (2011) provided a historical foundation for this review. During the 1970s and 1980s, studies conducted by researchers reported on school ethos and community along with socio-economic factors and how these elements could explain differences in student achievement. More current thinking was derived from research that looked at teacher and individual school level variables. The research of the early 1990's indicated that behaviors of teachers add another layer to the variance in student achievement (Teddlie & Stringfellow, 1993).

The school effects of the Teddlie and Stringfellow (1993) studies demonstrated that schools and instruction were, in fact, important influences on school-level student achievement. More importantly, these studies led to other research on professional development. A seminal school effect study was the *Louisiana School Effectiveness Study*, a multiphase research project of school effects in a rural context. In the *Louisiana School Effectiveness Study* or *LSES*, sixteen schools were followed over a four-phase project lasting ten years. Over the tenure of the study, twenty researchers participated by observing and gathering data. The researchers in LSES created a core group to write the study. The group addressed the limitations of the existing school effects research through quantitative and qualitative methods. Limitations addressed by this study included a rethinking of simplified reform models that did not match the culture of the schools. The researchers addressed the limitation of poorly conceptualized studies that did not center the research on specific problem areas of schools. They tried to avoid a one-size fits all approach to solve the problems of the school effects research (Teddlie & Stringfellow 1993).

The design of the *LSES* study included four phases of collecting data with interim periods of analysis and writing. Beginning with a two-year pilot study where instruments were tested, the research utilized a macro level study with a 76-school sample. In this phase, data were collected through questionnaires on school climate, principal surveys, and third-grade teacher and student surveys. As a result of the pilot study, modifications were made to some data collection instruments. The 76 schools represented 12 school districts and were selected, in part, based on their willingness to participate and the

availability of personnel data. Analysis of the characteristics of the sample determined that the selected schools were highly representative of Louisiana's elementary schools.

In a third phase labeled as the micro level or case study level with a cycle of two site visits, the researchers conducted 700 hours of classroom observations with 1000 hours of on-site data collection from 1984-1985. This phase included an analysis and writing phase. The fourth and final stage included a third and fourth site visit that contributed data for the case studies. Similar research hours were maintained during this final phase ending in 1992 (Teddlie & Stringfellow, 1993).

An overall synthesis of Teddlie and Stringfellow's findings in their ten-year study was that faculties and staffs at effective schools were resilient and developed varied means to maintain effectiveness based on their school's socioeconomic status. Significant context components were the geographic location of the school and grade-level configuration.

For the purposes of the present review, a look at the effective low-SES schools included in Teddlie and Stringfellow's study was most beneficial. In the low-SES schools, researchers identified 6 characteristics of effectiveness that were present (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Hall & Hord, 1987; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Edmonds, 1979). These six characteristics included the following: (1) a promotion of high educational expectations in the present with extensions into high future expectations; (2) the intentional hiring of active principals desiring to make changes for future educational goals through instructional leadership and monitoring which included more direct control of classrooms; (3) an intentional effort to make high achieving students feel special including increased external rewards and recognition for academic achievement; (4)

creation of a plan for focusing on basic skills and later offering other curricula; (5) an evaluation of community influence on achievement followed by a buffering between the school and community if the relationship was not a positive one; and (6) the principal having leeway in selecting teachers who were characterized by youth and idealism (Teddlie & Stringfellow, 1993).

In conclusion, Teddlie and Stringfellow (1993) suggested further research to determine how variables at the school level impacted teacher behavior, which in turn impacted student learning. They suggested areas in which school interactions could positively impact teachers. First and foremost was the selection of teachers. Another critical element was the process for replacing teachers, which included classroom monitoring and feedback. The manner in which principals supported teachers and the type of support given were also components. The provision for protected academic instructional blocks of time was a significant factor. The final area proposed by the researchers included administrators leading schools to a positive attitude and climate in which high expectations and standards reached every classroom.

While California reading instruction took a shift in the mid-1990s, Cynthia Coburn investigated how groups of teachers made sense of their reading instruction when reading policy was in transition and change. As the state shifted focus from “whole language” to what they labeled a “balanced” approach to reading instruction, money was pumped into reading materials and professional development (Colburn, 2001, p. 148). Coburn sought to extend earlier findings about how teachers translated, adapted, and changed instructional mandates as they put the mandates into practice. Using case study research in one California elementary school, she observed, interviewed, and interacted

with the entire school focusing on first and second-grade teachers and reviewing pertinent classroom documents. Coburn's stated purpose was to observe teachers' sensemaking first-hand with hundreds of hours of in-field study over an entire school year.

Sensemaking defined in Coburn's research reports was detailed in a theoretical base and included a description of how teachers attend to and choose environmental messages about reforming their instruction. As teachers' choices were made, interpretation of messages and decisions on actions to change practice followed (Coburn, 2001).

A leadership team consisting of the principal, reading specialists, Reading Recovery teachers, a reform leader, and four teachers from primary and upper grades guided the change process at the research site. Using an inquiry approach, the entire school focused on writing standards and grade-level literacy indicators to assess students' progress in meeting the reading comprehension standards. Released from classroom duties half a day a month, teachers met to study their instruction. Teams gathered by grade twice a month, and some teachers went outside the school for professional development. The context of reading instruction in this school included many messages from the California Department of Education, the school's district reading policy-makers, outside professional development providers, and universities.

Coburn summarized the research findings by reporting on the role of reform leadership and the power held by principals to guide reading instructional reform. The leadership team offered certain messages that highly influenced the grade level teams to work together to build their understanding of reading instruction. The change activities were designed so teachers could engage in the process in depth and over time in a collaborative way. Another important leadership tool was the framing of the discussions

around reading in a way that aligned with classroom practices. This contextual framing allowed teachers to reflect and draw connections between the reading reform and their current practices over time. The principal and her leadership team led the effort using messages that were clear about reading instruction.

In summary, Coburn identified significant ways in which policy makers encouraged collective sensemaking for schools. Leaders who successfully sought to promote change from within did so by encouraging a school culture of collaboration. Collaboration included the creation of conditions for teachers to work with each other in formal settings as well as informal ones. For this collaboration to be successful, time to meet with support that provided funding for structured as well as unstructured venues was considered. Finally, collaboration always operated within authentic experiences that connected to the classroom. Having access to resources of knowledge and materials for change built depth of professional decision-making. These supports were available onsite and offsite (Coburn, 2001).

Seeking in-depth answers into how principals influenced implementation of reading policy in California during the 1990 reform period, Coburn conducted a cross-case analysis of two principals. One participant, a principal supporting school change described in the previous paragraphs, supported teachers in making sense of their practice. The other participant, a principal who emphasized a skills-based approach to reading, used a different approach to change efforts in her school. The principals contrasted in their belief systems on how children learn to read and how teachers learn to teach reading. One principal was influenced by holistic constructivist approaches to child and adult learning placing heavy emphasis on conversations to build meaning. The other

principal placed great emphasis on teaching all the discrete skills of reading in sequence through a teachers' manual from a basal reading series. Because the second principal's approach to reading instruction was driven by outside authorities telling teachers what to do and how to do it, she believed that her job was to follow up to make sure teachers did as they were instructed (Coburn, 2005).

By conducting extensive observations and interviews, as well as attending hours of school-based meetings and professional development, Coburn used qualitative methods to deepen the scant research available on principals and the implementation of reading reform. In summarizing the findings, she stated that principals have direct and indirect impact on teacher learning. Since principals had closer connections to policy makers, they were in direct line to hear reading reform messages first-hand, and they often mediated what teachers heard. They also tried to shield teachers from the influence of outside others. On the other end of the spectrum, principals brought in outside influences by hiring professional development consultants and purchasing curriculum materials. A research finding demonstrated the principal as mediator. This role of mediation resulted in policies being implemented in very different ways across schools in the same districts (Coburn, 2005).

Further analysis led the researcher to conclude that principals impacted teachers' sensemaking of reform efforts in the way they structured teacher meetings and the ways they framed discussions in the meetings. Coburn also labeled principals as sensemakers and explained the tremendous impact principals have on how teachers learned and how reading reform was interpreted. The sensemaking of the principals was based on their personal knowledge and beliefs about how children learned to read. Often imposing their

own personal frameworks of understanding and at times mixing different approaches without fully understanding them, principals focused attention in particular ways and created boundaries around teachers' responses. The principals' personal frameworks also influenced how teachers could interact together. Another way principals influenced teachers' understanding and interpretation practices was the principals' belief about adult learning (Coburn, 2005).

Coburn cited research supporting the need for principals to build professional learning communities, participate in professional development themselves, and provide time and opportunity for teacher meetings. However, Coburn found that all of this was not enough. Her cross-case analysis supported the importance of the substance of the interactions among teachers in learning communities and the nature of the messages sent by principals, as well as the conditions they created for teacher conversations. Coburn found that teachers needed long time periods for sustained reflection around content that was authentic and related to their daily practice. Coburn offered the following considerations: principals must have focused professional learning on the specific content of the reform; principals must guide the implementation of the reform effort; and higher education institutions must provide extensive literacy training for principals. Coburn emphasized that guidance principals needed for implementing reading reform included how to introduce new materials and engage teachers in their use, how to examine students' work using protocols, and how to organize processes for teaching lessons in collaboration with others while reflecting on student learning (Coburn, 2005).

How schools responded when asked to reform instructional practice was found to be dependent upon teachers' construction of their understanding of the problem to be

solved and its relevance to their classrooms. Coburn called this a “problem framing” process. She reported that this process was recursive and that schools often wrestled with the process (Coburn, 2006, p. 343). Relationships with authority figures, specifically school principals, were often a part of the molding and framing process while the professional learning communities and teachers’ informal networks served to mediate the process. Coburn used the qualitative case study data from her 2001 study, which was synthesized in earlier paragraphs. She determined that framing the problem of reading instruction was critical to move teachers to action and instructional change, to reconfigure relations, and to impact what teachers’ believed and practiced (Coburn, 2006).

Seeking the how and why answers about implementing policy mandates, Coburn’s research reported exchanges of conversations and transcribed meeting notes as evidence built upon an extensive explanation of theory and a thorough research review. Coburn deepened earlier reported research and used the concept of problem framing since this stance assigned responsibility, offered reasons to find solutions, and created action around implementation of reading policy. No forward movement happened within school renewal when teachers and leaders of school change had conflicted opinions about the policies being implemented. Principals and school leaders skilled in problem framing were able to bridge for school staff between where instruction was situated to the direction mandated by reading policy. Problem framing was critical to move the change process forward. Successful principals were skilled at framing (Coburn, 2006).

Coburn identified three aspects of policy implementation in the reform of literacy practices. The first contribution deepened understanding of the role of authority in the

implementation process with principals in position to create powerful frameworks for teachers that helped make sense of mandated policy. Second, formal and informal organizational structures, such as grade team meetings, were critical for the process of problem framing as well as for the outcomes that helped solve the problems. A third school leadership contribution was the ability of leaders to shape and mold shared comprehension of problems with ways to move teachers into action around those problems. By creating ideological shifts in teachers' beliefs, school leaders generated a cooperative environment for school change where individual's motivation became the group's motivation (Coburn, 2006).

Lipson *et al.* (2004) designed a qualitative study of schools that exhibited successful literacy work. The research team listed factors that distinguished these schools. The nine factors were expert leadership, whole school endeavor, effective management of students and teaching time, high expectations of students, collaborative learning communities, effective home school connections, focused and effective professional development, and specific teaching practices. After three years of juxtaposing successful schools with schools that were not so successful, the researchers proposed that the success of schools was not accidental. The summary provided from this longitudinal study forms a substantial framework. It paralleled, yet extended, the school renewal work of Joyce *et al.* (1993).

Using a research design that validated and supported existing respected research on successful schools, Lipson *et al.* (2004) extended the work to draw further conclusions. The research team studied whole schools across all grade levels for a three year time period. They used what they termed an absolute standard of success. Schools

were identified by a cluster analysis procedure that grouped the schools based on free or reduced lunch data, English language proficiency of students, class size and ratio of students to teachers, community index of poverty, education level of the adult population in the community, school size, and average teacher salary. The success standard was based on state reading assessments in grades 2 and 4. To be successful as a school by the Lipson *et al.* (2004) standards, schools had to have 80% or more of their students meeting or exceeding state standards on three tests of reading at grades 2 and 4. These tests consisted of a standardized individually administered version of the *Developmental Reading Assessment* given to all second-graders and the *New Standards Reference Exams* for all fourth-grade students.

Three clusters of Vermont schools presented profiles that the researchers labeled with the following categories: Uptown, Main Street, and Country Schools. Uptown Schools were affluent city or suburban communities with high levels of education characterizing the adult population. These large schools had few free and reduced lunch students, high per pupil ratio of money to support student learning, and high teachers' salaries. Main Street Schools were in small to medium towns populated by middle-class families whose adult education levels were lower than Uptown Schools but higher than Country Schools. The same data were apparent in the free and reduced lunch information. In contrast, Country Schools were in small rural high-poverty areas with adult populations with limited education. Free and reduced price lunch populations were high in these schools. Spending per student was at the lowest level in these schools as were teacher salary levels. Only 16 schools in Vermont met the criteria for success.

Findings demonstrated that all Uptown Schools were not successful, and researchers concluded that factors other than community socioeconomic level were impacting the results. In essence, neither poverty level nor the types of reading program were determinants of a school's success in the teaching of reading. Researchers did a qualitative examination of two successful schools and one less successful school. Nine schools were studied using qualitative methods such as interviews of all staff and other relevant persons associated with the schools. Other methods included a retrospective timeline that captured the history and experience of the teachers and the school communities.

The factor of successful growth was documented through artifacts and publications. The researchers observed all teachers and ended their sessions with debriefings. Student work samples were collected also. Each site report was created in narrative form from a field notebook with artifacts. The researchers met often to talk about their findings and refine their research efforts. Numerous visits were made to the schools to discuss summary findings with the staffs and to discuss developing hypotheses.

This study did find similar practices across all three types of schools, such as teachers were experts in offering balanced literacy instruction in well-managed classrooms with high expectations for student learning. All the teachers participated in extensive professional development. From the student perspective, all literacy learners had multiple opportunities to read and write daily in large blocks of uninterrupted time with plentiful resources. In successful schools of each type, the entire school shared a vision, and they were committed for a long term of 8 to 10 years to improve reading

instruction. Without exception a stable school administration was also a part of the successful schools meeting the achievement standards set forth by the researchers.

Findings from the studies affirmed that teachers in the successful schools were given a high degree of autonomy in their reading instructional choices. Even so, these teachers operated in a community of colleagues who were all committed to the same vision. Furthermore, comprehension instruction in these schools was expanded to include increased higher order thinking, more diverse reading materials, and more emphasis on the social context of reading. The school context and the teacher had as much impact on students' academic success as the child's race, family economic status, or home context. This finding was in agreement with other studies and reports (The Task Force on Teaching and Student Achievement, 1999; Ferguson, 1991; Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Barbara Taylor and the CIERA team (*Center for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement*) led a research effort to study teachers and their professional development. This study was ranked highly by reviewers in England who prepared a synthesis of the research on school and teacher effects on reading and writing (Hall & Harding, 2003). Taylor's *et al.* research provided a connection between the research of effective schools and effective literacy teachers (Taylor *et al.*, 2000).

Linking school and classroom factors, the Taylor *et al.* study considered variables that impact primary-grade reading achievement in low-income school settings. Working in 14 schools across the United States, the researchers studied teachers in first through third grade from all of the schools, for a total of 70 teachers. The researchers strengthened the study by data collection from two low and two average readers from

each classroom. The readers were assessed in the fall and spring in three reading areas: fluency, accuracy of reading, and comprehension. Including observers with specialized training to interview all the teachers increased the study's rigor. In addition, each teacher kept a teaching log of activities and completed a written survey. Trained researchers observed each teacher. Each of the 14 schools was coded by one of three classifications: most effective, moderately effective, and least effective. The most effective schools reflected a combination of school and teacher factors. Factors showing significance were home-school connections, student progress monitored with a systematic assessment procedure, and communication and collaboration among staff (Taylor *et al.*, 2000).

The effective schools used a collaborative instructional model that involved early reading intervention. Teacher factors included instruction delivered in small groups, independent reading with high student engagement, and strong communication between teachers and parents. The teachers ensured interactions that included higher order thinking and involvement. In the effective schools, reading was the main priority. In conclusion, this study supported the finding that primary level reading instruction was best done in small groups based on achievement with progress monitored often. A significant amount of on-task independent reading punctuated with the teaching of needs-based skills and strategies was also found to be a factor. Teachers who delivered the best instruction were adept at coaching readers and keeping them on-task (Taylor *et al.*, 2000).

Barbara Taylor and the *CIERA* team, a research group, published a number of reports related to reading achievement and teacher behaviors. Taylor *et al.* (2003) reported findings related to cognitive engagement. This study included four teaching dimensions that comprised a framework for cognitive engagement. The teaching

dimensions included teachers supporting higher-level thinking, encouraging independent use of word recognition and comprehension strategies, using a student-support stance, and promoting active involvement with literacy activities. The summary of this research report states:

The description of effective reading instruction emerging from our work encompasses teachers who challenge students with higher-level thinking and the application of reading strategies to their reading and writing. Effective teachers' questioning for texts is purposeful, and they assess students' learning (Taylor *et al.*, 2003, p. 24)

In a synthesis across case studies of teachers and schools promoting reading achievement, Taylor *et al.* (2002) drew conclusions from three studies of high poverty schools that were successful in raising reading achievement. All three schools were opposed to packaged programs in spite of the pressure for schools to adopt the magic bullet of a scripted program for reading. The final analysis of the schools' success demonstrated hard work and dedication focused on classroom and school-wide best literacy practices like those described in the school change research conducted by Joyce *et al.* (1993).

While colleagues across the nation and world were studying school reform, Taffy Raphael, a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was working in Chicago school reform. In Raphael's National Reading Conference (NRC) address, she described her eight-year partnership with schools to improve literacy instruction. Key themes in her address were the history of school reform with a synthesis of the poverty-induced factors such as poor health, high stress, and the decline of reading ability over the

summer months. When school failures were discussed in public forums, Raphael stressed that educators were often characterized as the culprit (Raphael, 2010).

The NRC address was a narrative report of Raphael's Chicago reform work, which included collaboration with Kathryn Au and Barbara Taylor. As these researchers and others sought to answer how good reform techniques can be spread across schools and how schools can move from ineffective to effective, six features emerged. The six features were professional development on effective literacy instruction conducted by outside partners, learning communities developed within the schools, learning communities participating in well planned professional development, reflective practice as a means to guide teaching change, professional development based on needs, and literacy leaders who embraced continuous learning (Raphael, 2010).

Raphael described the school reform model used in Chicago as the *Standards Based Change Process (SBCP)*. Kathryn Au developed this model while conducting research in Hawaii. Raphael detailed how the model was refined for Chicago. In this literacy change approach, the reader was viewed through a developmental lens with progress ascending in a step fashion starting at the reader's emergence all the way to the reader's graduation. Schools started the reform process by visioning how this development looked with their children. High expectations were the hallmark of the steps. The literacy growth spanned the reader's full development leaving no gaps or holes. The reform did not include programs. Instead of adopting packaged programs, schools built on their strengths and planned a strategy for addressing the weak areas of the curriculum. The schools used a gradual release of responsibility and included all

adults. Resources, programs, and materials were carefully selected to suit the schools and students (Raphael, 2010).

The eight-year Chicago reform effort was a commitment made by Raphael and colleagues beginning in 2002 and ending in 2009. The Chicago reform studies were important because the district was the third largest school district in America and one of the most researched. Demographics were 45% African American, 41% Latino, and 12% Caucasian, Asian/Pacific Islander or Native American. Poverty levels were high with 85% of students meeting the criteria for poverty.

Outlining how the reform unfolded, Raphael began with the original ten schools. She described the movement as focused on requirements for high expectations and strategies for navigating the impediments to progress. The team started with two primary efforts to build understandings of literacy, leadership, and reform itself. This beginning effort was critical for creating cohorts of schools and leaders who could sustain the work. This *Standards Based Change Process (SBCP)* in Chicago had three components: the guidance of schools through the process of reform, dimensions for school improvement, and levels of progress to identify focus for the school's efforts. The steps included all school staff working together to create a vision of their children through their development as readers. The school constructed end of the year goals and benchmarks to be administered three times a year. Common assessments were developed for the school to measure progress on how well goals were met. Progress on this assessment system was reported three times a year to the whole school so everyone knew the status of the reform effort. The use of benchmark assessments three times a year aided in planning, finding problem areas, and progress monitoring of the school reform effort.

This reform effort had core dimensions that included the following: developing infrastructure, focusing on classroom practices, and building on student's engagement and achievement. A seven layer developmental model was used to determine where schools were on their journey. Labels for the layers included emerging schools, aspiring schools, progressing schools, and inspiring schools (Raphael, 2010). Au and colleagues outlined the seven levels as: recognizing a need; organizing for change; working on building blocks of professional learning communities, including vision-building, moving as a whole school; establishing a system; implementing the literacy curriculum; and engaging readers and their families (Au *et al.*, 2008).

The reform delivery mechanisms in the Chicago reform project included monthly meetings for principals, coaches, and teacher leaders. School site visits were conducted emphasizing collaborative work with teachers, grade levels, and teacher teams. Finally, professional development was used to deliver content. Over eight years the *SBCP* teams worked with thirty Chicago schools bringing on as many as ten schools a year. Data from these eight years were analyzed with qualitative measures of constant comparative methods. Teacher surveys and standardized achievement scores provided a quantitative component to the research. Findings included positives, such as the longer schools participated the more the achievement test scores improved. Raphael named three seminal findings: reform can be done; teams were essential to reform; and reform was fragile when sustainability was the goal. Raphael credited Kathryn Au with setting a strong structure in place ready for modification and for scaling up to other locations (Raphael, 2010).

Katherine Au, a university professor, had long been associated with creating environments for school reform around higher standards. She labeled the work she did with high poverty schools involved in reform as a “slippery slope” (Au, 2005, p. 267). Au worked with diverse students to assist the process of high literacy attainment. Her primary goal was to offer high levels of thinking and rigorous literacy opportunities to the students from diverse backgrounds.

A constructivist, Au sought a reform effort to create classrooms that allowed students the opportunity to synthesize and create information as opposed to following scripted programs. Au supported this same constructivist stance when working with teachers. She believed teachers were best prepared to design curriculum for their students within teacher communities of practice. These theoretical orientations permeated the *Standards-Based Change Process (SBCP)* that was first developed in Kipapa School in Hawaii and later grew into a process that scaled up in the Chicago Public Schools.

Au (2005) wrote of her Hawaiian school change project and the hope that she felt as the process unfolded. She built the context for the reform efforts in Hawaii by situating the effort in the Consortium for Responsible School Change in Literacy located at the University of Minnesota’s Reading Research Center. Citing Barbara Taylor as the resource for her reform framework, Au listed the *SBCP* guiding principles as organizational support, support for individual change, and balanced literacy content all within a paradigm of teacher professional development. The professional development sessions at successful schools were coordinated around the goals for a year. Eight days were devoted to curriculum development with teacher teams. From the perspective of

years of research, Au made clear that the work needed in high poverty settings was long range, and the role she saw for university professors was one of support and continued engagement (Au, 2005).

Using the *Standards-Based Change Process (SBCP)*, Au placed student achievement at the center of the reform by using a checklist. The “To-Do List” (Au, 2005, p. 268) included: developing a school-wide philosophy; building a vision of an excellent reader; designing student friendly grade-level benchmarks; wording the benchmarks in positive student language; collecting evidence of student progress; writing procedures and steps for collecting evidence; creating rubrics and scoring procedures; displaying students’ work toward meeting benchmarks; and writing lessons (Au, Hirata, & Raphael, 2005).

Beginning in 1997 with the *Standards-Based Change Process (SBCP)*, Au worked in over 100 Hawaiian schools. Over a four-year reform, Kathryn Au established a scalable model of school reform (Raphael *et al.*, 2006). This *Standards-Based Change Process* addressed four struggles confronting schools as they implemented standards. Problem one was that there were no ways to solve the problems of struggling schools. Higher test scores and standards-based instruction were cyclical in nature. Commitment from schools required time characterized by taking a long view of change. Moving from outside to internal control was also a problem. Collecting data on student progress on benchmark assessments and deciding on instructional moves to increase student achievement alleviated the feeling that control was external. Spiral curricula integrating grade level curricula and goals were necessary for success.

Au advocated for schools developing their own reading reform plan, benchmark assessments, rubrics, and instructional practices to meet standards. Lack of focus in schools' professional development plan created meaningless teacher learning that was disconnected from the reality of the classrooms. Successful *SBCP* schools developed plans over several years that created coherence between the need to improve student achievement and the need to change teaching practice to ensure improvement (Au *et al.*, 2005).

In summary, Au stated the goal of *Standards-Based Change Process (SBCP)* was "...to improve students' literacy achievement through professional development that empowers teachers to develop their own curricula" (Au *et al.*, 2005, p. 9). Au named numerous lessons learned about school reform through the research in Hawaiian schools. The first lesson was the need for all teachers to engage with the reform from the start. An onsite curriculum leader or resource teacher with knowledge of the school and its culture was critical. Schools with leadership teams working with a coordinator were the most effective. The presence of outside partners such as university support or technical advisors were important, but giving schools space to work through the "To Do List" (Au, 2005, p. 268) was equally important. Rather than the technical work, managing the complex social interactions during change was the most critical part of the change process.

The management by school staff, not an outsider, gave "staying power" to the change process (Au, 2005, p. 272). Au's research demonstrated one-half of the schools developed the ability to change and maintain the reform beyond two years. In sustaining the reform, school personnel realized that they were the answer to the problem not an

outside program. Successful schools that changed demonstrated school culture as more important than the method to teach reading (Au, 2005). Au and others reported that school culture had the greatest impact on teachers' development professionally as well as students' achievement (Au, 2005; Mosenthal *et al.*, 2002).

Internationally, researchers were at work to answer questions about literacy achievement and professional development. New Zealand's literacy and professional development research programs were reported by Taylor *et al.* (2011). The government of New Zealand partnered in research projects with universities and schools to create equitable literacy opportunities and higher achievement in the Maori and Pacifica student populations. The Pisa (Program for International Assessment Studies) studies often ranked the achievement levels of New Zealand students at high levels of reading comprehension, yet there were major differences among student populations. Much work and time were invested to close this gap in student achievement. The new change programs created more attention to struggling populations. (Timperley & Parr, 2007; Lai *et al.*, 2009).

In 2007, Timperley and Parr reported findings from *The Literacy Professional Development Project*. Described as a "school-based, job embedded model of professional development," this New Zealand reform effort increased student achievement for students scoring in the lowest 20%, as well as improving scores of other students (Timperley & Parr, 2007, p. 96). The lowest students were consistently two or more years below reading level as compared to their peers. The researchers collected data on this national professional development with the goal of studying improved literacy instruction and achievement over a two-year multi-level project in 91 schools.

The project was based upon two tenets: consistency between levels of schooling and administration and an inquiry approach to data study. The leadership team of the project included the Ministry of Education, regional team leaders of the school-based facilitators, Timperley and Parr (researchers), and leaders from a professional development organization.

The Timperley and Parr (2007) study was conducted as a continual inquiry by seeking to find how students learned, how teachers instructed literacy, how professional development facilitators guided teacher development, and how top-level administration designed systems. The entire literacy rich project was a collaborative learning system, and everyone was examining practice and regrouping based on the study of his/her role. Participation in the inquiry required “sophisticated content knowledge” (Timperley & Parr, 2007, p. 94). This knowledge base focused the problem solving process when students’ achievement stalled. Facilitators used study groups, demonstrations, workshops, and onsite professional development to build the literacy knowledge at all personnel levels.

Data included student literacy achievement scores, observations of leaders and operations, and interviews with principals, literacy coaches, and teachers. Recursive feedback at all levels resulted in improved student achievement, the project’s ultimate goal. Even the lowest scoring students achieved at higher levels as a result of the plan (Timperley & Parr, 2007).

The essential elements of this project included:

- coherence among all stakeholders;
- reform of whole schools;

- coordination across grade-level instruction; and
- guidance for change from teachers and upper level leaders.

Reflexive questions dominated the project. Self-regulated inquiry learning occurred at every level of the reform effort and was the guiding tenet of the work. Improvement required constant monitoring of the literacy program, changing the instruction to fit project goals, and using feedback to grow. Throughout the process, student learning was the guiding goal and standard. The Ministry of Education required the following goals: an increase in student achievement; an improvement of teachers' literacy knowledge; a transfer of literacy pedagogy to practice; and an inclusion of professional learning communities. Schools checked on their progress every six months and provided progress reports.

Analysis of the student data from classroom teachers' scoring of student achievement tests included a sampling within each class for scoring accuracy. The researchers measured gain over time. Writing scores were collected as writing samples were marked on a common scale or rubric. Facilitators monitored the scoring in all schools, and three data sets were collected. Data from interviews were coded from a co-constructed needs analysis approach (Timperley & Parr, 2007). Feedback offered to teachers was analyzed by coding the data according to how observations connected with project goals, how talk about co-constructed instructional change was enacted, and how techniques for ongoing feedback were developed. The New Zealand reform effort raised student achievement in literacy with improvement in reading and writing scores. The improvement in reading was four times the expected gain (Timperley & Parr. 2007). The organization, structures, and professional development in *The Literacy Professional*

Development Project produced results on the high end of the school reform scale. The significant progress made by readers and writers in the lowest achievement ranks was unusual and noteworthy for the impact the project had on an underserved population (Timperley *et al.*, 2007).

In another New Zealand report, researchers Lai *et al.* (2009) studied schools with students from underserved indigenous and ethnic minorities in high poverty locations to determine how to sustain and accelerate their literacy growth. This research team reported that New Zealand literacy instruction had improved student achievement in the surface structure literacy skills but not in reading comprehension. The Lai *et al.* study created a sense of urgency due to the continued disparity in comprehension scores of children from families with low income and low employment histories. Even though emphasis had been placed on early reading initiatives in many English-speaking countries, the gap continued for many minority students. The authors stated the “more language-based and content-dependent nature of comprehension” was very difficult to “teach and learn” (Lai *et al.*, 2009, p. 31).

The researchers studied the acceleration of achievement of readers from poverty and minority backgrounds. One suggested practice was the use of instructional data and another practice was the use of professional learning communities to “fine tune” instruction (Lai *et al.*, 2009, p. 33). Data analysis and work to generate answers to instructional dilemmas when children were not achieving were important components of the professional learning communities’ work. Recommended classroom practices were independent reading supported by instruction in skills and strategies, student self-regulation, active engagement, and students’ cultural capital. The suggested practice of

studying children and schools as specific cases and basing intervention on very context specific scenarios created student driven reforms. The authors believed in this matching of context to reform effort. “Our argument is using detailed evidence to affect instructional changes in a sustained way requires more than an intervention that prespecifies these changes” (Lai *et al.*, 2009, p. 33).

The researchers assumed that acceleration of children’s learning relied on two points. First, teachers working within communities analyzed how effective they were teaching and how students were learning. Second, after data analysis, the community carefully aligned teaching to the learners’ needs. The Lai *et al.* (2009) study was conducted over three years and in three phases with acceleration of student achievement as the primary focus.

The Lai *et al.* research team developed a support community composed of the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the University of Auckland Woolf Fisher Research Center, and New Zealand schools involved in school reform. This plan to include all stakeholders ensured sustainability. The government team members were involved to support connections between teaching, policy, and university research. The seven schools in the study ranged from 300 to 600 students and were populated with students from communities with the highest socioeconomic need. Three schools served primary children. Two schools worked with Year 1 through Year 6 children. One school served intermediate grades, and one school served middle school students. There were over 1,900 students representing 14 ethnic groups involved in this quasi-experimental study. Over one-half of the students’ home language was not English (Lai *et al.*, 2009).

The rationale for the study design revolved around the changing dynamics of schools and the need to provide a research plan that included variability. The researchers chose a quasi-experimental design to check “testing effectiveness over a period of time” (Lai *et al.*, 2009). The focus of the study’s intervention was acceleration of achievement over three years and the impact was increased students’ reading levels to expected norms. The researchers called this “a benchmark for effectiveness” (Lai *et al.*, 2009, p. 44). This study’s improvement plan was the only New Zealand reform that increased achievement for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The significance of the study was in the contextualized content for the specific children and schools served and in the fact that they used no packaged reform materials.

A synthesis of this reform effort, *The Learning Schools Model*, described teachers as adaptive experts who knew how to teach reading with confidence. This confidence ensured a pathway to adaptation. Examination of data at the school and district level encouraged teachers' to use different assessments for different purposes in order to meet every student's need. The context of schools created the critical component of improvement. Professional learning communities (*PLC*) in this model led the change process. Outside partners were an instrumental part of the school learning community (McNaughton & Lai, 2010). These professional learning communities were described as places where teachers worked together to bring instruction closer to agreed upon standards (Kruse *et al.*, 1994). The core business of the professional learning community (*PLC*) was to look at data and make instructional decisions, inquire into student need, and place this inquiry and these decisions against theory and research. The most successful communities sought knowledgeable others to assist them in problem solving. In turn, the

knowledgeable others were responsive to schools and acted as co-learners in the improvement process. Instructional leadership was critical for success of the instructional innovations (McNaughton & Lai, 2009 and 2010).

Fisher and Frey (2007) reported on a reform project informed by extensive literacy research. Taking the reform to scale across schools and districts was difficult. The two researchers suggested “precision in teaching” (Fisher & Frey, 2007, p. 32). Precision required in-depth understanding of literacy, instruction, and student needs. Fisher and Frey believed these conditions had to be in place for successful reform. To create environments where research-based practices could be implemented across a whole school, content knowledge and careful attention to students’ literacy development were a priority. The teachers at Rosa Parks Community School in San Diego, California, developed a framework for teaching literacy, which targeted teacher development in learning communities. The focus of the work was building in-depth knowledge about literacy instruction and about the way students learn to read and write. Rosa Parks School’s population was over 1500 students with 100% of the students qualifying for free lunches (Fisher & Frey, 2007).

The troubled Rosa Parks School decided to take action in 1999 by creating a team to manage and support a response to poor student achievement. The team designed a plan with the following tenets: interaction in social context for learning; integration of the language arts with content subjects; and the use of the gradual release of responsibility. The foundation for an instructional framework was built on teachers’ core beliefs. A cohesive teaching plan with a common language was built.

The final literacy framework developed at Rosa Parks placed heavy emphasis on teachers modeling what students do with reading and writing skills and strategies. With work completed on how to instruct, the team developed content around grade-level standards resulting in higher expectations. Common assessments were created and administered. The school also worked to institute independent reading as one of its focused strategies. Teacher modeling and independent learning were the final steps to complete the framework (Fisher & Frey, 2007).

The Fisher and Frey design team decided to alleviate the grouping practices that worked against student self-esteem. Embracing fluid grouping practices, structures were put into the framework that allowed for small group instruction while the remainder of the class worked in collaborative groups at centers. The small groups eventually grew into discussion groups. After the final framework was completed, the whole school agreed to use the plan. Fisher and Frey called this “going to scale” (Fisher & Frey, 2007, p. 37). The Rosa Parks staff also agreed to use precise instruction instead of a packaged program. During professional development, teachers learned the framework and the supporting research behind the instructional practices. The principal was also included in the effort and often conducted a walk-through looking for evidence of the framework. When evidence was not found, a follow up conference was conducted with the teacher. Teachers were supported by focused development opportunities that included learning in communities and coaching by peers.

Many lessons were learned from this reform effort. Students increased their reading and writing ability, and expectations for standards attainment were heightened. The researchers interviewed school personnel and a conclusion from the interviews was

the powerful nature of a framework with a common language. With a common language, conversations in learning communities were built on important literacy tenets and the sharing of ideas. Teachers believed the framework was internalized by the entire staff with deep understanding around the what, how, and why of teaching literacy. More time was spent on instruction, and students developed useful literacy habits after years of instruction developed from this cohesive framework. Teachers' developing themselves around a constant focused framework was important to the work at Rosa Parks. The researchers were adamant that context was important, and they reiterated this plan might not work everywhere the way it did at this school. In summary, small-group teaching paired with good whole class literacy instruction created a winning situation at Rosa Parks. High expectations developed as teachers implemented the framework. More time spent on learning with focused teaching provided powerful additives that increased achievement. (Fisher & Frey, 2007).

Much of the information in this review was based on a small group of dedicated researchers (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). Leadership from the Minnesota Center for Reading Research (*MCRR*) guided the way for disseminating studies around critical issues in school reform. The *MCRR* leaders joined with educators to create the *Consortium for Responsible School Change in Literacy*. They worked systematically alongside schools to spread best literacy practice through professional development to K-12 teachers. The university consortium members also researched effective school reform efforts revealing similar patterns among all the sites. (Minnesota Center for Reading Research at the University of Minnesota, 2010). Taffy Raphael summarized the *MCRR* efforts by stating school change was hard but doable. The researchers acquired significant knowledge

about what to teach and how to support schools through the change process (Raphael, 2010; Pearson, 2010; McNaughton, 2006; McNaughton, 2010; Wilkerson, 2010).

Taylor *et al.* (2011) synthesized the literacy reform literature and stated that much was known about what it took to impact schools. An overarching theme in reform was teachers acting together to focus on change and on content specifically designed for their schools. Research-based literacy instruction alone did not account for the change seen in successful reform efforts. Diligence and faithfulness to implementing the instruction were necessary for success. The misplaced notion that the hard work of changing literacy instruction came from the outside was not grounded in the reality of successful reform. Teachers needed time to deepen content knowledge and study instructional methods in a well-planned professional development system. As teachers learned to become adaptive to the needs of readers in their classrooms, they required support from leaders to shape their reform efforts (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

In conclusion, six elements were required for successful school reform. First, the entire school understood the principals of the reform framework. Every member committed to implementing the principles of change and the required content by going beyond just agreeing to the reform effort. All involved in the change process understood that the reform efforts changed through the process. Adaptation at the local level proved necessary. Leadership at the school and district worked in tandem to keep the effort growing and to sustain the change. The best professional development required high standards and expected schools to work together in communities. The final element was the deepening of teachers' content knowledge and the building of adaptive pedagogy (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

Writing about contemporary reading policy, Coburn, Pearson, and Woulfin (2011) predicted that reaching full implementation with high student achievement required close inspection of the descriptions of reform by Taylor *et al.* (2011), particularly the *School Change in Reading Framework*.

...we should probably look to more open and process-focused approaches to reform-interventions that offer participants prerogative in shaping new initiatives within a common framework. (Coburn *et al.*, 2011, p. 584)

Programs and reform efforts were well entrenched in the decade between 2000 and 2010. Many literacy reform efforts were unsuccessful because the teachers were not included as true participants, and their voices were not heard. Often little or no credence was placed in what teachers knew and no investment was made in teacher knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Lori Shepard (2004) stated, “research embedded in the dilemmas of practice” were necessary for school reform (p. 1632). She suggested that teacher change impacting student learning required teachers to try out and reflect on new approaches in the context of their own classrooms.

Culture and Diversity

As researchers developed a rich research base on school reform, school enrollment of students from diverse backgrounds increased. The need for knowledge on exemplary teaching practices supporting diverse students was expressed by Villegas and has since created fluctuating interest. The context of schools and the differences between faculties and students created a need to review culturally relevant pedagogy research.

Villegas’ issued a call to action:

...how people are expected to go about learning may differ across cultures. In order to maximize learning opportunities, teachers must gain knowledge of the

cultures represented in their classrooms, then translate this knowledge into instructional practice. (Villegas, 1991, p.13)

Cohen defined culture as a pattern. The pattern included values, institutions, and beliefs as well as behaviors, all shared by people in groups. Transmitted by one generation to the next, culture frames life contexts. Advocating for the use of an applied perspective of culture, Cohen iterated that educational settings could be much “better understood by appreciating the role of culture” (Cohen, 2009, p. 202).

A growing gap in achievement has created a need for more information on how to teach and reach all children. A disproportionate number of diverse students lacked skills and strategies to perform as well as their peers. In 2006, the National Center for Educational Statistics projected that by 2020 more than one half of public school children in America would be labeled as children of color (Ball, Skerrett, & Martinez, 2011). The same high standards expected of all children across cultures would need to be maintained by the current culturally and linguistically complex classrooms populated by children representing many cultures and races.

Ball (2009) recently responded to the urgency for effective instructional approaches to support the complex context of these classrooms. The research reviewed in the following section offers insight into the culturally relevant instruction of successful teachers of children of color. Ernest Morrell, UCLA Associate Professor of Urban Schooling, stated:

I begin with the assumption that all successful learning is the result of meaningful connection and therefore all successful literacy teaching will draw connections between the worlds of students and the world of academic literacy. (Morrell, 2011, p. 69)

Terrance Wiley (2005) suggested that successful teachers of diverse students must focus on creating learning environments free from what he termed a “hidden curriculum”

or the maintenance of the status quo around one dominate culture (Wiley, 2005, p. 150). Wiley described three actions often taken by schools that varied in support of diverse students. The first action was the least desirable, adaptation, the expectation that students changed to fit existing school conditions. Another action was accommodation that required teachers to understand communication and literacy habits of students. The third action was the most desirable, incorporation, where all student groups were valued and their culture incorporated in the curriculum. Wiley advocated for schools to embrace a role in creating bias-free conditions for all literacy learners.

In a recent research review, Fairbanks *et al.* (2009) discussed seminal studies about student diversity and their connection to reading comprehension. He used Wiley's framework to structure the review. The Fairbanks' *et al.* review suggested that adaptation was a deficit model naming direct instruction and similar programs as advocates of this type of instruction. The action of adaptation primarily focused on closing the learning gap that existed for struggling learners but was not inclusive of diversity. According to Fairbanks, the accommodation model built on students' culture and knowledge of linguistics and relied on explicit instruction. The CIERA projects (Taylor *et al.* 2003, Taylor & Pearson, 2005) were listed as examples of accommodation. The Fairbanks *et al.* suggested Luis Moll's work as supportive of incorporation because of the researcher's inclusion of students' communities of literacy practice. The Wiley framework provided a useful lens for reviewing and discussing research that supported culturally responsive reading instruction (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009).

In the review of research on culturally relevant pedagogy and reading, Fairbanks *et al.* (2009) responded to the paucity of research linking reading comprehension to

culturally relevant pedagogy. The reviewers stated that many studies in this field did not yield a direct link to reading comprehension due to their qualitative and ethnographic designs which sought to answer how and why questions about readers rather than how much readers improved their comprehension. Most studies in this field sought to find out how students built meaning within their cultural context and the studies were not situated to determine the degree of student comprehension. The studies reported in Fairbanks *et al.* were considered seminal research in culturally relevant reading comprehension (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009).

Calling for more research on “culturally relevant pedagogy” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 160) to determine how students’ meaning counted when assessed, the Fairbanks *et al.* review ended by stating the significance of reader control over the meaning of texts created a powerful force to drive readers’ development (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009). Research reviewed from the work of Fairbanks *et al.* (2009) will be extended with more detail from the original studies and some newer studies.

In 1970, the Kamehameha Schools, were designed to prepare Hawaiian leaders and build their capability. In 1970, Roland Tharp and Ron Gallimore, psychologists, sought to answer the question: “Why do Hawaiian children have trouble learning to read? Is there anything the Kamehameha Schools can do about it?” (Tharp, 1998, p.161). The Hawaiian state built a K-3 laboratory school and the two psychologists, Tharp and Gallimore, studied Hawaiian children labeled as at-risk. The answer to the questions and the sixteen-year experience were recorded in *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context* (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). To address the reading dilemma of the Hawaiian children, Tharp and Gallimore advocated the implementation of

these elements: a balanced program of reading emphasizing comprehension, a multiple activity classroom organization with teacher-student co-narration, frequent assessment monitoring of student progress, and teacher supports to ensure fidelity to the prior named elements (Tharp, 1998).

In 1982, Roland Tharp published a review of the work at the Kamehameha School labeled as *KEEP*, an acronym for *Kamehameha Early Education Program*. Tharp described the *KEEP* plan as a model to adapt to the cultural needs and abilities of the children served. The program, influenced by Kathryn Au and others, featured comprehension taught in a systematic framework. The children served in this program were Polynesian-Hawaiian children labeled as high risk. The study was designed with an experimental group and a control group to test the *KEEP* program in comparison to a phonics-based program. Findings supported the *KEEP* program as more effective than the phonics-based program.

By observing homes, the project researchers discerned that native Hawaiian families used turn taking or talk story during family interactions. Building on the cultural phenomenon of talk story, a strategy for allowing this group turn-taking to build collective responses to read-aloud and story time was implemented as part of the comprehension instruction. Other community practices that were valued were the use of peer learning since observations showed that the children studied turned to their peers for help instead of adults (Tharp, 1982).

The *KEEP* program used customs and interaction styles from the children's daily home experiences to design the program elements. These elements were active comprehension instruction, small group work with numerous opportunities to apply

skills, motivation through a positive classroom climate, monitoring and feedback of student progress, and attention to individual student needs. The program included teacher monitoring and feedback for quality control of instruction. These elements were guided by cultural considerations (Tharp, 1982).

Tharp and Gallimore presented an educational theory based on the cultural awareness that evolved from the *KEEP* school and other research. The two advocated for assisted performance at the student and teacher level (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Tharp and colleagues developed a framework to support and value culture and language. These researchers and others at the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (*CREDE*) surveyed thousands of studies to organize a framework with the following five principals. Teachers and students worked together to create common learning goals that connected to students' everyday experiences. All learning utilized language development built within a context of honoring students' existing language and strengths. Learners' experiences built the curriculum within rich contextualized instruction. All curricula were driven by thinking and were developed through instructional conversation and dialogue to engage learners (Tharp, 1997a; Tharp, 1997b).

Like Tharp, Katherine Au (1998) conducted research at the Kamehameha School and led research studies based on student culture and literacy instruction. Kathryn Au worked for twenty-three years at the *Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP)* as a teacher in grades K-2, and then as a researcher and teacher educator. Au studied what worked with minority students. She found that effective beginning reading instruction involved surface structure letter-sound work, comprehension instruction, and writing. Phonics instruction was a part of the writing and reading curriculum. Au

observed small-guided reading work with rich discussions of literature in the most effective beginning reading instruction (Au, 1998).

Dedicated to a continual search for exemplary teachers and instructional strategies responding to the culture students bring to school, Au compiled research into a volume titled, *Multicultural Issues and Literacy Achievement* (2006). She addressed the use of class time and organization of the structures that supported literacy learning and maintained that teachers were obligated to “involve” readers in grade appropriate experiences and offer instruction meeting their attained level of reading (Au, 2006, p. 61-62). To support the work, Au drew from a teaching model, *Book Club Plus*, created by the research team of Raphael and McMahon (1994; Raphael *et al.*, 2001).

Au recommended the *Book Club Plus* model as an opportunity for diverse learners to become immersed in real whole literacy experiences while also allowing them time to learn the “parts” of reading (Au, 2006, p. 74). The gradual release of responsibility also offered a structure that supported the learners. Advocating for the six-step gradual release process for instruction from the work of Pearson and Gallagher (1983), Au listed the following as elements that teachers must do: name what was to be learned, show students how to do the assigned task, use time to guide and watch the students try the task, coach the students as needed, allow students to do the task without help, encourage students to check their success, and finally encourage students to set new learning targets (Au, 2006).

Other research studies on cultural relevance were conducted to determine characteristics of effective teachers of minority students. Louis Moll (1998) conducted studies with Hispanic students and Ladson-Billings (1994) documented the teaching of

African American students. Both researchers concluded that the best teachers of minority populations drew from the community to connect student learning to student culture. The use of cooperative learning was rated highly as a beneficial instructional strategy.

Gloria Ladson-Billings was credited with coining the term “culturally relevant teaching” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 106). Drawing from ethnographic and anthropological research, reviewed seminal studies and identified several culturally relevant practices. Among these practices, Billings noted that linking students’ language, communication styles, and culture, along with student group work, were the most important practices (Ladson-Billing, 1992).

Ladson-Billings (1994) studied exemplary teachers and learned how they provided instructional scaffolding. As teachers supported learning, students moved from what they knew to what they needed to know. Authentic education provided by exemplary teachers, extended children’s thinking and abilities. The most effective teaching encouraged deep knowledge of subject matter and the absolute determination that student language or attitude would not lower expectations (Ladson-Billings, 2002).

Ladson-Billings stated in another publication:

My argument is not that pressing human needs must be ignored by schools and teachers but that teachers cannot forget their primary mission – helping students learn. (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 56)

In *Crossing over to Canaan: The Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms*, Ladson-Billings (2001) wrote about passing knowledge from an older generation of educators to younger teachers and dedicated the book to teachers choosing to teach children of color. Ladson-Billings systematically studied eight young teachers enrolled in a program called Teach for Diversity (*TFD*). The *TFD* program was a graduate level university program. Dedicated to critical literacy, these teachers embraced

raising achievement of their students while using student culture to direct learning. Culturally relevant pedagogy rested on academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. These culturally relevant tenets served as the research framework for qualitative ethnographic study. The purpose of Ladson-Billings' research was to provide a deeper understanding of how teachers used culturally relevant pedagogy. Using the findings from *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African America Children* (Ladson-Billings, 1994 and 2009), Ladson Billings identified what successful teachers do in diverse school settings. She found that targeting the academic achievement of students, building cultural competence within students, and nurturing awareness of sociopolitical dynamics were the essential practices of the successful teachers. These essential practices influence the fifteen-month in the Teach for Diversity Program (TFD).

Ladson-Billing's framework held academic achievement as the standard above all others. By maintaining close student contact and providing feedback on progress towards goals the teachers assessed their students' achievement. The curriculum developed by these teachers intertwined social justice and equity with high expectations. These teachers made clear the rigorous expectations and the steps required to meet those expectations. They believed in the students' ability to achieve and this attitude permeated the classrooms. Text choice and materials matched the high expectations in these culturally relevant environments (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Recently, Ladson-Billings' passion for culturally relevant teaching and assessment was expressed at the 59th *National Reading Conference (NRC)* as she delivered an address titled, "*Why can't we read something good?*" How "*Standards,*" "*Testing,*" and

Scripted Curricula Impoverish Urban Students". Ladson-Billings labeled standards, testing, and scripted curricula as a type of violence to the minds of children. Her message considered the damage created by required texts that pushed children away from intended goals by requiring low interest and unconnected reading. By using data from national reports, she built a case that students were, in fact, reading many other materials in their world outside of school. Ladson-Billings' message was that reading was something that must be important in the lives of readers. Her fear of losing children to unconnected curricula was evident in the following quotation.

We are stripping every single joy out of reading and language and that is the opposite of what we are charged to do. ...it is true of the system to which we are acquiescing. (Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 18)

In this address, Ladson-Billings commented on the textbooks required by state mandates. She shared her concern that the design of textbooks was disrespectful to students and teachers. She documented the textbook phenomenon by describing how the required books imparted simplistic organization, shortened excerpts, and vocabulary explanations that implied students and teachers were not smart enough to read and comprehend the original texts. Her final point made clear that the emphasis on standardized tests created an environment of getting the right answer without much concern about students' abilities nor their desires to read and grow as thinkers (Ladson-Billings, 2010).

Recently, Ball and Tyson (2011) edited *Studying Diversity in Teacher Education* that included a chapter by Etta Hollins. Hollins offered these suggestions to build a new vision for embracing diversity and culture in teaching practice: involvement in "shared observations, collaborative inquiry, and problem solving based on evidence from classrooms with diverse and underserved students" (Hollins, 2011, p. 127). This practice

is an example of Ball and Tyson's suggestion that teachers must develop "the eye" for an "equity agenda" that overlays systems for educating our children (Ball & Tyson, 2011, p. 399).

Ball (2009) described teachers' development of pedagogical understandings of culturally and linguistically nondominant students (*CLNS*) as generativity. She explained that teachers who differed from their students in culture and race must become metacognitive about their teaching practice and remain continually vigilant. By this belief, she meant that the building of understanding required methods to connect teachers' personal and instructional knowledge with the knowledge of the students to produce a new knowledge. This new knowledge when used in planning curriculum and in solving problems built classrooms that were "communities of change" (Paris & Ball, 2009, p. 390).

The environments described by Paris and Ball (2009) were not a simple idea of learning communities. These classroom communities of change transformed learning and allowed students to become generative thinkers and participants in society, thereby, addressing the often forgotten political action component of Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1994) culturally relevant pedagogy (Paris & Ball, 2009).

Lisa Delpit, (1995), another proponent of cultural relevance, synthesized her research findings in the seminal text *Teaching other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. In this work, themes emerged that included the following characteristics of teaching practice that embraced culture: providing education self-determination, honoring and respecting the students' home culture, and helping African American students see the world as it is while changing the world for the better. Delpit

went further to guide reading educators. She encouraged teachers to be cognizant of the clash between school and student culture and the culturally different interaction styles among diverse populations. This caution included the call to have high expectations for all children no matter what stereotypes society chose for them. According to Delpit, child-deficit assumptions created the teaching of less as opposed to more.

When addressing the community as a whole, Delpit described the powerful connections that must exist between home and school and the connections to ensure reading success for all children. She suggested to educators that awareness of community norms and development of parental connections were starting points to solve the problems of education. By becoming aware of what she called the invisibility factor, Delpit suggested that educators acknowledge and honor differences by seeing each family as a rich addition to the school. She advocated facing the issues of educating educating poor and culturally diverse children (Delpit, 1995).

Delpit (2002) urged teachers to accept children and their language and by this acceptance African-American children would more likely be moved to standard school language. She suggested that there was a seminal need to listen to students, delve into their interests, and create curricula that convinces them of their origin in a brilliant historical culture. Rinaldi also supported the concept of listening carefully to children and remaining in dialogue with them (2005). Delpit described this type of critical literacy curriculum as one generated from the community of learners with deep respect for the children and families served. The school was considered a place where democracy could be experienced. When viewed as a living laboratory where students live, learn and transform their world, schools become culturally relevant institutions.

In a 2003 *Dewitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Distinguished Lecture*, Lisa Delpit referred to educators as seed people whose business and responsibility was to grow futures. In this paper, she advocated for a conscious and carefully planned environment that built vocabulary through lived experiences and connected new school information to the cultures of students. Delpit (2003) deepened her work from prior years by asserting that teachers were the power needed to change education. She stated, "The reality is that we can actually save the children we teach and ourselves, regardless of which instructional program we adopt" (Delpit, 2010, p. 168).

In this lecture, Delpit's offered ten perceptions to support teachers in their role as school change agents included the following lessons learned from exemplary teachers. First, Delpit (2010) suggested teaching more content with rigorous processes while assuming that children are capable and smart thinkers. Teaching up and demanding the highest standards were techniques used by teachers who were successful with diverse students. Second, access to the basic language skills gained through relentless efforts to build meaning proved to be a method of choice of successful teachers. A third percept created by exemplary teachers revolved around critical thinking as the umbrella for all instruction. This took precedence over methodology, programs, and materials.

Confrontation of racial bias provided tools for supporting students' power to delve inside themselves for strength when facing difficulty. This fourth item created an environment in schools and communities in which students looked beyond the dominant culture's projection of poor minority communities as deficit. Fifth, recognition of student gifts and talents required deep knowledge of their out-of-school-lives. The sixth percept of using the students' background knowledge as a connecting point for all teaching and

learning led to a seventh principal of classroom community. This classroom community was built on achievement that required the development of deep relationships in classrooms. Diane Barone's (2003) research on second-grade teachers supported this notion also) as did Paratore and McCormack (2005). Careful monitoring and assessment of learning needs, respecting students' culture, and creating student transformational attitudes completed the list (Delpit, 2010).

Louis Moll *et al.* (2005) designed a study merging education and anthropology together by researching teachers' instruction and Mexican American households in Arizona. The investigation sought to find teaching innovations that drew from the home background of children. The researchers aspired to move teaching and classroom environments beyond repetitive and boring instruction. They hypothesized that by using the household practices experienced by children the classroom instruction would become engaging and rigorous.

The Moll *et al.* (2005) research team used qualitative methods including observations, interviews, life histories, and case studies to represent the manner in which households functioned "within their sociohistorical contexts" (Moll *et al.*, 2005, p. 71). Analysis of home interactions, study of classrooms, and the creation of after school study opportunities were conducted collaboratively with classroom teachers who were action researchers and members of Moll's research team. Data collected were termed "funds of knowledge" and defined as the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll *et al.*, 2005, p. 72).

The key findings were the “strategic connections” (Moll *et al.*, 2005, p. 72) between teachers and children. These expert teachers knew the child as a multidimensional whole and had deep connections to community and family. This whole child concept is recognized and supported by other organizations and researchers (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Whole Child Initiative, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2009; Copple, 2010).

Geneva Gay’s list of culturally responsive teaching was similar to the work of other scholars in the field of cultural relevance (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Delpit, 1994; Moll, 1998; Au, 2006). Gay’s list of five essential elements included teacher knowledge about diversity, curriculum content related to culture, communities for learning, communication with diverse students, and delivery of instruction with a responsive stance toward ethnic diversity (Gay, 2002 and 2010).

Carol Lee, a professor at Northwestern University, explained that diversity must be fundamental to our instructional work as opposed to viewing difference as pathological. Viewing social exchange and culture as the melting pot for student development, Lee outlined adaptability as the key feature for human survival as well as the mark of a culturally supportive classroom environment. Delivering the 2008 *Wallace Foundation Distinguished Lecture*, Lee supported her lecture, *The Centrality of Culture to the Scientific Study of Learning and Development: How an Ecological Framework in Education Research Facilitates Civic Responsibility*, with research that dictated “multiple pathways for learning and development” (Lee, 2008, p. 269) and ended with implications for practice.

Drawing on her research of African American students’ response to literature,

Carol Lee named requirements for a cultural modeling framework for curriculum design (Lee, 1993). First, the cultural modeling framework required teachers to know what students do outside of school and secondly to connect those student activities to required academic curricula ensured relevant instruction. Deep teacher content knowledge was required for mapping to occur (Lee, 2008). Lee recommended that culturally rich classroom environments included connecting content to learners' daily experiences to scaffold for deep levels of comprehension. By valuing of students' language, teachers provided them with a vehicle for expressing their thoughts and for experiencing a sense of belonging (Lee, 1995, 2000, and 2008).

Continually viewing difference through a positive lens instead of a filter for pathology, Carol Lee (2008) explained how culture facilitates learning especially when the focus is on the students' language. Lee's dissertation was based on teaching high levels of literature analysis to inner city students by using the African American oral language traditions of signifying. The oral tradition of signifying was built upon innuendo and double meanings. By tapping into students' prior knowledge of how language was used, Lee uncovered the students' ability to operate with high levels of inferential comprehension by attending to African American's oral traditions (Lee, 1993).

Another element of Lee's research was text choice. By using books written by African American writers who captured the conventions and cadences of Black English Vernacular, Lee built upon students' connections to the literature. Over a six-week period, Lee worked in two inner-city schools with almost all African American students. Using four experimental classes and two control classes, Lee designed a study. The findings affirmed that the experimental group, who had the lowest reading scores at the

start, demonstrated the greatest gains. These gains were attributed to the fact that students read and discussed books that connected to their culture and language (Lee, 1993; 1995; and 2000).

Lee's study of the use of African American students' culture, language, background knowledge and the matching of experiences to texts provided a Vygotskian theoretical base for her research and offered a review of what students must know and be able to do if they are to succeed in literary analysis. Using Vygotsky's (1987) premise that language was the mediator of knowledge building for humans, Lee supported the premise that language served as a concept organizer and the medium through which thinking occurred. Lee's Vygotskian techniques used spontaneous concepts that were developed within students' community experience (Lee, 2000).

These Vygotskian concepts embraced by Lee (2000) were further refined by formal concepts developed in academic school settings. The spontaneous concepts provided a framework for the further development of formal learning in school. Lee stated that students must also learn to ask questions, attend to the most important text parts, and generate arguments using text and background knowledge while monitoring their understanding (Lee, 2000). The response to literature provided opportunities for culturally-based response as shown in other studies. Galda and Beach (2001) also wrote about response to literature as a cultural activity: "By creating opportunities for students to read and respond in the company of others, teachers foster their students' ability to make sense of text worlds and lived worlds" (Galda & Beach, 2001, p. 71).

Alfred Tatum wrote, "Diversity is a sociologically influenced term that does not fit neatly in literacy research" (Tatum, 2011, p. 425). In the chapter, *Diversity and*

Literacy, Tatum prepared a two-page checklist of research-based suggestions for literacy educators. This checklist confirmed the preceding literature review on diversity .(Tatum, 2011).

Basing his personal literacy practice and much of his writing on text choice, Tatum (2011) emphasized that classrooms honoring children and diversity required the teaching skills of careful, precise planning with just right texts, genre, and essential questions. Tatum summarized with the final reminder that the creation of safe places for children must be an integral component in literacy work. These safe places provided opportunities for students to respond to provocative literature just as Galda and Beach (2001) reported ten years earlier. Through the specifics of a planning grid that included listed texts, text starters or provocative book excerpts, and essential questions, Tatum (2011) provided concrete details about the type of quality teaching required to move literacy instruction toward embracing the tenets of diversity.

Bergin and Bergin named teacher quality as education's "silver bullet" and suggested that developing outstanding teaching skills must be based on the science of child development (Bergin & Bergin, 2011, p. xxi). These child development experts explained that awareness of diversity was the foundation for interpreting student behavior and responding appropriately. Theories of child development by Margaret Beal Spencer (2008a) and Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) placed alongside the research on effective teachers and culturally relevant pedagogy builds a framework for instruction that supports all children and especially marginalized children from minority groups.

Critical Literacy

As a field of study, critical literacy has created dimensions for political, moral, and equitable instructional practices (Luke & Freebody, 1999). These dimensions were grounded in the work of Freire, 1970; Gee, 1992; Giroux, 2001 and 2004; Green, 2001 and supported by researchers such as Au, Moll, Ladson-Billings, Lisa Delpit, Gay, and Lee. Critical literacy described by Comber, “involves people using language to exercise power, to enhance everyday life and to question practices of privilege and injustice” (Comber, 2001, p. 173).

Critical literacy has created a broader view of exemplary literacy teachers and instruction both in the United States and internationally. Behrman reviewed research articles between 1999 and 2003 that included critical literacy pedagogy. Findings on classrooms using a critical literacy stance indicated that students used books beyond required textbooks, read texts written on the same topic from authors with varied viewpoints, read from a critical stance, researched on topics of their choice, created their own texts, and took social action (Behrman, 2006).

In a webcast, Allan Luke, an Australian research professor, described critical literacy as an act of construction and inference (<http://www.curriculum.org/secretariat/criticalpathways/lukecritical.shtml>). Luke asserted that critical literacy has become “a new basic” for survival in the world. In a recent publication, Luke and Dooley (2011) described critical literacy as the use of text to analyze and change power relationships in culture, society, and politics. Critical literacy historically has been about equity in acquiring language and literacy, particularly in marginalized groups. To support a critical stance, students were encouraged to question texts and develop an awareness of author’s

purpose. Proponents of critical literacy believed that developing a questioning stance is critical in a multimodal society that includes visual, aural, and digital formats.

Gaining influence, critical literacy has begun to impact whole countries. Using Freebody and Luke's reading model (Freebody & Luke, 1990), the Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat adopted the key concepts of critical literacy to guide exemplary literacy teaching. The five concepts they chose were: all texts were constructed by authors who brought their own message; all texts carried messages that expressed someone's values and beliefs; all readers interpreted texts and their messages in their own way; "texts are served by different interests; and the medium develops its own "language" in order to position readers/viewers in certain ways" (The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2009, p. 20).

Teacher Expertise

Schon (1983) stated that professionals were obligated to reflect often on what they knew. This process included reflection about the professional's actions and how the "client" perceived the actions (p. 295), a process similar to lesson link (Kratzer & Teplin, 2007). For the purposes of this review, the "client" is the student and the professional is the teacher. Schon described what happened when teachers moved beyond their technical knowledge to become "reflective practitioners" (p. 332) as they listened to their students. The actions of reflective practitioners were described as the teachers' understanding of their students' thinking and the teachers moving beyond lesson plans to use his/her "on-the-spot-understanding" (p. 332) of the student's learning. Schon wrote the following example:

Curriculum becomes an inventory of *themes* of understanding and skill to be addressed rather than a set of materials to be learned. Different students present different phenomena for understanding and action. Each student makes up a universe of one, whose potentials, problems, and pace of work must be appreciated as the teacher reflects-in-action on the design of her work. (p. 333)

As Schon described the reflect-in-action process, he acknowledged that teachers using this process “would push against the rule governed system of the school” (p. 334). Teachers who become reflective practitioners questioned how school tasks are defined and questioned organizational knowledge. Reflection-in-action was noted as essential for learning and at the same time the process created a tension in the organization. Larrivee (2000) explained Schon’s (1983) concept of reflective practitioner as the development of teachers’ self-efficacy to solve classroom dilemmas by using their own best thinking and solutions. According to Larrivee (2000), this approach to teaching resulted in teachers developing a deliberate code for their conduct as they infused their beliefs and values into their professional identity. Paris and Winograd (2003) affirmed that reflection was a desired characteristic for teachers.

In order to be successful, teachers must be reflective and analytical about their own beliefs and practices and they must acquire a deep understanding of cognitive and motivational principles of learning and teaching. (p. 1)

Others included reflection as an essential component of teachers’ expertise. In 2005, the National Academy of Education’s Committee on Teacher Education sought to create a knowledge base for teacher education that provided essential content for those preparing pre-service and in-service teachers. The committee organized a text titled: *Knowledge to Support the Teaching of Reading: Preparing Teachers for a Changing World* (Snow *et al.*, 2005). The authors produced this edited volume and established a model for teachers’ professional growth in reading education. A stage model presented in this volume was designed to include the required teacher knowledge base for the

development of expertise over time. Included in the text were the seminal steps of a reading teacher's path to becoming an expert. In the opening chapter, the five stages of teacher development were introduced as pre-service, apprentice, novice, experienced, and master teacher. From stage to stage teachers expanded their understanding of declarative, situated, stable, expert, and reflective steps. All stages included a cycle of learning comprised of action, assessment, and reflection (Snow *et al.*, 2005).

Snow *et al.* (2005) built the knowledge base by using prominent research. The scholars researching effective literacy teachers found that teachers were more than efficiency experts in implementing best literacy instruction. Teachers went beyond efficiency as they worked to meet the needs of their students. By using numerous methods and materials, the expert teachers sought the best processes and content to engage their students. Excellent literacy teachers did whatever it took to ensure that their students received instruction matching their needs and the circumstances of the environment (Delpit, 1995; Duffy, 1997; Pressley & El Dinary, 1997; Almasi, 2003; Au, 1998; Au, 2005; Block, *et al.*, 2002a; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Snow *et al.* (2005) listed components of a knowledge base for teaching reading relying heavily on the International Reading Association's (2000) position statement on excellent reading teachers. Components of excellent reading instruction included: maintenance of reading motivation; development of vocabulary and strategies to build comprehension; use of students' background knowledge; and creation of an active reading stance. Other components such as the development of surface structure skills in fluency, decoding, and mapping speech to print were included in the list of excellent reading instructional practices (International Reading Association, 2000; Snow *et al.*,

2005; Delpit, 1995). Recently the International Reading Association (2010) has revised the standards for reading professionals.

Pressley *et al.* (2001c) focused a case study on the “*complex instruction*” of first-grade teachers (Pressley *et al.*, p. viii). The research purpose was to produce findings that identified what the best first-grade teachers must know and be able to do to teach emergent readers. The methodology was a survey of first-grade teachers about their teaching of literacy. The surveys were distributed across the United States and were based on a sample of teachers identified by reading supervisors who were members of a national reading organization. Fifty letters were sent to determine first-grade teachers who were the most effective in teaching the majority of their first-grade students to read. After responses were read, 34 teachers were selected. These teachers stayed with the study throughout all phases of the research.

In phase one of the study, the teachers listed ten practices that they considered essential to their reading instruction. This query resulted in three hundred practices. In another phase, the teachers answered questions to a more focused survey. In the focused survey, all three hundred practices were represented and teachers were asked one question about each practice as a determinant of prevalence. The teachers reported implementing numerous strategies and using extremely diverse methods for emergent readers. The teachers blended techniques and focused on good children’s literature and a book-rich environment (Pressley, 2001a).

Excellent first-grade teachers were involved in building an extensive knowledge of classroom management and organization and in implementing a variety of ways to teach reading. These teachers possessed an in-depth knowledge of surface structure

teaching about sounds, letters, and word level skills. Exemplary teachers knew the surface instructional techniques just as thoroughly as the best children's literature. The teachers wove decoding and understanding into the teaching of reading. Teacher modeling was used to explain surface structure phonics, print conventions and writing conventions. All of this expertise was supported by the use of motivational techniques. The final analysis of the study produced a synthesis of abilities that included a balanced approach to early literacy instruction with extensive opportunities to write and to read good literature (Pressley, 2001a).

The reported components did not include more traditional methods such as the use of ability grouping, whole group basal instruction, or round-robin reading, which tend to have negative effects on literacy learning. The surprise finding in the study was that early childhood/primary special education teachers reported using many of the same techniques as the first-grade teachers in regular education classes. The researchers noted that commercial programs were rarely mentioned. The teachers appeared to focus on the needs of the children rather than a commercial plan to teach reading. Differentiated instruction was reported frequently. Only few mentioned commercial materials reported in use were trade books or children's literature. As with all self-report studies, the question of reliability was raised. Realizing that classroom observations would test the generated hypothesis that first-grade reading instruction was based on balanced instruction, the researchers conducted observations of the original 34 teachers and their teaching techniques (Pressley, 2001a).

The plan for this observational case study was based upon a grounded theory approach of Strauss and Corbin (1990) and was modeled on an older study conducted by

Pressley *et al.* (1992b). Observations in the classrooms of surveyed teachers produced a theory of best first-grade reading instruction. The analysis covered all findings from the surveys and the observed classrooms. Findings were similar to the original survey study by Pressley *et al.* (2001c) and other studies on exemplary teaching. The exemplary first-grade classrooms were well managed and full of deep and surface instruction.

Instructional strategies for word recognition, explicit comprehension strategies with student self-regulation, and coached writing were often observed. High expectations with rigorous focused academic work increased as the year progressed (Pressley, 2001b; Wharton-McDonald, 2005; Baker, Allington, & Brooks, 2001; Block, 2001; Morrow & Asbury, 2001).

Another study on reading teachers was conducted by Ruddell (1997). The teachers in this research study were identified as exemplary teachers by former students, colleagues, and principals. Ruddell (1997) relied heavily on interviews and observations to conclude that these nominated teachers used many effective strategies for instruction and for following students' progress. The teachers gave feedback to students on their growth and progress in reading. The teachers were masters of their craft and content. The content was not just relegated to literacy but included content instruction such as science and social studies. Much was done by these reading teachers to motivate, inspire, and create an ambiance of warmth, energy, and caring. The teachers were flexible yet focused on making learning fit the students. In the observations, the classrooms were flooded with teacher-student talk about meaning, interpretation of text, and higher level questioning (Ruddell, 1997).

Block *et al.* (2002b) created a descriptive database of preschool through grade

five literacy teachers' expertise. The research team sought instructional practices that distinguished expert literacy teachers from less effective teachers. The work was based upon the hypothesis that a grade level continuum with distinct capabilities would emerge at different grade levels. The completed study highlighted the intricacies required to nurture best literacy instruction across grade levels. Findings demonstrated that teachers' abilities not materials were more important to the literacy success of children.

From the descriptive database, Block *et al.* (2002b) situated the characteristics of exemplary second-grade literacy instruction within six categories: predominate role, motivation, re-teaching, relations to students, classroom qualities, and lesson characteristics. The role of demonstrator characterized exemplary second-grade teachers as spending significant amounts of instructional time modeling the process of comprehension. The modeling was demonstrated through thinking aloud. Re-teaching, another category of exemplary second-grade teaching, was observed often in personalized lessons with one-to-one conferences, which were also reported by researchers Hattie and Timperley (2007). Great teachers listened with appreciation for their students' backgrounds. Classroom qualities were relaxed. Students were challenged to think deeply about important topics. Print rich spaces provided an inviting place for the students as they explored reading opportunities. Lessons were often creative and differentiated in ways that differed from the previous years' first-grade instruction (Block *et al.*, 2002b). Paratore and McCormack (2005) recognized similar characteristics in second-grade teachers.

Block and Mangieri (2009) collected research on exemplary literacy teachers and identified the following domains: relationships with students, motivation, dominate

teacher role, reteaching, and the quality of the classroom environment. These domains were based on research collected while Block & Mangieri (2009) conducted teacher professional development. Built on earlier work, the researchers also cited teacher reflection as a key component of an exemplary teacher's experience. Since readers' needs changed, these teachers reflected in order to determine the appropriate instructional focus for each developing reader.

Drew Gitomer (2007) reported on the impact of *National Board for Professional Teaching* certification. Gitomer listed three exemplary teaching practices that Block and Mangieri connected to the six domains or sets of behaviors: higher order thinking questions asked in a manner that elicited answers that could be elaborated on to include high level vocabulary, comprehension, and conceptual links; formative assessments that engaged the classroom community with rigorous standards for completion and frameworks for self monitoring; and assignments that were challenging. The pursuit of excellence was the overarching teaching quality that characterized these exemplary literacy teachers (Block & Mangieri, 2009).

Beyond exemplary literacy teaching, teachers' lesson planning, teaching techniques and research of their instruction have been suggested as essential for meeting standards based instruction. These elements were reported in the research literature for standards attainment (O'Shea, 2005). An innovative practice suggested in the research, Japanese lesson study, was first introduced nationally to American teachers through the 1999 *TIMMS* Study (Hiebert *et al.*, 2003). Lesson study was identified as a powerful tool to study mathematics instruction. *TIMSS* is an acronym for Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, formerly known as the Third International

Mathematics and Science Study). This report provided reliable and current data on the mathematics and science attainment of students in America and compared them to international students.

Japanese lesson study received renewed attention in the literature as a means for American teachers to research their instruction, discern if students were learning the intended curriculum, and collaborate on writing lessons that met rigorous standards (Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002). The current focus on standards implementation and achievement created new interest in Japanese lesson study, functional standards, and looking at student work. (O'Shea, 2005; Gibbons, Kimmel, & O'Shea, 1997; Lewis, 2002; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Watanabe, 2002). Additionally, research on the use of lesson link, a technique similar to lesson study completed in a short time, produced findings that group interactions were transformed. Individual teacher's instruction improved and students' achievement increased (Kratzer & Teplin, 2007). Improved lessons and improved teacher learning resulted from cycles of research lessons in lesson study and lesson link events (Hurd & Licciardo-Musso, 2005, Lewis, Perry, Hurd, & O'Connell, 2006; Lewis & Hurd, 2011).

The Interactive Model of Reading

The theoretical orientation for reading instruction in this research setting was a holistic integrated approach based on the principles of constructivist theory influenced by Lev Vygotsky (1986). The *Cornerstone Literacy Framework* in place for four years at Stanmore, was an exemplar of this theory. Ellin Keene (2008) wrote about the framework in *To Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension*. In this book

Keene stated that effective literacy learning occurred when educators “...teach a few concepts of great import (what’s essential), teach them in depth over a long period of time, and apply them in a variety of texts and context” (Keene, 2008, p. 31).

Keene (2008) also presented a list of subtleties of instruction through the lens of teaching what matters most. Her list of what matters most instructionally emphasized the balancing of six language systems in the interactive model of reading. She also included the following essentials for literacy learning: teaching text structures in narrative, poetry, and expository genres; connecting comprehension strategy instruction across the curriculum; focusing on genre and text characteristics in a variety of text levels; building a classroom community that included intimacy and rigor; and distinguishing between attractive environments and authentic learning environments.

The primary position of constructivist theory, including Keene’s subtleties of instruction, was the ability to integrate the learners’ goals, the context for learning, and the social construction of meaning and knowledge. Classrooms with these types of learning environments transformed learning through students and teachers working together to reflect on improvement. The process of teaching reading was as important as the end product. The context or environment was a highly significant component of reading instruction. Reading immersions and demonstrations were important but were far surpassed by the learner’s goals and engagement with the demonstrations. These occurrences supported the learner in seeing his/her potential as a reader. These constructivists’ ideals provided an instructional framework connected to multiple theoretical orientations (Keene, 2008; Cambourne, 2002).

Particularly salient to the learning model of the *Cornerstone Literacy Framework*, were Vygotsky's theories concerning the development of internalized cognitive competence (Pressley, 1998). Vygotsky (1986) stated that there was a zone of proximal development where interactions between a more experienced knowledgeable learner allowed for assistance to support a novice learner. He theorized that instruction could guide student learning. This theoretical stance was particularly important to this research because it framed the teaching of metacognitive reading skills that were not yet fully developed in young readers. The idea that young children developed metacognitive awareness of their reading processes with adult support owed part of its impetus to Vygotsky's work (Block *et al.*, 2002c). This was a critical element of the *Cornerstone Literacy Framework*.

The interactive model of reading used as the theoretical base for this research study was also the basis for the *Cornerstone Literacy Framework*. The interactive model was often viewed as a balance between phonics or word level processing of print and a holistic view of reading referred to as a three-cueing system model like the model supported by the Alabama Reading Initiative. Theorists who contributed and wrote about the interactive model were David Rummelhart, E. V. Dechant, and H. Singer and R. B. Ruddell. The model described in this study relied heavily on theory developed by David Rummelhart who suggested that letter features and sensory information along with nonsensory information joined in one location in the reader's brain (Rummelhart, 2004).

Tracey and Morrow (2006) described Rummelhart's interactive model of reading interactive model. The use of the interactive model enabled teachers to understand what happens inside the reader during reading. The researchers also supported the continued

use of this processing model because the reading process was described in the way that reading worked. Other classroom applications for this model were found in guided reading lessons. The skills identified in the interactive model could be studied in the small group instruction provided during guided reading lessons (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

According to Tracey and Morrow (2006), Stanovich expanded Rummelhart's original model by including a compensatory component. If one processor was weak, others compensated for the weakness. In 1988, McClelland and Rummelhart continued to refine the model. The revised model demonstrated that readers collected information, and the information was stored in a series of connections among the six-cueing systems. As the systems were paired, the connections among the cueing systems grew stronger and with repetition the connections were made with greater speed (Tracey & Morrow, 2006; Stanovich, 1980).

Rummelhart designed a visual representation of this theoretical model. The design was similar to a computer message board that synthesized information from the reader's sensory input with the reader's nonsensory information. The message board was the location where everything came together for the reader. According to this model, reading was neither bottom up nor top down but a synthesis of the two. Knowledge of letters or orthography and their sounds, lexical or word knowledge, syntactic knowledge, and semantic knowledge gathered at the same moment to culminate in word identification or reading. The message board was the "keeper" of hypotheses about the reader's input of letter strings. The reader scanned the message board to determine how the forming hypotheses related to the existing knowledge sphere or schema, evaluated the

information, and confirmed or disconfirmed the accuracy of the hypothesis (Rummelhart, 2004; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

In the interactive reading model, six-cueing systems were utilized: semantic, syntactic, grapho-phonetic, lexical, schematic, and pragmatic. Reading was viewed as a multilevel interactive process using these cueing systems. Readers negotiated text at various levels. The reader's choices of the cueing systems were dependent on the text, the reader, and the purpose for reading as described in *Cornerstone Framework*.

The use of schema in this process was grounded in Rummelhart's (1980) assertion that schemata were the building blocks for thinking or cognition. Readers accessing and using what they already knew were seminal features of this interactive model of reading. Rummelhart emphasized the importance of students' using their cultural heritage in the reading classroom (Rummelhart, 1980). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems were in agreement with Rummelhart's recognition of this significance.

Comprehension Strategy Work

Comprehension strategy and exemplary reading comprehension instruction were recognized as features of critical literacy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and best literacy practices. (Au, 1998; Ball, 2009; Delpit, 2010; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2010; Lee, 2008; Luke & Dooley, 2011; McNaughton, 2006; Almasi & Hart, 2011). Many theorists and researchers advocated "the belief that children from diverse backgrounds have the ability to participate in learning experiences that promote higher level thinking in response to text such as participation in instructional conversations or book club discussions, rather than be relegated to skills-based and decontextualized exercises."

(Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009, p. 590-591). Reading strategies were defined as “deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader’s efforts to decode texts, understand words, and construct meanings of texts” (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008. p. 368).

Descriptions of exemplary teachers as “adaptive experts” often included details of their comprehension instruction (Hammerness *et al.*, 2005, p. 360). Hatana and Oura (2003) coined the term adaptive expert and explained that effective teachers were more apt to change their deep beliefs of teaching and learning and change their instruction. Researchers described comprehension strategy work from teacher interviews. Teachers’ expressed their strategy work as “uncomfortable,” “initial awkwardness,” and “giving up control.” (Pressley *et al.*, 1992a, p. 542-543). Essentially, teachers who embraced comprehension strategy work faced challenges. Block *et al.* (2009) iterated that teachers who were best at comprehension strategy work were thinking teachers who adapted and responded to students’ needs. This review describes the “what” and the “how” of this complicated comprehension strategy work and the exemplary instruction required to teach comprehension strategies.

Comprehension has been identified as the goal of reading and described as dependent on three variables: the reader, the text, and the context (Fisher & Frey, 2011; Almasi & Hart, 2011; Keene, 2008 and 2009; Israel & Duffy, 2009; Ganske & Fisher, 2009; *RAND*, 2002). The manner in which comprehension or the thinking part of reading has been described reveals beliefs about the reading process. For example, comprehension defined in the Alabama Reading Initiative (1998) research review read: “Reading comprehension is not a single process; rather, it is complex and made up of

many interrelated components” (*Alabama Reading Initiative Comprehension Module*, 1998, p. 6).

The *RAND Reading Study Group* chaired by Catherine Snow defined reading comprehension and developed a heuristic showing the reader, the text, and the reader’s purpose interacting within a socio-cultural context. This group used a proficient adult reader model to build their definition of comprehension. The *RAND* definition of reading comprehension evolved from this vision:

Reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading.. (*RAND*, 2002, p. xiii)

Block and Duffy (2008) defined comprehension as:

Comprehension is a strategic process; that is good readers proactively search for meaning as they read, using text clues and their background knowledge in combination to generate predictions, to monitor those predictions, to re-predict when necessary, and generally to construct a representation... (Block & Duffy, 2008, p. 21)

The National Reading Panel (*NRP*) described comprehension as a complex active process of thought deeply connected to word-knowledge. Intentional and interactive, the comprehension process was created between an active reader and the text (National Reading Panel, 2000). Some researchers reported that the *NRP* was grounded in the simple view of reading and automaticity theory connecting comprehension to decoding and fluency (Almasi & Hart, 2011).

Walter Kintsch (2004) provided a descriptive framework of the comprehension process and outcomes. Kintsch’s framework, the cognitive-integration model of text comprehension, expanded a framework that included instructional techniques proving helpful to teachers. He researched long-term working memory as well as the talk of

comprehension and emphasized the connection. Kintsch's model of text comprehension was considered the standard model of the comprehension processes (Weaver, Mannes, & Fletcher, 1995). The model was given considerable credence by the United Kingdom Department of Education's adoption of the situation model as the comprehension component in the *Primary Literacy Strategy Framework*. The United Kingdom online frameworks stated the following:

...comprehension depends on the construction of a rich and elaborate mental model of the text that is read...The situation model can be thought of as an integrated summary of the contents of the text, which can be scrutinized in response to questioning. (United Kingdom Primary Literacy Strategy, 2010)

In the Kintsch model, there were many strategies for building and activating prior knowledge with emphasis on before and during reading. Kintsch's model of comprehension depended on linguistic ability supported by specific strategies for reading comprehension throughout the reading experience.

Literacy experts agreed that the goal of reading was comprehension and the need to develop readers who could compose meaning from multiple genres (Pressley, 1998b). Early on researchers reported on what strategies to teach (Pearson *et al.*, 1992). Knowledge has expanded over many years about the instruction of comprehension strategies, and a growing body of newer research suggested changes or transformations from the early research findings (Almasi & Hart, 2011).

The "what" of comprehension strategy work is reviewed in the following section. After reviewing early comprehension work, the Durkin study (1978-1979) identified comprehension as a neglected but important component in reading instruction. This study stimulated the move toward teaching comprehension as a process and finding ways to increase understanding. The seven metacognitive strategies often called the proficient

reader research were viewed as critical for building deep personal meaning while reading. In early work on the instruction of single comprehension strategies, Pearson, *et al.* (1992) stated that seven strategies constituted the reading comprehension curriculum.

Seven strategies (Pearson *et al.*, 1992) were the base for the content of comprehension strategy instruction and were core curriculum for the comprehension content in the *Cornerstone Framework*. Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) reviewed similar processes when researching strategies used by proficient readers. However, Pressley disagreed with the viability of teaching inference and monitoring due to the complicated nature of the two and the paucity of knowledge about instructional practices needed to develop these mental processes (Pressley, 2002b).

Kamil (2003) brought attention for the need to use comprehension strategy instruction and reminded teachers of the complex nature of comprehension strategy work. Furthermore, all seven strategies of activating relevant prior knowledge or schema, determining important ideas and themes, asking questions, creating visual and sensory images, drawing inferences, synthesizing, and utilizing fix-up strategies to repair comprehension were required to meet proficient and advanced levels on national tests of reading.

The *National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP)* listed reading comprehension strategies that included inference and synthesis as critical to student reading. *NAEP* required students to execute the cognitive targets of “locate and recall,” “integrate and interpret,” and “critique and evaluate” (*National Assessment Governing Board*, 2009, p. 37-39). Similarly, the *Common Core Standards* required the use of the strategies to achieve high levels of comprehension (Hiebert, 1991; Mullis, Campbell, &

Farstrup, 1993; NAEP, 2002; Rampey, Dione, & Donahue, 2009; *The Common Core Standards Initiative*, 2011).

The seven comprehension strategies and the studies that brought them to the attention of the reading world were important as the historic base for understanding the most current research in reading comprehension (Pearson *et al.*, 1992). As information about what strategies to teach moved into classrooms, staff developers and classroom teachers wrote about the implementation of strategies instruction beginning in the late 1990's. Michael Pressley referred to the movement generated from the publication of *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop* (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997) as a teacher movement with a large following and called for more research on strategy implementation in classrooms beyond the description in the Keene and Zimmerman (1997) book. Pressley suggested that the teachers utilizing the Keene and Zimmerman (1997) content were convinced of the merit in comprehension strategy work (Block *et al.*, 2002a). A brief review of research on each of the seven strategies recommended in the Keene and Zimmerman books follows.

The history of schema theory and schema as a comprehension strategy originated from the research of Anderson and Pearson (1984) at the *Center for the Study of Reading*. Schema was defined as an integrative means to bring together concepts that were concurrently in the mind into an orderly representation. Researchers built upon this early work and conducted studies that supported the use of prior knowledge as a tool against which readers could measure the meaning they were composing while reading. Schema was used as a means to store new information into existing knowledge and deepen understanding (Pearson *et al.*, 1992; Gordon & Pearson, 1983; Hansen, 1981). The use of

schema to interpret reading, critique text, and draw critical text conclusions occurred in various forms such as predictions, conclusions, and totally new thinking. The use of schema has been described as using prior knowledge or background knowledge. This strategy was listed by the *NRP* report as receiving some support from the research and teachers were encouraged to use it (Armbruster, Lehrer, & Osborn, 2003). Keene and Zimmerman (1997) described schema as a strategy with the analogy of “homes in the mind” (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997, p.45).

Strategic reading of text was an important technique for active reading (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Dewitz, *et al.*, 1987). The use of schema as a strategy resulted in drawing inference from reading and created conditions for reader engagement. Inference required readers to use two or more bits of information to arrive at a third bit of information that is implicit (Kispaal, 2008). Keene described inference as the combination of what is read with relevant background knowledge and blending these two to create a personal and unique meaning.

Studies resulted in findings related to what good readers do to determine the seminal meaning and themes in text. It was discerned that readers used their conclusions about the big ideas in texts as a focus for their reading. Furthermore, they learned to ignore the unimportant details from reading memory (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1986; Baumann, 1986; Tierney & Cunningham, 1984; Winograd & Bridge, 1986). This strategy was referred to as determining importance and was defined as a strategy that readers used to distinguish between important information in a text and information that is interesting but not critical for comprehension (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997).

Another comprehension strategy used by readers was sensory images. The *NRP* report referred to this strategy as mental imagery or visualizing, and it was encouraged for classroom use (Armbruster *et al.*, 2003). The research supporting this strategy demonstrated how readers deepened their understanding and became closely connected to text during and after reading by using sensory images (Anderson & Hiddle, 1971). Using sensory images gave readers flexibility and capacity to experience an added depth of meaning and elucidation (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997).

Researchers, Brown and Day (1983), detailed the view of proficient readers and how they paid attention to the most relevant text information as they built an ever-changing synthesis of text meaning. This aspect of comprehension included retelling and extended retelling to add a personal interpretation to the recount of texts. Other research on synthesis described the process of the reader's awareness of the total meaning of the text that included a continual search for the integration of text ideas. Described as collapsing text into meaningful chunks and then integrating the chunks into a new configuration, synthesizing was a generative process (Fagan, 1987). Readers synthesized to aid and increase memory for text at a deep level (Harvey, McAuliffe, Benson, Cameron, Kempton, Lusche, Miller, Schroeder, & Weaver, 1996), and the process was dependent on prior knowledge at the core (Lin, 2008).

Cain, Oakhill, and Bryant (2004) found that working memory and comprehension monitoring were predictors of comprehension, which established a connection between cognitive and metacognitive processes. This strategy of monitoring for meaning or comprehension repair was explained by how proficient readers correct and monitor meaning when comprehension was not clear. Comprehension repair relied upon readers

using cueing systems and knowing which system to use for specific comprehension problems (Garner, 1987). This strategy supported readers in developing independence. Several instructional models advocated its use (Keene and Zimmerman, 1997). The seven strategies represented the early content or “the what” of comprehension instruction. The “how” of instruction related to comprehension strategy work is reviewed in the following section. Comprehension strategy instruction or “the how” of instruction was represented by several paradigms: direct explanation, favored by Duffy, Roehler, Meloth, Polin, and Vavrus (1986a); explicit instruction introduced by Fielding and Pearson (1994) and Pearson and Dole (1987); and transactional strategy instruction supported by Brown *et al.* (1996), Anderson (1992) and Pressley *et al.* (1992a).

Direct explanation (Duffy, *et al.*, 1986a) required teachers to explain how to utilize a small cluster of strategies, to model the strategies use, and to provide students guided and independent use of the strategy. Explicit instruction was described in four phases: teacher modeling and strategy explanation, guided practice with gradual release of responsibility, independent strategy use enhanced with feedback, and application of the strategy to independent reading (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). *Transactional Strategy Instruction* was defined as a complex teaching action for multiple strategy use. The strategies were used in an interactive manner resulting in self-regulated reading that improved comprehension of content (Brown *et al.*, 1996; Anderson, 1992; Pressley *et al.*, 1992a).

Researchers studied reading comprehension strategy instruction with the goal of creating active readers who could monitor and regulate their independent reading. Skillful teaching was required to develop readers in the use of strategies and to enable

teachers to offer readers meaningful suggestions as they read. Thus far the research literature had not provided an adequate model for effective classroom strategy instruction; however, gains were occurring as researchers provided more insights into what should be included in a model program of strategy instruction. Providing teachers with professional development to deliver strategy instruction was noted as an involved and lengthy process (Williams, 2002; Pressley & El-Dinery, 1997; Block & Duffy, 2008).

Released in 2008, *Comprehension Instruction: Research-Based Best Practices 2nd ed.* synthesized reading comprehension research. A chapter by Block and Duffy explained where comprehension research has been and where it's going. Block and Duffy (2008) categorized research findings under three broad headings: comprehension strategies, direct teaching of comprehension, and how teachers learn to teach comprehension. They synthesized how the new research could improve comprehension instruction and revisited early comprehension strategy research.

According to Block and Duffy (2008), comprehension was an extremely fluid process with fewer strategies than earlier recommended. The chain of events in this fluid thinking process included predicting, monitoring, and re-predicting, which created a cycle of continuous thinking and re-thinking. Good readers used this process for all the strategies. Moreover, this fluid cycle was the same at all grade levels causing strategy instruction to be situated in an ambiguous cycle that could not be detailed in a scope and sequence like the sensory portions of reading such as phonics. Block and Duffy explained the idea in the following excerpt.

This means that we do not teach one strategy at a time and delay other strategies until a later grade. Instead, we teach the entire comprehension process at each grade level. (Block & Duffy, 2008, p. 29)

Block and Duffy (2008) discussed the trend in teaching fewer comprehension strategies and the fact that core reading programs and teacher's manuals presented so many skills and strategies that readers were confused. Another problem with these programs was the use of several different names for strategies even within the same core-reading program. Finally, the authors stated that core reading programs limited comprehension development and growth for readers who struggled.

The researchers reviewed strategy instruction research, explained the direct teaching of comprehension, and described the comprehension process. The review related the teachers' struggles with comprehension instruction and iterated that comprehension instruction was more difficult than researchers first thought. Reading First recommended that schools adopt a core reading program. So much of the information gathered on this topic came from the research on core reading programs. The findings on core reading programs included facts such as over eighty percent of basal readers lacked elements of highly effective comprehension instruction (Block & Pressley, 2000). Basal readers lacked text material to provide opportunities for independent strategy use and practice (Block & Duffy, 2008).

Other problems with basal readers included few opportunities for the use of multiple strategies as a means to transfer the thinking process to new texts. The basal reader lessons were not varied enough to take into consideration the reader's growing knowledge and ability to use comprehension skills and strategies from previously offered lessons. Furthermore, there was no opportunity to use strategies across increasingly

difficult texts. The lessons offered no release of responsibility, and guided practice was not offered as an option (Block & Duffy, 2008).

With an extensive research base, Block and Duffy (2008) supplied information about classroom environments that supported comprehension instruction. The recent classroom environment research recommended the use of a rich context for comprehension instruction where students chose and read many books, talked about their reading, and signaled for teacher support when they were confused. At the same time, teachers worked to provide personalized short lessons to meet students' needs. In these lessons, teachers moved among students and questioned their understanding. Teachers knew about the readers in their classrooms. There was much less teacher domination and much more student talk around authentic reading of complete texts (Block *et al.*, 2009). The best comprehension instruction was offered by thinking teachers who adapted and responded to students' needs.

Exemplary teachers of comprehension often re-taught a strategy and offered deeper versions of the lessons. They continuously checked in to see where students were with their understanding. These teachers added complexity to their comprehension instruction while constantly working toward higher levels of student motivation (Duffy, 2009). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) reported that engaged readers comprehended better and were motivated.

McRae and Guthrie (2009) reported on the power of engaging students by encouraging them to read for authentic reasons. The greatest increases in students' comprehension resulted from teaching several metacognitive strategies together. The strategy instruction that netted the most gains in student comprehension required a shift

from teacher directed environments to high student involvement as strategy instruction proceeded and readers developed (Cummings, Stewart, & Block, 2005; Block *et al.*, 2009).

Waters and Kunnmann (2010) noted the significance of age differences and developmental levels in metacognition. They defined the trajectory of learning strategies as running concurrently with a child's development. As the children used the strategies, they moved from passive to active readers and were more goal-directed over time. The researchers presented a review of research that supported this finding with more detail as to what materials and conditions best supported the growth of readers. There was evidence that comprehension strategy instruction was developmentally sensitive and required building over time with real books.

Direct teaching of comprehension strategies was difficult and required time for teachers to implement. The explanation and modeling of how to do strategies required explicit and thoughtful language for students to benefit from the teachers' think aloud. The think aloud was used as a means to show how readers used strategies. These episodes of thinking aloud could not be scripted since teachers modified their explanation based on student response. The type of think aloud that got results required a relentless teacher in pursuit of adjusting and retrying the explanation offered to students. Also, student readers needed many opportunities to practice what the teacher had modeled in the think aloud process (Block, 2004; Block & Parris, 2008).

Fast mapping was a useful technique for multiple opportunities to practice strategy use. The instructional move of fast mapping allowed readers to remember and try the just modeled metacognitive processes at least six times in successive episodes.

These episodes built a pattern for the independent use of strategies. For struggling readers this application of a strategy on the reader's own terms often took as many as ten consecutive applications (Block, 2004; Block & Parris, 2008).

There was much research-based evidence around strategy instruction as well as the complex instructional nature required in the multi-step strategy instructional process. Strategy lessons in the current era of comprehension instruction included explicit explanation or thinking aloud about mental processing, multiple reteaching episodes of the required thinking procedures, constant assessment of individual students, and student application of the strategy in reading and writing across multiple genres and texts. Because of this instructional complexity, professional development on strategy instruction continued to require effort and time. Researchers found that the best context for this type of teacher development was a gradual collaborative effort. As teacher development proceeded, much attention was given to developing sensitivity to each classroom and each context within which the strategies were taught (Block & Duffy, 2008).

Instructional approaches that significantly increased reading comprehension were reported by Block *et al.* (2009). The researchers used stratified randomized selection of four school districts. Four elementary schools and one middle school were selected using the same stratified randomized selection process. Schools were represented in the following community types, low socio-economic inner-city schools, a high socio-economic suburban neighborhood, and a middle-class rural setting. All participating schools volunteered for the study. Students ranged in age from 7.0 to 12.11. Their

teachers received 40 hours of training and practice in the application of all six instructional approaches.

This experimental study looked at the following six instructional approaches: workbook practice, silent book reading with teacher monitoring, silent independent book reading with prior teacher instruction about a skill or strategy to practice, two student selected expository books on the same topic read back to back, silent reading followed by discussion, and basal readers. During the study, all students were taught within each of the six contexts. Every treatment required students to read silently instructional level texts and provide written answers to questions posed about the reading. The primary differences were in what the students read and what happened before and during the silent reading. The research control groups used traditional basal instruction for the additional twenty minutes of instruction; whereas, the experimental group did not. Controls were built into the study to ensure high fidelity to each instructional approach in both the experimental and control groups (Block *et al.*, 2009).

The study found the three most successful instructional approaches had these common features: student book choice for guided independent reading practice, reading of more than seven pages in continuous text from fiction or nonfiction classroom books, and 15-20 minutes of silent reading with teacher actions. In addition to these approaches, the teacher actions that provided personalized scaffolds for students were essential. Data from this study indicated instructional approaches that significantly increased reading comprehension. More time in basal readers should be reconsidered since this type of reading was not powerful enough for grade 2-6 to increase reading ability. Longer time periods for silent reading of full-length books were recommended for all students. The

implications of how to increase learning while students were in sustained silent reading depended upon teacher actions and supports during independent reading (Block *et al.*, 2009).

Below-grade level readers performed better and as well as their on-grade level peers if they were allowed 15-20 minutes of reading from class books in addition to the 70 minutes of basal instruction. Below-level readers required teacher guidance in book choice with personalized scaffolds during reading. Some of the scaffolds included schema-based learning and the choice of two expository books on the same topic to build conceptual learning. Transactional learning such as open-ended discussions dominated by students and led by teachers produced the greatest student comprehension growth. Basal reading instruction and workbook practice produced the lowest student scores (Block *et al.*, 2009).

The Block *et al.* (2009) research had limitations such as the six-week length of the intervention, the lack of control of materials from the basal reader lessons, and the need for including special needs readers. The findings raised questions that caused the research team to revisit some of the current widely disseminated literacy environmental studies. Reading instruction followed by whole-group lessons that were at one time considered to add value to the original lesson were an example of a practice that was recommended for rethinking. Other examples cited were independent or guided practice lessons that provided readers with time to apply a skill just taught. Researchers recommended a shift from teacher directed lessons with teacher selected leveled texts to more student book choice and involvement.

In conclusion, the use of situated practice defined by the research team as free voluntary reading with a priori teacher instruction did not produce high scores in this study. This practice caused readers to focus too much on the assigned teacher request and not enough on building meaning around the text. This superimposition of reading purpose caused lower comprehension of main ideas and details (Block *et al.*, 2009).

The study supported abundant book choice as a necessity for struggling readers. Implications were for more study on instructional approaches that impacted vocabulary development, fluency, and phonics use. In summary, teachers' actions before and during sustained silent reading were critical for student success. Teacher monitoring was essential to hold readers accountable. Through student-driven as well as teacher-led discussions, accountability was evident in a very concrete manner. Furthermore, these instructional approaches were appealing since the gains in student scores occurred within a short six-week time frame (Block *et al.*, 2009).

Block and Duffy (2008) also reviewed the early research on qualitative comprehension strategy instruction. These studies established the instructional moves for explicit explanation of comprehension strategies. The techniques evolved from a rich research movement in the period between 1980 and 1990. In this paradigm, readers were thought of as active and capable of controlling their processes during literacy events. These early studies of how readers used their reasoning powers provided a deeper understanding of strategies used by readers. Studies such as those conducted by Dewitz *et al.* (1987), Dole *et al.* (1996), Duffy *et al.* (1986b), and Pressley *et al.* (1992b) demonstrated that direct strategy instruction benefitted readers, particularly struggling readers (Block & Duffy, 2008).

The first historically important research study reviewed was Dewitz *et al.* (1987). They studied one hundred and one fifth-grade students using an experimental design with a 6-week treatment. The researchers examined the effects of how the strategy of inference developed. Pretests were administered as well as follow up posttests to measure literal and inferential comprehension. Transfer was measured at six-week post treatment and twenty-week post treatment. The researchers also included interviews that probed students to reflect on their inner thinking or metacognition.

Findings from Dewitz *et al.* (1987) affirmed that students could be taught to improve their inference ability while using expository texts. The readers could also use their newly developed strategy to tackle unfamiliar texts. Dewitz *et al.* (1987) stressed that readers needed extensive time to develop and apply the strategy. The researchers clarified results from previous studies on the integration of text information with background knowledge. Findings demonstrated that teaching readers to integrate new information with their current knowledge through a specific strategy yielded more inferential understanding.

Researchers affirmed that students needed repeated instruction in order to sustain their inference abilities. Literal skills withstood time to a greater extent than inference strategies. All readers benefited from the instruction including the below-average readers. In the summary, the research team reported that readers could improve their comprehension without increasing their metacognitive awareness. They stipulated that the success of the instruction was due to the modeling of the strategy with follow-up lessons on monitoring the strategy just taught (Dewitz *et al.*, 1987).

Another study reviewed by Block and Duffy (2008) was the Dole *et al.* (1996) research. This historically important study built a foundation for direct instruction of comprehension strategies and reiterated the embedded use of background knowledge as a seminal component of reading instruction. The researchers sought to find the effects of strategy instruction on at-risk readers in a study conducted in phases. In the first phase, there were sixty-seven fifth and sixth graders from a high poverty setting.

The randomly assigned students were in treatments that included instruction of strategies, story content, and basal reading as a control treatment. Data were gathered as baseline, immediately after treatment, and a posttest was administered after seven weeks. The strategy group scored in the same range as the basal control group and the story content group. When readers read on their own, the strategy group did better than the other two groups. Success for the strategy group was attributed to extensive modeling and coaching during their instruction (Dole *et al.*, 1996).

Phase two of the Dole *et al.* (1996) study included two students from the strategy group who offered their perspectives in interviews. One low achieving student who was successful in using the strategy instruction explained that the strategy work helped her, and she was intent on using strategies. Her motivation was high. The other high achieving student was not motivated to use the instructed strategy that she viewed as unhelpful. This high achieving reader's comprehension was impacted negatively. Dole *et al.* (1996) hypothesized that the high achieving student was already comprehending and doing so with automaticity; however, the strategy instruction hindered her process, which caused a decrease in her motivation to use the strategy. Raising questions about reader motivation relative to strategy use created opportunity to rethink higher achieving

students' strategy use and how teachers could arrange strategy instruction to suit the various needs of readers in their classrooms.

In a third reviewed study, researchers looked at teacher effects regarding explicit verbal explanations. Duffy *et al.* (1986b) trained twenty-two fifth-grade teachers to use explicit explanation with their lowest readers who were grouped in basal readers. This study was designed to put research into practice under experimental conditions in naturalistic classroom settings. The teachers were all volunteers from an urban school district. The research study was structured to test teachers' direct explanation of reading skills and strategies and to determine the impact on students' test scores. The research question pivoted on the impact of this direct explanation on students' achievement scores. The teachers did learn to be explicit in their instruction and students were more aware, yet there were no student gains on achievement tests.

Teacher lessons were transcribed and one hundred and ten lessons were rated on an instrument to measure explicitness. This instrument was a product designed from a pilot study the previous year. Student awareness was measured by interviews conducted after the lessons with randomly selected students. The teachers were given ten hours of instruction on how to be explicit when explaining strategies. Four observations were conducted one month apart by the same observer collecting data on the same teacher. The lessons were audio taped and field notes were collected. The standardized test measure used was the Gates-MacGinitie test (Duffy *et al.*, 1986b).

Duffy *et al.* (1986b) named two points of significance as a result of the study. A strong correlation between awareness of the content of the lesson and the teachers' explanations suggested the power in instructional talk since this enabled students to

understand and remember lesson details. A second contribution was the body of knowledge created about how to do research in naturalistic settings that was at the same time experimental. The call was made to conduct more experimental fieldwork studies and for researchers to dedicate more research in naturalistic settings since this would have a greatest impact.

Pressley *et al.* (1992a) researched transactional comprehension instruction and wrote a synthesis of the seminal studies. The researchers acknowledged the difficulty of instructing readers to “coordinate memory and comprehension strategies with interpretative processes” (Pressley *et al.*, 1992a, p. 513). Pressley *et al.* (1992a) stated that the period between 1970 and 1980 was inundated with studies of how the individual strategies supported memory and understanding of texts. Pressley shared a description of early transactional strategy instruction in the following excerpt.

Teachers introduce only a few new strategies at a time, with introduction of new strategies extending over a long period of time. Teachers model the use of strategies, verbally explaining their thinking processes. Teachers explicitly explain to students the value of strategies being learned. (Pressley *et al.*, 1992a, p. 514).

Controversy developed over the transactional strategy instruction because some researchers saw this model as an anti-constructivist model of instruction. Pressley and his university partners teamed with the Benchmark School led by Irene Gaskin to conduct qualitative research to “put flesh on the skeletal descriptions of strategy instruction provided previously” (Pressley *et al.*, 1992a, p. 515). Using observations and interviews, the researchers had three purposes. They wanted to show how transactional instruction was different from early single strategies instruction, to collect different research than earlier work, and to develop a practical theory of strategy instruction.

The Pressley *et al.* (1992a) research team described the reading observed at the Benchmark School as a joint decision process between the teacher and the readers while they interacted with texts. A small group of readers worked with the teacher for an extended period of time to ensure internalization and independent use of strategies. The researchers listed factors that developed reader controlled and self-regulated thinking. Their report stated that transactional strategy instruction included all the necessary elements required for the reader's self-regulated control of texts (Pressley *et al.*, 1992a).

Transactional strategy instruction was reviewed in depth since the practice produced significant results. Brown *et al.* (1996), Block, (1991), and Anderson and Roit (1993) conducted experimental studies to measure affect of transactional metacognitive strategy instruction over an extended time period. These studies included a range of grade levels from second-grade to high school.

In the Brown *et al.* (1996) quasi-experimental study lasting a year, a team researched the impact of transactional strategies instruction on second-grade students' reading and comprehension of text. Transactional strategy instruction was a type of comprehension instruction where students were encouraged to construct meaning by using strategies. This strategy use enabled students to link text to prior knowledge through their talk. Discussion was a key component of the process. This group interpretation of texts as opposed to individual interpretation was the impetus for the term transactional.

The metacognitive and transactional strategy instructional techniques were very similar in nature. Five-second-grade classes taught with the transactional method were matched with the same number of classes taught with good instruction led by respected

literacy teachers who were not transactional strategies teachers. In all of the classrooms, groups of struggling readers were studied at the beginning of the second-grade year. At the outset the two groups, the transactional strategies group and traditional instruction group, did not vary on standardized reading achievement tests. In the latter part of the year, the transactional strategies groups showed significant differences over the traditionally taught group. The researchers concluded that the strategy students were learning more content in greater depth than the control group (Brown *et al.*, 1996).

Block (1991) designed an experiment to improve the reading comprehension of fifth-grade and sixth-grade students who were comparable in their reading achievement. The comprehension lessons for the experimental group were conducted over an entire semester three days per week. The control group received traditional reading instruction over the same time period with no strategy instruction. The standardized comprehension assessment results indicated that the experimental group scored 3 standard deviation points above the control group.

A study conducted by Anderson and Roit with learning-disabled students extended over a three month time period. The experiment was designed to research the impact of transactional strategy instruction on students in sixth through eleventh grade. Students who were placed in nine experimental groups received strategy instruction. The seven control groups received no strategy instruction. The researchers noted gains on standardized comprehension tests were higher for the experimental groups than for the control groups. The study allowed for the collection of qualitative data finding that reading for meaning was the greatest achievement of the experimental group. The experimental students showed a greater willingness to work with their reading classmates

to solve reading problems, discuss texts, and work rigorously on difficult reading material (Anderson & Roit, 1993).

In a summary of transactional strategy instruction, Pressley *et al.* (1998b) reflected on the work by reiterating the power in the student talk in the classrooms and the active stance readers took. The increases in amount of reading and motivation and the students' autonomy were also noted. He stated that the teaching of strategies was not common because teachers struggled with the process until they were aware of their own metacognitive strategy use. Many teachers struggled with this process of mental modeling (Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997).

An experimental study conducted by Duffy and Roehler in 1987 stimulated interest and led to the transactional strategy instruction research conducted by Pressley and colleagues (Pressley *et al.*, 1992a). Duffy and Roehler (1987) confirmed the impact of direct-explanation strategy instruction on third-grade reading. The study included a random assignment of ten groups of struggling readers to a direct explanation group and ten control groups to their usual reading instruction. The researchers provided teachers a framework for direct explanation of strategies and for modeling through think-alouds. The framework extended over an entire school year. As a part of the instruction, students were given guided practice while the teachers monitored their understanding. The teachers gradually released the responsibility of strategy use to the students as they became proficient. Students received support until they could independently use the strategies. The standardized achievement test results demonstrated that the experimental direct explanation group outperformed the control groups. The results held for over a year.

The qualitative research on comprehension strategies instruction continued while much of the original research was ignored in the actual practice of classroom teachers (Baker, 2002 and 2008; Dole, 2000; Pressley, 2000a and 2000b; Ogle & Blachowitz, 2002). When reviewing studies that reflected the omission of strategy instruction from the reading programs, Pressley *et al.* (1998a) investigated reading instruction in grades four and five. In a survey of teachers named as outstanding literacy teachers, the researchers asked about their teaching in an open-ended format. The information gleaned from the teacher-described elements was written into a questionnaire that provided a quantitative measure of classroom frequency-use. The researchers found that the fourth and fifth-grade teachers balanced many parts of reading and concluded that literacy teaching at this grade level was very diverse. This data provided the observational points in another study conducted by the same research team of Pressley *et al.* (1998a).

Results of the Pressley *et al.* (1998a) observational study affirmed that teachers used a mix and balance of whole language and skills instruction in very different ways. The researchers clustered these differences into components. The identified differences were in how teachers monitored student growth and how they matched lessons to student need. Other differences were found in the quantity and type of reading materials and the level of student engagement. The most common focus was on reading trade books and writing even though each class was unique.. In these classrooms there was little or no comprehension process instruction. Researchers also reported the students lacked self-regulation (Pressley *et al.*, 1998a).

Another descriptive study was conducted in Pennsylvania during 1993 school year at the Irene Gaskins' Benchmark School. The study interpreted the strategy

instruction of six teachers. Three reading lessons for each teacher were analyzed. The first observation occurred when the strategy was introduced. The next observation was staged later. The third observation was conducted considerably later with well-spaced timing to ensure a thorough perspective of the teaching and learning.

One finding was that talk in the classes differed from conventional classes. The teachers and students participated interactively at least 88% of the time using the taught strategy in a content focused discussion as opposed to the conventional teacher question and student response routine. Students were continually encouraged to say more to build their content understanding. Through this investigation researchers frequently found these actions: teachers modeled comprehension strategies and instructed students concerning the use of the strategy; teachers supported students practiced; teachers taught strategies within content materials; and teachers explained why the strategy was useful and when to apply it (Gaskins, Anderson, Pressley, Cunicelli & Satlow, 1993).

In Maryland, El-Dinary *et al.* (1992) used observations to study strategy instruction. The classroom instruction included the use of quality literature and small reading groups similar to book clubs. The researchers noted that the teachers modeled strategies with think aloud procedures. Students then practiced the strategies with teacher feedback that included the rationale for the use of the strategy. Years of this comprehension strategy practice produced a relaxed atmosphere in these classrooms where the students utilized the strategies in a coordinated manner, and they often described their thinking using high-level vocabulary. The students used the strategies in book clubs as they talked about their reading and the content of books. After three years

of strategy instruction, the students autonomously continued their book clubs with strategy use (El-Dinary *et al.*, 1992).

In the previous paragraphs, the seminal research reviewed on the use of comprehension strategies as interventions was recently reconfirmed. In a meta-analysis, Berkeley *et al.* (2010) reviewed forty studies for improving learning-disabled students' reading comprehension. The reviewed studies were published from 1996 to 2006. Of particular interest to this literature review were the question/strategy instruction interventions. The conclusion of the synthesized research was that reading comprehension interventions of question/strategy were very effective.

The general conclusion that can be drawn from the present investigation is that an additional decade of research has demonstrated the effectiveness of a wide variety of reading comprehension interventions, including fundamental reading instruction, text enhancements, and questioning/strategy instruction. (Berkeley *et al.*, 2010, p. 433)

Due to the substantial effect sizes found when comparing fundamental reading instruction, text enhancements, and questioning/strategy instruction to traditional instruction, the researchers conducting the meta-analysis stated that reading comprehension could be enhanced and improved by using the treatments. Findings from observational studies revealed that little "specialized instruction" including strategy teaching was actually taking place in general education classes. (Berkeley *et al.*, 2010, p. 433-434). Suggestions were made to investigate why strategy instruction was not commonly instructed in general education classrooms and what could be done to improve current practice of comprehension strategy work.

In summary, reading scholars built a large body of evidence on comprehension strategy instruction. Almasi (2003), Duffy (1993a and 1993b), Brown and Coy-Ogan

(1993), and El-Dinary (2002) contributed to the body of work on metacognitive strategy instruction and how teachers learned the nuances of research-based strategy instruction. These nuances were documented in Brown & Coy-Ogan's (1993) case study of one teacher's journey to learn metacognitive strategy instruction. The teacher experienced the same learning curve as her students. The researchers discerned a pattern in the teacher's growth as an instructor of comprehension strategies that paralleled earlier studies by Hall and Hord (1987) and Anderson (1992).

Duffy (1993b) studied eleven teachers over a five-year span to chronicle their development and the process of their journey toward teaching strategies with expertise. Duffy's definition of strategies was solving comprehension difficulties with a plan. This was important for understanding the study. Describing a proficient strategy user as a reader with an overall plan for meaning making, Duffy elaborated on successful strategy learners as those who intentionally selected individual strategies from a repertoire. This proficient reader also coordinated clusters of strategies and changed the use of strategies to fit the reading purpose. This reader, adept at thinking about flexible strategy use, was active at all stages of reading. From this body of research, the difficulty and nuanced manner of strategic reading was apparent.

Duffy's (1993b) research, qualitative in nature, included twice yearly interviews with each teacher and concluded with a descriptive case study of each teacher's journey toward becoming a comprehension strategies teacher. Analytic induction of the interviews and full transcripts were conducted to discern recurring themes. In this analysis that relied heavily on the teachers' words, comments were grouped categorically.

In the results, Duffy found nine progress points that were recursive and nonlinear. These nine recursive points were affected by three conditions: social, cultural, and experimental.

Findings from Duffy's (1993b) research plotted the nine points of teacher growth about metacognitive instruction. In the beginning, teachers were confused because they were accustomed to relying on an outside source like a basal reader to meet their students' needs and interests. At the second point, implicit instruction with individual strategies was used with basal stories, children's literature, and content lessons. Students were passive recipients. At point three, teachers realized the less able readers in their class could not attain metacognitive processes from such implicit teaching. They then moved to class immersion in worksheets. However, students did not know the conditions for strategy use or the declarative knowledge that explained the function of the strategy.

After point three or the "trying out phase" of teaching strategies, teachers moved toward assisting their readers to control their strategy use. In the fourth phase, teachers explicitly connected the strategy to the text and began to use their own think aloud processes. The students were still not learning why and when to use strategies. The teachers moved from confidence to confusion over their inability to instruct strategies in a manner that was genuine and helpful. Since teachers were confused about strategy instruction and had no control over the curriculum they sought programs with little thought about student autonomy and engagement (Duffy, 1993b).

Point six found teachers at the stage of development where they realized that modeling strategic thinking and explicit instruction were falling short of necessary instruction. This stage was labeled "The Wall." Later, teachers began to lead lessons that required student conversations about the use of strategies as an aid to comprehending and

not just an end result of a lesson. At this time, the teachers realized that there was no perfect or right strategy instructional tool kit or way to teach strategies. They continued to seek outside authorities to approve their particular methods (Duffy, 1993b).

Teachers finally moved to point eight or what Duffy (1993b) labeled as the creative-inventive phase where they were confident in their strategy instruction and could create, revise and even invent strategies. Three conditions were necessary to move teachers to point eight. Students were put in power. Teachers were willing to chance failure, and the teachers faced the vague nature of strategies and their use. At point eight, teachers provided scaffolds for student learning, allowed themselves flexibility in planning, and were more responsive to students' needs. The last phase was an open-ended one in which teachers expected to continue their understanding of strategy instruction (Duffy, 1993b).

El-Dinary (2002) reported on a study conducted as a part of her dissertation, and she extended the work a year later in collaboration with teachers and research associates. As a final portion of the report, each participant completed a questionnaire and participated in an interview. Findings from this research were corroborated by focus groups, observations, and conversations. El-Dinary (2002) reported five supports that teachers found useful. The supports were expert modeling by video or live model lessons, classroom coaching, discussions with peers, scripted strategy lessons, research reports, and prepackaged materials such as strategy charts.

Concerns surfaced as a part of the focus group discussions and three challenges were named by many of the teachers. The classroom time required for this type of instruction, the control given to students, and the difficulty in finding the right texts for

instruction were listed as problems. In teacher discussions, many expressed low confidence in their ability to teach strategies. The teachers requested extensive professional support. As a result of this study, El-Dinary (2002) recommended further research on the order of teaching the strategies. She also suggested developing an instructional map for introducing the strategies in clusters and their use in content areas (El-Dinary, 2002).

Almasi (2003) studied her students' growth in learning instructional practices related to strategic reading processes in a graduate level class over a six-week practicum. Almasi's research included the student teachers' scripting of lesson plans with marginal notes to indicate strategy use. Students taught lessons and kept reflective memos on their learning. A portfolio with a case study was required for each teacher in the practicum. The portfolio included a metacognitive analysis of the teachers' process in becoming an instructor of strategies. Almasi (2003) scrutinized the materials submitted by these nineteen students and found these patterns: struggles with explicit instruction, reduction in the number of student processes, unfocused lessons, unclear lesson-plans, and no distinction between skills, strategies, and activities. The conclusive finding from the analysis was that strategy instruction was difficult and teachers learning the process must be treated with care and respect to spiral learning into deeper insight.

Researchers indicated that there were three kinds of knowledge readers should know and be able to explain concerning their use of comprehension strategies (Paris *et al.*, 1983). Almasi (2003) suggested a plan for inclusion of the three kinds of knowledge, declarative, procedural, and conditional, in teachers' professional development. In this plan teachers used declarative knowledge to name the strategy and its use. Teachers used

procedural knowledge to articulate their understanding of steps and processes of strategy use. The third type of knowledge, conditional, helped teachers evaluate students' understanding of when the strategy was helpful to them. To build a personal understanding of reading comprehension strategy instruction and of the three kinds of knowledge, teachers invested a significant amount of time and effort with attention to their own personal reading.

Michael Pressley and colleagues introduced the concept of waves of comprehension research (Pressley *et al.*, 1998b; Pressley, Brown, El-Dinary & Afflerbach, 1995; Pressley, 2000a, 2000b, and 2006). Raphael, George, Weber, and Nies (2009) also described these three waves of comprehension research with the first wave focusing on the study of individual strategies. The second wave of research on comprehension instruction extended the first wave to targeting a range of strategic actions to be used together when reading. The third wave consisted of research on building comprehension instructional coherence across grade levels in schools using transactional strategies instruction. The fourth wave of research moved toward an understanding that deep comprehension was driven by content-rich instruction, discussion, argumentation, inter-textuality, and use of technology (Wilkinson, 2010 July; Wilkinson & Son, 2010).

Reninger and Wilkinson (2010) contributed to the fourth wave of comprehension strategy instruction by studying striving readers discussions. They affirmed that a sophisticated context for talking and thinking about texts was an important strategy in the new wave of comprehension strategy work. Striving readers sometimes had difficulty with comprehension because background knowledge and reading strategies were not enough to support their higher-level comprehension. Book clubs and discussions

following research-based frames were recommended as a way to support these readers (Reninger & Wilkerson, 2010).

Other researchers contributed to the body of research on discussion models that promoted high levels of comprehension. By using elements of productive talk that were structured and focused, Soter *et al.* (2008) researched language as a tool for thinking. The researchers discerned that too much structure and focus failed to build generative learning. They discovered more about social interaction and the manner in which readers' thinking could be supported. By taking a stance that text comprehension was critical for all readers, particularly strugglers, the research team investigated readers' connections to texts and styles of conversation. Soter *et al.* (2008) found critical-analytic or interrogation of the text by questioning and expressive-affective student talk resulted in higher level thinking and reasoning. Uptake or follow-up responses and authentic questions were greater in these types of text conversations. Furthermore, productive discussions occurred when students held the floor for an extended time as they were prompted to discuss texts through authentic questions and more open-ended talk opportunities. Along with these real extended conversations, the discussions resulted in uptake or students adding on to what others had said previously (Soter *et al.*, 2008).

To create a culture of talk, teacher modeling and scaffolding were necessary. When teachers supported student discussions in this manner, elaborated forms of individual student reasoning resulted. The richest student talk occurred in the critical-analytic models such as seminars rather than the expressive approaches like book clubs. Components of seminar discussion included comprehension through careful reading and questioning, deep analysis of texts through focused discussion, connections from specific

to broad ideas, and awareness of group dynamics and discussion techniques in a safe classroom community. A gradual release of responsibility for discussion control produced the best results as teachers led students to comprehend through talk (Soter, *et al*, 2008).

In conclusion, Almasi and Hart (2011) indicated comprehension strategy instruction needed to move from an old paradigm of focusing on strategies in isolation to focusing on building strategic reading processes. Using this type of instruction, teachers encouraged students to be transformed and to become the strategies. Students engaged in deciding which strategies to use and when to use them were more likely to experience a transformed comprehension experience. Almasi and Hart called this “strategic processing” (Almasi & Hart, 2011, p. 255).

Work conducted by Keene was part of an early movement to build understanding of how to teach strategies. Keene (2002) listed several traits to move comprehension instruction toward excellence. The traits were teachers’ use of a workshop model to provide readers an opportunity to socially construct knowledge. In this workshop model teachers conferred with readers to probe for their deep understanding. The gradual release of responsibility was her recommended teaching model. Keene placed emphasis on teachers’ use of their own reading and metacognitive processes to guide their modeling of comprehension strategies. Other researchers iterated the same belief that teachers who used personal reading to build knowledge of comprehension was a worthwhile endeavor and required further study (Block & Pressley, 2000 and 2002). Keene continued to suggest that teachers as readers who discussed personal reading in

their classrooms to teach students strategies were successful with strategy instruction. She supported teachers as readers as the best instructional element (Keene, 2008).

The use of book clubs for the study and development of adults' reading comprehension instruction has been a recurring but under investigated theme in research (Harvey & Gouvdis, 2000; Miller, 2002; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). The interest in teacher book clubs grew from Commeyras *et al.* (2003) book on the importance of reading in teachers' lives. Commeyras *et al.* (2003) listed a summary of actions teacher readers might take to improve their instruction. The actions suggested that teachers inform students of their reading process, of how personal reading materials were selected, and of how they used questions during read.

In the summary of the literature, no formal studies on teachers reading together to build their understanding of comprehension strategies were found. Mary Kooy (2006) conducted an initial two-year study on adult book clubs and extended the study into the present. This research was not specifically targeting the comprehension strategy instruction of teachers. In the early research, Kooy worked with two book clubs both comprised of teachers. One book club consisted of experienced teachers from a range of teaching practice, and the second group was composed of novice teachers. Both groups were small in number and all women. The teachers chose books that evoked complex discussions and responses. Kooy's findings were based on relational components among members, books, and teaching stories. All members wanted to continue their book club membership because of others in the group. The connections and friendships created opportunities for dialogue about teaching.

Debate was common in the groups and explorations about new learning and growing knowledge was discussed. The book club members explored their roles and experiences as teachers. They were often operating out of difficult teaching circumstances and the “teachers were caught in the maelstrom,” and involved in “teaching to the test” (Kooy, 2006, p.10). Kooy argued that teacher book clubs were the best context for teacher professional development because they “provide support, deflect challenges, furnish feedback, and offer encouragement” (Kooy, 2006, p. 7). In conclusion, Kooy added that the book clubs created a context for teachers to renegotiate and reconstruct their professional knowledge while “constructing a cohesive community committed to learning and teaching” (Kooy, 2006, p. 66). Kooy also suggested that self-sustained and self directed teacher groups such as book clubs must not be overlooked as effective professional development (Kooy, 2007).

In the current political climate, high-stakes tests, and mandated curricula, teachers’ voices matter since they are closest to the context and perception of the child as a reader (Spencer, 2008b). Teachers’ voice grew as a result of the book club experience. The voice was strong and independent, and Kooy offered the following suggestion: “Both teacher groups moved beyond “following orders” to ask and respond to difficult questions; How can we as women teachers intervene and say how we believe things ought to be?” (Kooy, 2006, p. 217).

Summary of the Review

The review of literature related to reading strategy comprehension work suggested that researchers agreed on the necessity of coherence in the delivery of a balanced

reading curriculum that included complex thinking as well as a plan to support teacher change (Timperley & Parr, 2007; Taylor *et al.*, 2011; Taylor & Pearson, 2005; Fisher & Frey, 2007, McNaughton *et al.*, 2006; Lipson *et al.*, 2004). Reviewing the theory of child development, the history of school reform, the impact of culture and diversity, the necessity for critical literacy, the role of teacher expertise, and the interactive model of reading set the context for this study of reading comprehension instruction. After reviewing the literature, it was clear that all of these factors had a significant impact on reading comprehension instruction. Many of the reading comprehension models and studies reviewed considered the reader, the text, and the context (Rummelhart, 2004; Paris *et al.*, 1983; Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008); these factors were directly related to child development theory and culture and diversity. The research on comprehension instruction indicated that exemplary teachers relied on the use of the students' culture and diversity (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1992).

The school effects research ranged from perceptions that environment had the most essential impact on learning to the most current research, which asserts that schools and teachers have the most influence on learning (Teddlie & Stringfellow, 1993; Joyce *et al.*, 1993; Taylor *et al.*, 2000). The new approaches to school change were based on the idea that schools and teachers greatly influenced student achievement. Taylor's *et al.* (2000) research provided a connection between the research of effective schools and effective literacy teachers. This connection was also supported by the work of Block *et al.* (2002a). Both asserted that teachers' abilities not materials were more important to the literacy success of children than programs.

Literacy experts agreed that comprehension is the goal of reading and recognized the need to develop readers who can compose meaning from multiple genres (Pressley, 1998b). The early research on reading comprehension focused on what strategies to teach (Pearson *et al.*, 1992) with minimal research on how to teach them. As the body of reading research increased, researchers recognized the importance of studying the “how” of strategy instruction. The seven comprehension strategies represented the early content. The strategy instruction or “the how” was represented in several paradigms. These included: (a) direct explanation, favored by Duffy *et al.* (1986a); (b) explicit instruction, introduced by Fielding and Pearson (1994) and Pearson and Dole (1987); and (c) transactional strategy instruction, supported by Brown, *et al.*, (1996), Anderson (1992) and Pressley *et al.* (1992a).

Michael Pressley and colleagues introduced the concept of waves of comprehension research (Pressley *et al.*, 1998a; Pressley *et al.*, 1995; Pressley, 2000a, 2000b, and 2006). In the first wave, the researchers identified some strategies and recognized that the strategies made an impact on students’ reading achievement. At this time the recommendation was made to focus on single strategy instruction. The second wave expanded on this idea and stressed that the reader needed to utilize a range of strategies in transaction with each other. The next wave recognized the importance of students interacting or transacting with the text and peers through talk. Wilkinson and Son (2010) introduced the fourth wave, which was built upon the research of transactional learning, and extended the research to determine the specific types of talk that had the greatest impact on student learning. This current research indicated that

students need opportunities through a dialogic approach to engage in content-rich instruction, discussions, and arguments to build and apply deep comprehension.

Pressley *et al.* (1998b) supported transactional strategy instruction but indicated that teaching strategy instruction was not the norm. Many teachers struggled with this mental modeling process because they did not understand their own metacognition strategy use (Duffy, 1993a and 1993b; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997). Keene (2008) indicated that teachers who were successful in teaching strategy instruction shared and discussed their personal reading with their students. She contended that teachers as readers were one of the best instructional elements.

Kooy (2006) agreed with Keene's contention of the importance of teachers actively constructing knowledge. Both believed this active construction was an important component of professional development. Kooy's work focused on general teaching knowledge and used book clubs as an avenue for teachers to explore and extend their pedagogy. She asserted that book clubs created an opportunity and a context for teachers to reconstruct their own professional knowledge. Kooy's study was one of only a few that investigated the use of personal reading in books clubs as a model for supporting professional growth and reflection about their instruction.

The purpose of this extensive review was to build the theoretical propositions to frame this case study. This chapter explored the impact of such factors as child development, school reform, culture and diversity, critical literacy, teacher expertise, and the interactive model of reading and reading comprehension work. It was evident that researchers recognized the importance of the strategy work as well as the difficulty of implementing effective strategy instruction. Although researchers recognized this

difficulty, there were only limited studies on the teachers' professional development on comprehension instruction (Sailors, 2009). The challenge now is to determine how to support teachers in understanding their own metacognitive strategy use so they can become effective comprehension instructors, particularly in diverse school settings.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

To call a research activity qualitative inquiry may broadly mean that it aims at understanding the meaning of human action (Schwandt, 2007, p. 248).

Qualitative Inquiry and the Research Approach

This study is a case study of four second-grade teachers functioning as a community. The teachers studied comprehension strategy instruction through their own book club readings and monitored their teaching through lesson study and a similar process called lesson link. Stanmore Elementary, a pseudonym for the school where I conducted my case study, embraced and supported the *Cornerstone Literacy Framework* and the research methods conducted by *Cornerstone*. Recognizing as Yin (2009) asserted that the perspectives of schools, social science, and the public have required multiple research methods and because it suited the participants and the context of the study, I conducted a qualitative inquiry.

Over a ten-year span, *Cornerstone*, a national school change organization, tapped into qualitative and quantitative inquiry processes to determine its impact on children's reading achievement and teacher's literacy instruction. These data were reported to participating schools including Stanmore. A circuitous path led researchers of

Cornerstone to first embrace qualitative inquiry, then quantitative inquiry, and in 2010 a call was made for case study research.

Cornerstone's changing research methods created a rich tapestry of information from various paradigms. My choice of case study research grew from ten years of work with *Cornerstone* and my need to answer questions about how a particular group of teachers learned comprehension strategy instruction. As a result of my ten years of work with *Cornerstone* and my desire to understand how a particular group of teachers learned comprehension strategy instruction, I selected case study research. This method provided me an opportunity to contribute to the “knowledge of individual group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomenon” and “to understand complex social phenomenon” found in the instruction of the Stanmore second-grade teachers. (Yin, 2009, p. 4) My decision was affirmed by a 2010 review and analysis of *Cornerstone* when reviewers recommended case study as a research method to strengthen the initiative. Estrada and Shields' (2010) suggestions resonated with my role as a staff developer in schools and my need to understand the Stanmore second-grade teachers' implementation of comprehension strategy instruction.

Case studies can capture real practices as well as on-the-ground complexities and can generate new understandings and hypotheses about implementation and impact. (Estrada & Shields, 2010, p. 37).

Yin described case study research as “an encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis” (Yin, 2009, p.18). In the *Foreword* to Yin's (2009) case study design and methods book, Donald T. Campbell applauded Yin's determination to abide by and conform to the goals and methods of science. By carefully aligning his case study methods and design with the laboratory research that he conducted for many years, Yin provided a rigorous path

for researchers needing to capture real practices and generate new understanding as described by Estrada and Shields' (2010) recommendations to *Cornerstone*.

Taylor's work at the *Center for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA)* was reported with the extensive use of case study research. Eventually a book of case studies titled, *Teaching Reading: Effective Schools, Accomplished Teachers* (Taylor *et al.*, 2002), was published as a result of the *CIERA* work. In the *Foreword* to this book, Steven Stahl noted that the "stories" captured in the book's chapters provided powerful study pieces for teachers as they worked collaboratively to improve instruction. Goldenberg and Gallimore (1990) stated that school change and improved teaching and learning depended upon "the interplay between research and local knowledge" (p. 2) including the powerful use of case study research. Other researchers agreed with this assertion (Sarason, 1990).

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), a child development specialist, called for research in isolated high poverty settings and stipulated that study in such settings was a social responsibility. He theorized that the world "reflects a breakdown of the interconnections between the important parts of students' lives" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 231). As a scientist, he recognized the unique opportunity to document field as well as experimental studies delving into the interconnections of child development and schooling.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (2006) theory about the systems of influence surrounding teaching, learning, and research created a layered effect that determined meaning from all school related activity and the systems surrounding the school. Bronfenbrenner's belief that the context of schooling was messy and complex caused him to call for research designs that honored the context, a move away from lab based

experimental studies. He believed studies that recognized complexity would maximize generalizability. Bronfenbrenner strongly advocated for research within the everyday world of teachers, children, and schools. Recently, Stuart McNaughton (2011) revisited this recommendation and agreed with Bronfenbrenner.

Yin explained the case study logic of design through this definition.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (Yin, 2009, p. 18)

Yin (2009) also called for multiple data sources that triangulated. A case study benefited by prior development of theoretical propositions. These propositions guided data collection and analysis.

Qualitative inquiry in the form of a case study offered the opportunity to interpret the actions of schools, teachers, and children, their meaning, and the nuances of their interactions in the broader scope of *Cornerstone* and my research in one *Cornerstone* school, Stanmore Elementary, with one group of second-grade teachers. All place and personal names were reported as pseudonyms. In following McNaughton's directive to seek the "layers of influence" (McNaughton, 2011, p. 125), I selected qualitative research as the method for investigating the strategy instruction of the Stanmore second-grade teachers.

Case Study Method in Context

My case study method was influenced by the context of my work. My research was conducted in Talmedge County, Alabama, a pseudonym. I relied on methods prescribed in case study research (Yin, 2009) to give voice to the second-grade teachers I

studied (Apple, 2001) and to address the manner in which the complexities of their instruction and the levels of influence on their effectiveness were tackled (McNaughton, 2011). Case study using Yin's (2009) method suited the issues the second-grade teachers faced in trying to implement the literacy research on comprehension strategy instruction in a high stakes context emphasizing constrained skills, particularly timed fluency tests.

My research goal was to determine how the four second-grade teachers in a rural high poverty context burdened with the stress of school reform and with the state's emphasis on measuring constrained skills were teaching children to read utilizing an interactive model of reading that relied heavily on comprehension strategy instruction. Using case study was an appropriate choice for my goal since "the boundaries between phenomenon and context" were not clear. (Yin, 2009, p. 18)

Because of the cultural differences between teachers and students at Stanmore, my interest increased during critical literacy course work that described exemplary teachers of children of color. I was particularly interested in instruction that supported the children through culturally relevant instruction (Delpit, 1995; Freire, 1970; Gee, 1992; Giroux, 2001 and 2004; Green, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll, 1998). Thus, my research path was set early in the "how" and "why" world of Stanmore Elementary and the second-grade teachers. My research mirrored Yin's description of the case study because of the types of questions I sought to answer. Yin stated:

In contrast, "how" and "why" questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories, and experiments as the preferred research methods. This is because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than frequencies or incidences. (Yin, 2009, p. 9)

In order to collect relevant information about the second-grade teachers, I used Yin's method of building a set of three theoretical propositions based on my literature

review. According to Yin (2009), articulating theory about what is being studied and what is to be learned makes the case study explicit. I also used the literature review to guide my data collection and analysis as a means to strengthen this single-case study. Proposition one was my primary interest while proposition two and three were of secondary interest in this study. These propositions provided the beginning point of theory development to aid in my decision on how to collect data.

Rival explanations were provided alongside the three theoretical propositions. The recognition of these rival theories or statements made certain that information about them was included when I collected my data and ensured a constant search for independent variables. The first theoretical proposition and the rival proposition were the most “significant aspect” (Yin, 2009, p. 161) of this case study.

Theoretical proposition one: The case study showed how schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) and social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986) supported teachers’ development of comprehension strategy instruction (Pearson *et al.*, 1992) over a school year while participating in adult book clubs (El-Dinary, 2002; Keene, 2002; Kooy, 2006 and 2007).

The case will also show why the adult book club was not sufficient to fully support the teachers’ development of comprehension strategy instruction and exemplary reading instruction (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

Theoretical proposition two: The case study showed how concentrated reflection and instructional development over time (Almasi, 2003) through adult learning; (Sparks, 2002) in a gradual collaborative effort (Block & Duffy, 2008) of adult book clubs (El-Dinary, 2002; Keene, 2002; Kooy, 2006 and 2007) and lesson study and lesson link

(Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; O'Shea, 2005) deepened teachers' understanding of comprehension strategies (Pearson *et al.*, 1992) and connected instructional practices (Block *et al.*, 2002a).

The case will show why concentrated reflection and instructional development over time through adult learning in a gradual collaborative effort was not fully sufficient to deepen teachers' understanding of comprehension strategies and connected instructional practices (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

Theoretical proposition three: The case study showed how working in learning communities through lesson study/link and adult book clubs supported teachers' professional knowledge and practice (Taylor *et al.*, 2011; Coburn, 2005; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Lewis & Tsuchida 1998; O'Shea, 2005; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Watanabe, 2002) and developed some exemplary teacher characteristics listed in the research (Block & Duffy, 2008; Block *et al.*, 2002b).

The case study will also show how learning communities connected to lesson study and adult book clubs for teacher development were not exclusively responsible for the development of the teachers' exemplary characteristics (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

In conclusion, I used the case study method in Yin's graphic representation in a three step process of first, *define and design*, then second, *prepare, collect, and analyze*, and third, *analyze and conclude* (Yin, 2009, p. 59). I developed a theory and a syntheses from my literature review and a pilot study conducted a year prior to this research. I selected my case based on an unusual occurrence in second-grade and designed a data collection protocol based upon the theory I built from the literature review and the earlier pilot study.

Participants

There were four participants in this case study, all teachers in Talmedge County, Alabama. This county was rich in culture, history, and natural resources, yet the government labeled it as a high poverty area. Because of an increase in standardized achievement test scores, Stanmore, an elementary school in this large county school district, came off state alert status and was saved from a near take-over by the Alabama State Department of Education. Teacher turnover rate was high. A faculty with 14 new teachers, many of whom were first-year teachers and all Euro-American, started the school year at Stanmore. This school demanded an understanding of the context of student life because of the differences between staff and students (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Student ethnicity at the school was 70% African American, 29% Caucasian, and 1% Hispanic with 81% of the students receiving free lunch.

The four teachers in this study were second-grade teachers, all Euro-American females. The decision to interview and observe the second-grade teachers evolved after a long period of reflective planning with the second-grade teachers, the two Stanmore administrators, and the school's literacy leadership team, comprised of grade level leaders, the principals, and the literacy coaches.

To provide anonymity, each of the four teachers was given a pseudonym, as were the school and district. Because of the high stakes context and emphasis on one test of constrained skills, I considered the teacher participants' anonymity imperative. Yin (2009) recognized some situations where anonymity was required especially with a

controversial topic and stated the acceptability of not using identity disclosure to “protect the real case and its participants” (p. 181).

Description of Participants

There were four participants, Sarah, Tamra, Deanna, and Janet. Sarah was the youngest teacher with a specialist degree in elementary education with five-years of teaching experience. Stanmore was Sarah’s first teaching assignment.

Tamra was a teacher with two years of experience, all at Stanmore. Having graduated with a bachelor’s degree from a local university, she began teaching after ten years of work experience, some of it as a supervisor in a factory. At 27, Tamra entered college while working at two part-time jobs, all to fulfill her dream of becoming a teacher.

Deanna, the most experienced of the Stanmore teachers in the work at this school, spent her entire ten-year career at Stanmore and was involved in the school’s effort to use comprehension strategies over many years. She was at the school when the strategy work was initiated and was the most experienced teacher of comprehension strategies and the *Cornerstone Framework*.

Janet, a teacher with eighteen years of experience with four of those years at Stanmore, had the most years of experience in teaching second-grade. Janet, an older member of the second-grade Stanmore team and the teacher with the longest tenure in the field of education, returned to Talmedge County to teach at Stanmore after an absence of thirty years.

All four teachers received extensive professional development from two reading initiatives, *Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI)* and *Cornerstone*. The school completed a

four-year school renewal and change process with both initiatives. Foundation status was awarded to *Cornerstone* schools like Stanmore to continue building capacity in best literacy practices. This process occurred over a three-year period as schools such as Stanmore further developed expertise to spread exemplary literacy practices to other schools and districts. *Cornerstone's* goal was to have all children reading on grade level, a similar goal of the *Alabama Reading Initiative*. Sponsored by the New York Institute of Special Education and The Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, the literacy mission statement for *Cornerstone* read:

To read, to write, to think critically, to reason, to analyze and evaluate information, to communicate effectively in a variety of forms, and to inquire systematically into any important matter. (*Cornerstone Bulletin*, 2003)

The selection of the site for this research was based on the researcher's prior connection as a Literacy Fellow and staff developer at Stanmore Elementary through the *Cornerstone National Literacy Initiative*. Thus, the site selection was based on convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009). I was employed by *Cornerstone* as a Literacy Fellow to provide technical advice on best literacy practice to Stanmore. At the present time, I no longer work with Stanmore.

The teacher participants in this study were active in the *Cornerstone Initiative*. *Cornerstone* schools and teachers utilized a research-based literacy framework that refined the essential elements of literacy learning. The essentials were placed in a framework that allowed the participants in the initiative to add teaching exemplars and instructional strategies on-line for colleagues across the nation.

Teaching within the *Cornerstone Framework* allowed the second-grade teachers to concentrate on content that was seminal to literacy learning in four research-based arenas: cognitive strategies; text structures; resources and materials; and school and

classroom context. The *Cornerstone Professional Development Model* depicted the four stages teachers experienced as they participated in *Cornerstone* staff development.

My role in this study developed through participant observation (Spradley, 1983). I immersed myself in the world of the second-grade teachers and studied their words and perspectives as they practiced reflective analysis of their comprehension strategy instruction through personal reading in adult book clubs and Japanese Lesson Study and lesson link. Their reflection occurred within the context of participating in two reading initiatives focused on reading for meaning. One initiative moved to a high stakes assessment, which measured constrained skills such as reading fluency (DIBELS) while the other continued to measure reading progress by the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)* (Beaver, 2001). As Yin suggested “the line between what happened in the real life experiences and the surrounding conditions were not often clear.” (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Data Set

Yin advised, “a good case study will therefore want to use as many sources as possible” (Yin, 2009, p. 101). My case study data sources were transcribed teacher interviews, transcription of book club discussions and participant observation of the meetings, and direct observation and transcription of lesson study and lesson link reflections. Secondary data sources were written documentation of lessons, archival records of strategy instruction, a blog of book club responses, and photographs of comprehension strategy anchor charts created by teachers.

A primary data source was teacher interviews. For clarity, I labeled this data as Primary Data Source 1: Teacher Interview Transcripts. Each second-grade teacher was interviewed three times and all interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews served as “guided conversations” (Yin, 2009, p. 106) to get at the heart of the teachers’ experiences. The interviews were based on a protocol found in Appendix A. The *University of Alabama, Birmingham Institutional Review Board*, approved the protocol and issued an approval form found in Appendix B. Yin suggested that interviews were “one of the most important sources of case study information” (Yin, 2009, p. 106). This data source built a frame for knowing the teachers and examining the teachers’ perceptions as well as a frame for recombining all the data.

The first of the three interviews was conducted to cover the life context of each teacher. In the second interview, I posed questions partially drawn from the literature review on school effect and renewal, effective literacy teachers, and comprehension strategy instruction. Each teacher was asked to reconstruct the past year in relation to the work of second-grade. The final interview was reflective about the teachers’ experience of the previous year and the significance of the experience to them (Seidman, 2005; Yin, 2009).

Another primary data source was the recorded and transcribed book clubs labeled as Primary Data Source 2: Book Club Transcripts. The book club data were collected over a school year. This was a key data source for my research. Along with the book clubs, I took notes while participating in the book clubs as an observer. A third major data source was the recorded reflections during the lesson link. I labeled this as Primary Data Source 3: Lesson Link Transcript. The second-grade team conducted one lesson

study modified as a lesson link. Data collected from this lesson link included the four reflection sessions occurring after each teacher taught the jointly planned lesson. The reflection sessions were tape recorded and transcribed, and the final discussion was captured on a chart and transferred to a computer file.

I also collected artifacts that included comprehension strategy lesson plans, photographs of classroom anchor charts, a school timeline for comprehension instruction, and blog responses to the books read in adult book clubs. The comprehension strategy lesson plans collected were over one school year and mirrored the focus comprehension strategy lessons in Debbie Miller's *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (2002). The second-grade teachers supported the plans with text sets recommended in Miller's book. The comprehension strategy focus lessons were synthesized and transferred to a computer file.

Miller (2002) recommended teacher created anchor charts. The team used those anchor charts and they were photographed as a data source. The charts were designed to hold the thinking of students. The teacher and student jointly constructed charts anchored the strategy studies. The charts were photographed while the second-grade teachers and I walked through the classrooms prior to the book club meetings. The data from these charts represented a history of the strategy work over time. They were placed in a computer file.

The Stanmore leadership team developed a timeline for comprehension strategy instruction. The teachers kept a copy of the strategy timeline in their lesson plan books and referred to it as a guide for the school wide focus strategy. This timeline was temporal in nature. Monitoring for meaning as a strategy was on the school wide

timeline each month. Connections and use of schema as a strategy were the instructional foci during the first six weeks of school paralleling monitoring for meaning, a year-long strategy. Questioning was added in the next six weeks followed by visualizing and determining importance. Instruction on the use of these strategies was completed after approximately twenty-four weeks of school. Inference and synthesis completed the instructional timeline and concluded strategy work for the last month of school.

A Teachers as Readers Blog was developed for the book club and included postings from teachers about the books read. I collected the comments in a document file. The teachers had little time to post to the blog and it was a sparse data source. In summary, the advantage of multiple data sources allowed for a wide range of instructional behaviors to be studied. The historical information gleaned from the artifacts created a rich tapestry of the instructional context.

Data Analysis

Defining data analysis, Yin stated, “Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to draw empirically based conclusions” (Yin, 2009, p. 126). My “unit of analysis” (Yin, 2009, p. 31) was a group of second-grade teachers focused on their self-development and instruction of comprehension strategies in a time of high stakes testing focused on constrained skills. I used “bracketing” (Denzin, 1989, p. 76) to find essential components or structures of the second-grade teachers’ group behavior. The team’s adult book clubs, the meaning they made together around their own reading and use of comprehension strategies, and their use of lesson link as a means to investigate their instruction were of great personal interest. Yin labeled groups like the second-grade teachers as the critical case.

One rationale for a single case is when it represents the *critical case* in testing a well formulated theory. The theory has specified a clear set of propositions as well as circumstances within which the propositions are believed to be true. (Yin, 2009, p. 47)

The teachers were acting as a group not independent of each other. Kidder and Judd offered advice on selection of units of analysis: “in group processes, generalizations across groups may be desired, and groups are the appropriate unit” (Kidder & Judd, 1986, p. 318).

Data gathering and analysis were guided by the literature review of these topics: child development, school reform, culture and diversity, critical literacy, teacher expertise, the interactive model of reading, and comprehension strategy work. The review of the topics, my research questions, and a pilot case study led to predicted patterns and three theoretical propositions.

I relied on Yin ‘s suggestion of choosing a “general analytic strategy” (Yin, 2009, p. 135), which was the strategy that he preferred. My general data analysis strategy was the three theoretical propositions based on my research questions and my literature review. My three propositions detailed in the method section determined the scope of my research on how the teachers instructed comprehension strategies, how they developed as strategy teachers, and how they studied their instruction as a group.

I used other strategies described by Yin such as pattern matching and rival explanations. Yin explained pattern matching as a logic method where an “empirically based pattern” was compared to a “predicted pattern” (Yin, 2009, p. 136). The predicted pattern was built upon the literature review and was compared to the empirically based pattern drawn from my data.

The first step was to analyze the teacher vignettes as a separate data source before recombining them with two other primary data sources, book club transcripts and lesson link transcripts. This recombining provided the opportunity for the rival explanations to be considered fully. The rationale for analysis of the vignettes first before recombining with the other data sources was to draw out alternative perspectives that might refute the theoretical propositions. The vignettes were created from the interview transcripts that were collected from the individual teachers apart from the group. By using the vignettes in this manner, I hoped to find viewpoints that refuted my theoretical propositions and lessened the possibility of being “accused of stacking the deck” in favor of the theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009, p. 134).

Data analysis for the secondary data sources included a simple time series analysis of a school wide strategy timeline and lesson plans. The Stanmore leadership team designed the strategy timeline based on periods of focused strategy study over time as directed by the *Cornerstone Framework*. The timeline included a cumulative instructional plan for building strategies and connecting their use over a school year. For analysis, I used a simple time series analysis because much of the research on the development of comprehension strategy instruction indicated concentrated reflection and collaborative instructional development over time as the key elements of teacher learning (Almasi, 2003; Block & Duffy, 2008; Kooy, 2007).

For clarity and organization in the following paragraphs, I referred to my data as Primary Data Source 1: Teacher Interview Transcripts, Primary Data Source 2: Book Club Transcripts, and Primary Data Source 3: Lesson Link Transcript.

Transcription

I began with transcribing the recordings of the teacher interviews and labeled the transcriptions as Primary Data Source 1: Teacher Interview Transcripts. Information found in the transcripts emerged from the questions found in Appendix A. There were twelve transcribed interviews, three for each of the four teachers. I transcribed the tape-recorded interviews of the second-grade teachers and sifted through the transcriptions to identify the big ideas. I examined the data from the twelve transcribed interviews, constantly testing the information against the literature review on exemplary literacy teachers and comprehension strategy instruction.

I reduced the transcriptions by creating teacher profiles derived from verbatim transcriptions of the tape-recorded interviews. This data reduction was done inductively by seeking emerging themes in the transcriptions that seemed important and interesting in relation to the research questions and the literature review.

After careful reading, the first step in making sense of the data included marking passages with brackets (Denzin, 1989, p. 76). Using the suggestions by Seidman (2005), I noted language that evoked conflict, frustration and resolution, and isolation while keeping a holistic eye toward any wording that expressed joy, collegiality, or community connected to the second-grade teachers' work. As suggested by Seidman (2005), the interviews lent themselves to in-depth profiles. In a final step, I condensed the transcriptions by writing a vignette of each teacher using their exact words (Appendix C).

As I continued to analyze Primary Data Source 1: Teacher Interview Transcripts, the interviews provided targeted insight about key topics from the literature review on exemplary second-grade literacy teachers. Beginning an analytic technique of pattern

matching (Yin, 2009), I then categorized the interview data using six topics found in the literature review on literacy teachers. The topics formed predicted patterns. The patterns were predominate role, motivation, reteach, relate to students, classroom qualities, and lesson characteristics (Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005).

I refined and extended the “predicted pattern” (Yin, 2009, p. 136) taken from the literature review that included the characteristics of exemplary second-grade literacy teachers. I synthesized the characteristics and labeled them as: demonstrators/modelers; whole process enthusiasts/big picture advocates; personalizers/connectors; listeners/conference focused; creators of learning environments/users of pragmatics; and creative differentiators (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005).

As I read and reread each interview, I categorized and organized the teachers’ words within a narrative, *Characteristics of Exemplary Second-grade Teachers*. Next, I transcribed the recordings of the teacher book clubs and labeled the transcriptions as Primary Data Source 2: Teacher Book Clubs. The transcripts of the book clubs occurred over the school year so the arrangement for the data analysis was done by the sequence of the book club meetings. I read and reread the club transcripts and marked patterns of interest in regard to comments about schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), social construction of understanding (Vygotsky, 1986), and the seven comprehension strategies (Pearson *et al.*, 1992; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Pressley, 2000a). This analysis of the book club provided details over time about learning how to teach and use strategies. Time was an important element in learning to teach strategies (Almasi, 2003; Duffy,

1997, 2002a). I used the exact teacher words as data for evidence of schema theory interplay as well as language related to social construction of knowledge and strategy work.

Predicted Pattern

From my literature review, I built a detailed “predicted pattern” (Yin, 2009, p. 136) including the seven reading strategies suggested for developing comprehension expertise. The strategies were connecting, questioning, determining importance, inferring, synthesizing, visualizing, and monitoring for meaning. (Pearson *et al.*, 1992; Keene, & Zimmerman, 1997; Pressley, 2000a).

Included in the detailed pattern were characteristics of exemplary reading work in high poverty settings (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). The pattern included teacher modeling (Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Fisher & Frey, 2007), collaboration (Block & Duffy, 2008), communication (Taylor *et al.*, 2000; Taylor *et al.*, 2011), coordination (Timperley & Parr, 2007; Lai *et al.*, 2009) plus vision building in professional learning communities (Au *et al.*, 2008; McNaughton & Lai, 2010).

Other topics in the predicted pattern were a focus on students as readers (Raphael, 2010) and on connecting to students’ culture and background (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001, and 2010; Moll *et al.*, 2005; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Snow, *et al.*, 2005; Keene, 2008), students’ cognitive engagement, independence in word recognition, and comprehension strategies (Taylor *et al.*, 2003). Professional development that supported teachers to develop their curriculum (Au *et al.*, 2005) while using a reflective stance

(Timperley & Parr, 2007) and the pursuit of excellence (Block & Mangieri, 2009) were included in the detailed predicted pattern.

In the book club transcripts, I “bracketed” (Denzin, 1989, p. 76) evidence of the teachers’ use of the seven strategies and evidence of the characteristics of exemplary reading work in high poverty settings. Finally, I used the teachers’ exact words when constructing the narrative and noted the book club discussions. I then recombined the data from Primary Data Source 2: Book Club Transcripts in *Characteristics of Exemplary Second-grade Teachers*.

The modified lesson study or lesson link was first transcribed, reduced, and arranged in a narrative into Primary Data Source 3: Lesson Link Transcripts. The narrative included the details of reflective discussions and decisions made after the instruction by each second-grade teacher as well those made by the group at the end of the lesson link. There were four lessons followed by four reflection sessions. From the reduced data found in the narrative, I sought themes based on topics found in the literature review such as teachers’ conversations about instruction and students’ understanding (Timperley & Parr, 2007; Taylor *et al.*, 2011; Taylor *et al.*, 2003; Fisher & Frey, 2007, McNaughton *et al.*, 2006; Lipson *et al.*, 2004), focus on change of lessons with students’ culture and deep comprehension in mind (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009; Raphael, 1994; Raphael *et al.*, 2001; Reninger & Wilkinson 2010; Soter *et al.*, 2008; Wilkinson, 2010; Wilkinson & Son, 2010), discussion of required curriculum and thoughtful reflection (Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Hammerness *et al.*, 2005; Hatana & Oura, 2003; Block & Mangieri, 2009; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida,

1998; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002; McNaughton & Lai, 2010) and improving instruction and students' use of comprehension strategies (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

I used themes derived from the research and built a "predicted pattern" (Yin, 2009, p. 136) from the review of literature that included teachers' deepened interactions, teacher focus on instructional improvement, and teacher focus on students' achievement of the lesson goals (Kratzer & Teplin, 2007) with attention to students' learning the intended curriculum, and collaboration on writing and rewriting lessons that met rigorous standards (Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002). I also included an element of expanded teacher learning of literacy and comprehension strategy work (Hurd & Liccardo-Musso, 2005, Lewis *et al.*, 2006).

As I read reflections from each lesson link, I categorized and organized the data within the narrative, *Characteristics of Exemplary Second-grade Teachers*. Using the prescribed labels from the narrative. I then recombined data from Primary Data Source 3: Lesson Link Transcripts. I completed a cycle of recombining data from all three primary data sources into one narrative around themes of characteristics of exemplary teachers, professional development such as book clubs to improve strategy instruction, and reflection on instructional practices and improvement through lesson link. This final recombining effort ended with a narrative based upon triangulation of the data from the three primary data sources of teacher interviews, book club transcripts, and lesson link transcripts.

Secondary Data Sources were written documentation of lessons, archival records of strategy instruction, a blog of literature responses, and photographs of comprehension anchor charts created by teachers. I studied and coded this as support for these topics:

characteristics of exemplary teachers, professional development such as book clubs to improve strategy instruction, and reflection on instructional practices and improvement. The results were included in the narrative, *Characteristics of Exemplary Second-grade Teachers*. I fully analyzed all primary and secondary sources.

Test of Theoretical Propositions and Rival Explanations

As a final data analysis step, I placed the reduced data gleaned from Primary Data Source 1: Teacher Interview Transcripts, Primary Data Source 2: Book Club Transcripts, and Primary Data Source 3: Lesson Link Transcript and the secondary data sources against Proposition One and the rival explanations, Proposition Two and the rival explanations, and Proposition Three and the rival explanations.

I sought agreement among the theoretical propositions and synthesized all data in the combined narrative, *Characteristics of Exemplary Second-grade Teachers* by pattern matching. I also sought evidence for rival explanations and any points where patterns disagreed or did not match.

Reliability and Validity

I sought to allow the readers of this study to understand the “layers of influence” (McNaughton, 2010, p. 125) on the second-grade teachers by reliably and validly connecting the links between the review of research, the data, and the findings. Lincoln and Guba cited “prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation” as ways to ensure this credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). They also included peer debriefing and member checking.

A measure to increase the reliability and construct validity of this case study was the chain of evidence or cross-referencing and the use of multiple sources of evidence that converged over an extended period of one year. Through the triangulation of the multiple primary data sources of interviews, book club transcripts and lesson link transcripts, the study's validity was increased. According to Yin, "using multiple data sources of evidence is the development of *converging lines of inquiry*, a process of triangulation and corroboration" (Yin, 2009, pp. 115-116).

The multiple data sources and prolonged fieldwork provided a database of rich resources. I used original documents and transcribed interviews to form teacher vignettes. Yin cited the ultimate "chain of evidence" (Yin, 2009, p. 124) as the ability "to move from one part of the case study process to another, with cross-referencing to methodological procedures and to the resulting evidence." (Yin, 2009, p. 123). I established this "chain of evidence" (Yin, 2009, p. 42) to build construct validity.

Interviews were one of the multiple data sources used in this study and the only data source collected from the individual teachers. When the interviews were completed and transcribed, I used member checking to refute or support the narratives developed from the transcription. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined member checking as a technique to provide evidence of a study's credibility, which they described as analogous to internal validity.

I took care in preserving all the data collected at the research site by making the analysis of the data very concrete. For example, I quickly transcribed the interviews, the book club discussions, and the lesson link and used the exact words of the participants (Seidman, 2005) as much as possible within a frame built from my literature review.

The verbatim transcription technique used in this study was influenced by Vygotskian theory on the value of every word spoken by a participant. The words transcribed represented each person's consciousness and thoughts (Vygotsky, 1987). As member checking proceeded, the participants' voices were clear in the verbatim transcripts. When the interviews were analyzed, care was given to use exact phrasing from participants, providing what Seidman (2005) termed a strict "accountability to the data" (p. 97).

By using this process of member checking during and after this study, participants and others reacted to my reconstructions of data. When the interviews were transcribed, a written copy was given to each teacher. The teachers were asked to exclude any information that they felt would not be in their best interest or the school's best interest if reported. This strategy of member checking was used as a tool to add to the trustworthiness and credibility of the reporting. To increase my study's validity, I used the same process with the book club transcriptions, the lesson link, and the final case study report (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2009).

Another technique I used to increase credibility was peer debriefing which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) exposed the researcher to the critique of a peer not directly involved in data collection but knowledgeable of the context. Dr. Janet Cumbee, a former principal at Stanmore and retired district office curriculum director, met the criteria for peer debriefer. She read this study and provided feedback and oversight. The process enhanced this study's credibility. During the peer debriefings, Dr. Cumbee offered alternative explanations.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested an audit trail to determine if the study's conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations connected to their original sources. Raw data, products from analysis such as the teacher vignettes, notes, and interview questions created an audit trail in this study. The audit trail suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) shared characteristics of the case study database described by Yin (2009) as a means to increase reliability.

To collect the data that was placed in the case study database, I designed a protocol across the school year. Before the study began, this case study protocol was further developed with the second-grade teachers and we followed it. As a part of the protocol, I first sought appropriate approval to gather and analyze data. Prior to the beginning of this study and the data gathering, the Institutional Review Board (*IRB*) at the University of Alabama, Birmingham approved my research and issued a stamped approval found in Appendix B. They also approved my interview protocol and interview questions found in Appendix A. The Talmedge County superintendent also supported and approved of this study.

The case study protocol extended over the course of the school year with monthly book club meetings. In the middle of the school year while the adult book club meetings proceeded, the lesson link was planned and enacted. The book club meetings continued and concluded at the end of the school year. The case study protocol guided my investigation, served as a "standardized agenda" for the inquiry, and increased reliability of this study (Yin, 2009, p. 80). The personal nature of the data collected in the case study database required organization and security for all data sources. Building the case study's reliability by carefully securing all data in computer files, a case study database

was constructed. I maintained this case study database by storing computer files on two computers that were password protected and on an external hard drive. I stored all audiotapes in a locked home safe with this external hard drive. All transcriptions were stored electronically as well as in paper copy and secured from public scrutiny. This method of keeping a case study database in a safe place made certain that the steps in this study were available for review by others interested in the investigation as well as for the researcher.

Philosophical Assumptions and Theoretical Framework

The theories of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and M. B. Spencer *et al.*, (1997) shaped “my philosophical worldview” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7) and grounded my research design in the notion that context matters and set my path to study second-grade teachers within a school context that interested me and mattered for children and their development.

Creswell proposed that research design rested on worldviews, strategies, and methods (Creswell, 2009). My worldview most closely matched Creswell’s description of constructivist behaviors since I used teachers’ quotes and multiple views and perspectives. In the process of collecting the data in classrooms, I maintained close relationships with the second-grade team. My constructivist’s worldview and the demands of my job influenced the choice of the research method.

The nature of school literacy reform required me through participant observation to partner with teachers to construct meaning around where we wanted our literacy instruction to go as we talked through our understanding of reading theory. Daily co-

construction of where research met reality and decision-making about our reading instruction moved us to action focused on children.

While serving Title I schools, I collected data of professional development sessions that supported and encouraged teacher autonomy. At the time, I used my data as a personal “sensemaking” strategy (Coburn, 2001, p. 146). “Sensemaking,” defined in Coburn’s work, described colleagues “in formal and informal settings, co-constructing understandings of messages from the environment, making decisions about those messages, and negotiating technical and practical details of implementation” (Coburn, 2001, p. 146).

In this role and context, I lived the theory that all human experiences balance “context and perception” (Spencer, 2008b, p. 257). M. B. Spencer (2008b) named context and perception the “twin influences” describing them as determinants of how we build meaning of everyday happenings. Context and perception created my “worldview” of school change, reading instruction, and research. As I inquired into the comprehension instructional practices of four second-grade teachers at Stanmore Elementary and how they developed themselves to teach comprehension and monitored their instruction, I used the “twin influences” to guide my research strategies and methods. By immersing myself in the context of Stanmore while developing an understanding of the second-grade teachers’ perceptions of their work, I made meaning of the intricate instruction that they embraced.

My *Cornerstone* Literacy Fellow role at Stanmore and other *Cornerstone* schools required that I develop more strategies and methods for collecting data for the senior staff at *Cornerstone*. Through graduate study and work in *Cornerstone* Title I schools, I

developed an appreciation of the human resilience and cultural relevance that I found in the teachers and children at Stanmore School, the site of this research. I wanted to develop a study that showcased the words, work, and reflection of the second-grade teachers with whom I had worked in a naturalistic setting.

Qualitative research offered a range of techniques allowing the nuances found in the world of the teachers to emerge and a detailed description to unfold. Thereby, my strategy of using descriptive data was born. My strategies for qualitative research continued to be nurtured while studying teachers' implementation of the *Cornerstone Framework*. I learned the necessity of teachers' building meaning about the comprehension strategies first-hand through the *Cornerstone Continuous Professional Model*. Adult book clubs were often common professional development experiences that seemed to impact the teachers' ability to use their personal metacognitive ability to strengthen their literacy instruction. This constructivist paradigm and inquiry drove my service in *Cornerstone* Title I schools and influenced this study's qualitative research design.

Other influences that fed my research design emerged from the constant literature reviews that my Literacy Fellow role required. Not finding many studies connecting teachers' personal reading to the development of their comprehension strategy instruction, the "stories" I saw unfold in teacher book clubs and classrooms over many years offered a rich data source (Yin, 2009, p. 130). The teachers' words I collected in professional development sessions fueled an interest in qualitative case study research and offered a fitting choice for my research methods and my personal learning style.

Margaret Beal Spencer (2011) brought attention to the media's portrayal of minority youth challenges as pathological. This representation of children was the most troubling aspect of my service in high poverty communities. Media portrayal of schools, teachers, and communities as deficit did not match my worldview. The context of my school renewal work in public education often presented a dichotomy of teachers portrayed as the "magic bullet" (Bergin & Bergin, 2011, p xxi) and at the same time described as occupants of rubber rooms waiting for dismissal hearings (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126055157>).

This contrast was not in line with my experiences as a *Cornerstone* Literacy Fellow nor did the representations match the informal data that I collected from the classrooms where I worked. I knew the "stories" of teachers with whom I worked must be heard and elevated.

My graduate program in child development led to the study of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and M. B. Spencer's *et al.* (1997) contextual and phenomenological laden theories. Continued critical literacy study created a curiosity about the "how" of learning to teach comprehension strategies in the context of Title I schools. Work with teachers continued to require a vigilant study of the research literature in the areas of comprehension strategy instruction, school reform, exemplary literacy instruction, and reading models that impacted reading achievement. I found that many studies concerned with "what" of comprehension instruction were often reported in experimental research; however, studies on "how" to teach the comprehension through the use of descriptive case study research were growing and offered much that I could use when coaching the teachers I served. At this point, I lived in a literacy coach's world because of the

Stanmore teachers' persistent questions around the "how" of comprehension strategy instruction.

My need to answer "how" questions concerning the second-grade teachers' self-development also connected to Yin's assertion that "how" and "why" questions are likely to favor the use of case studies, experiments, or histories (Yin, 2009, (p. 10). The *RAND Study* (2002) and other research (Block & Duffy, 2008; Duffy, 2009) found reading comprehension to be in need of in depth study. The *RAND* group made some important queries that resonated with me as I designed my research. The main query was: *How can teacher quality increase along with expertise in reading comprehension instruction?*

A small group of researchers dedicated to interpreting "how" reading teachers taught built a body of qualitative case studies of exemplary reading teachers (Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005) and inspired my literacy coaching and this research project.

Role of the Researcher

Working at Stanmore Elementary in the capacity of a *Cornerstone* outsider and a non-county employee provided a clear vision of the literacy situation in the school and the opportunity to "describe and explain the world of literacy instruction the way the teacher experienced it" (Merriam, 1997, p. 205). Taking the role of *Cornerstone* Literacy Fellow one day a week, the responsibilities of the researcher's position included evaluating the literacy situation and giving technical support to the staff and faculty as needed to improve student reading achievement. The *Cornerstone* Literacy Fellow position was related to participant observation (Spradley, 1980) in the several ways.

Working as a literacy fellow and a researcher required engagement in activities appropriate to the situation and observation of activities, people, and the environment. The positions required a “hyper-awareness” of all interactions in the school. My role with *Cornerstone* required collection of data through student work-samples, lesson plans, and unit plan documents as well as photographic evidence. This work experience supported my data gathering for this research. My facilitation of professional development sessions with adult learning as a component was invaluable to the data collection in the teacher book clubs.

A personal inclination to listen to stories from teachers and students learning together in Title I schools as they strove to embrace high levels of literacy created a deep understanding of the context of Title I schools and increased my research skills. As a *Cornerstone* Literacy Fellow, my role required a listening stance with the goal of coaching toward research-based literacy instruction, and I was able to use this experience during my research. Through the stories of teachers and children, I learned their vulnerabilities as well as their resilient character. This experience broadened my coaching repertoire and set my path toward this case study research. I learned to tap into the “funds of knowledge” surrounding me to guide my Literacy Fellow work and I used these funds as a guide in my research endeavor (Moll *et al.*, 2005, p. 72).

The skills I brought to this study were developed by formal graduate study and my *Cornerstone* job requirements. The use of multiple data sources created a need to increase my skills, particularly with using interviews as a data source. A pilot case study of the Stanmore principals developed and strengthened my interview techniques and my reporting skills. As I completed the analysis and transcribed the interviews, this pilot

study offered experience and opportunity to build my skills for this case study. My limited formal research experience created a need for great focus and practice in writing and editing the narratives created in this study.

A critical part of my work has been to maintain the ethics of this qualitative research. By constantly sharing my transcriptions through member checking with the second-grade teachers, I have provided an opportunity to maintain transparency and an opportunity for the teachers to remove any content. The final report will be offered to the second-grade teachers with the same opportunities to delete material (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Siedman, 2005; Yin, 2009).

My most important role in this inquiry process has been to listen to the voice of teachers, learn from them, and share any useful findings through my report. The final research report written in a narrative mode utilized a profile of the second-grade teachers with vignettes and thick description (Geertz, 1983) to make the setting vivid, thereby, lending an air of trustworthiness. The primary implications from this research were intended to inform the second-grade teachers at Stanmore Elementary. Another possible implication involves the use of lesson study as a reflective analysis tool of comprehension strategy instruction. The setting and instructional techniques for second-grade reading instruction might be considered for other grade levels at this school. Beyond the school itself, there are no intentions to generalize the findings to other settings (Merriam, 2009). My desire has been to honor the second-grade teachers. By honoring teachers, we elevate the profession.

Summary

Qualitative inquiry through the use of how and why questions were the guide for my case study. This inquiry met my purpose. Chapter III informed the next two chapters in my dissertation and explained my analysis of three primary data sources and multiple secondary sources. The chapter also described the path of my qualitative inquiry and how I maintained rigor and trustworthiness throughout the research process.

Participants were from a rural Title 1 school working as a second-grade team. The four second-grade teachers and their comprehension instruction and professional development created a compelling context for data gathering that required recording and transcribing key events over a year. The teachers were my unit of analysis and the critical case.

The data set included key events over a school year of in-depth interviews, adult book clubs, and a lesson link. I used a data collection protocol to plan how the data sets would be collected and I decided upon tape recording as a tool. Transcriptions from the recordings of key events, lesson plans, photographs, comprehension strategy plans, and timelines provided a rich set of data built upon teachers' exact words and their valued artifacts.

The plan for data analysis and collection grew from a widespread search and review of the literature. Building a theoretical frame for the study required an extensive literature review because the research setting was very complex. The context necessitated scrutiny and review of literature on seven topics. The literature review topics were child development, school reform, culture and diversity, critical literacy, teacher expertise, the interactive model of reading, and comprehension strategy work. I

developed three theoretical propositions from this literature review, my questions, and a pilot case study conducted prior to this research (Yin, 2009).

My general analytic strategy was the development of these three theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009). The propositions framed the scope of the research and centered on how teachers instructed comprehension, how they developed as comprehension strategies teachers, and how they studied their instruction as a group.

I also chose four predicted patterns from the literature: comprehension strategies, characteristics of exemplary teachers, professional learning communities, and cultural connections. As data were transcribed, I used “bracketing” (Denzin, 1989, p. 76) and pattern matching (Yin, 2009) across data sources to seek themes. As I found themes, I grouped examples together in a narrative.

Bracketing and pattern matching created multiple opportunities for triangulating the data sources to seek agreement or to expose incongruence. Because reliability and validity were important for my case study, triangulating the multiple data sources was critical. Other characteristics of the study such as the year-long length of the study and the data collection protocol created reliability. The prolonged engagement with the teachers followed a case study protocol of carefully planned monthly and bimonthly sessions. These sessions offered numerous opportunities for member checking and peer debriefing, two other validity and reliability checks.

Because the data were extensive and I sought to build reliability, a database of all transcripts and artifacts was safely stored for my personal use as well as to provide an audit trail for others. The secured database offered constant availability to the organized

and catalogued raw data as well as data being analyzed. This provided a context for my personal audit of emerging themes and findings.

As a constructivist grounded in theories of child development, I sought to illuminate the “human face” (Yin, 2009, p. viii) of Stanmore through the case study of the second-grade teachers. The admittedly long and difficult journey of these teachers to become comprehension strategies teachers could not be generalized to others. However, the unique story through this case study might offer inspiration to others on the same professional path and in a similar context.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter consists of two parts. The first section, Teacher Interviews, describes the themes and subthemes derived from the transcribed teacher interviews. The second section, The Research Framework, describes the subthemes from matching the data to the research frame. The next chapter, Discussion, frames these findings, places them in context, and presents reflections on the findings.

Four descriptors characterized the group of teachers: passionate, committed, professional, and adaptive scholars. The critical case characteristics, derived from the teachers' exact words from the vignettes illustrated the themes and subthemes for this study. All data sources were analyzed by building an outline from the literature review (Yin, 2009). Drawing from research on child development, school reform, culture and diversity, critical literacy, teacher expertise emphasizing exemplary second-grade literacy teachers, the interactive model of reading, and comprehension strategy work, I built a research frame on domains to describe exemplary second-grade literacy teachers. The domains for exemplary literacy teachers were: dominate role, motivation, reteaching, relating to students, classroom qualities, and lesson characteristics (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block & Mangieri, 2009).

My research questions were: How do four second-grade teachers at Stanmore Elementary describe comprehension strategies instruction and reflect about teaching? How, why, and with what influences do the teachers engage in professional development to improve students' comprehension through instruction?

Themes

Four themes emerged from the data. The characteristics of the four teachers as a group were as follows: (1) passion for teaching; (2) professional community; (3) commitment to strategy instruction; and (4) adaptive scholarship. Subthemes were identified for each of these four themes (see Table 1).

Table 1

<i>Themes and Subthemes of the Case Study</i>			
Passion for Teaching	Professional Community	Commitment To Strategy Instruction	Adaptive Scholarship
Children	Improving Instruction	Teacher Challenge	Change
Reading	Community of Change	Integration of Strategies	Deep Content Knowledge
Metacognitive Response		Talk about Books	Theory-based Instruction
Exemplary Instruction		Thought –driven Lessons	Generative Pedagogy
Teacher as Primary Resource			

Teacher Interviews

Interview questions in Appendix A were designed to structure the conversations with the teachers. The first interview focused on the teachers' life history, followed by questions about the teachers' instruction of comprehension. The last interview concentrated on teachers' reflection about the year, comprehension instruction, and professional development. The first analysis of the raw data was focused on the transcribed interviews.

Passion for Teaching

The theme of a passion for teaching emerged in the interview transcripts with subthemes of a focus on children and a focus on reading. The teachers faced personal hurdles prior to entering the education profession. They had a passionate commitment to become educators as was evident in the interviews. One teacher offered an explanation of why she teaches. "To be honest, I think this work is a calling that was put on my heart a long time ago. For me to be able to do it the way I did it, I had to go through many things."

All members of the group except one entered teacher education programs after working in other non-degree jobs. Pursuing teaching degrees was an important goal for each of these second-grade teachers. When asked what teaching at Stanmore meant, a teacher responded. "Well, I guess that teaching has been the greatest thing that I have ever done in my life other than having my child. I want to stay as long as they will let me."

The teachers recognized the commitment, hard work, and reputation established by the grade level during the tenure of the two school change initiatives, *Cornerstone*

Literacy Initiative and the *Alabama Reading Initiative*. The second-grade team implemented comprehension strategies recommended by both initiatives. Professional reading in groups was common. Transferring from a third-grade position to the second-grade was a long awaited move for one teacher, a move back to a grade level where most of her career had developed. The teacher's professional development in the third-grade position prepared her for the move. Appreciation for her colleagues was present in the following comment. "I feel we work together well. I feel the teachers here work harder than any other teachers I have met before. The dedication of the teachers is amazing."

Stanmore is located in a rural community in Talmedge County. Three of the four teachers travelled considerable distances to the school. One teacher explained her choice to teach in the Stanmore community in the following way. "I always knew that I wanted to go where I could make a difference. It's my life. I live basically an hour away. I go to school. I come home. I read, read, and then go to bed. Then I go back to school."

The youngest member of the group expressed her passion for teaching. She said, "It encompasses my life. It is my life, my whole life. Teaching is my life. I dream about it." As a group the teachers had a distinctive commitment to children and reading. Each teacher expressed a desire to teach children at the second-grade level, often listing developmental capabilities and qualities of the age group such as the students' love of questions and their ability to talk about their thinking.

The teachers possessed keen insight into the students as individuals. The interactions with the children and the daily instruction were child focused. Discussion of the developmental characteristics of second-grade students occurred frequently. Bergin and Bergin (2011) suggested that outstanding teachers were guided by the science of

child development and the art of applying this knowledge to instruction. This was sound pedagogy as noted by the *National Association of Education of Young Children* (Copple, 2010). The second-grade team used child development as a guide for their teaching as affirmed by the data collected in this study.

Awareness of the developmental characteristics of second-grade students and a passion for the ability of what the students brought to reading instruction was illustrated by the teachers' words. The teachers honored students and families' knowledge. Theories and research found in the literature review supported the teachers' honoring of students and families' background knowledge (Moll, 1998; Anderson, 1977; Rummelhart, 1980; Anderson & Pearson, 1984). "There is so much that can be said about the maturity sometimes with second-graders and their reading...you can take them into higher levels of learning especially in reading."

Recalling special moments and times of listening to children occurred frequently in the interviews (Rinaldi, 2005). This reciprocal interaction of exchanging ideas was represented in the following account of a class discussion of *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993). The book evoked a series of student questions. The recount of this classroom event was shared using children's language and ideas.

We often focus on questioning, for example, someone would ask a question and other students would say, "Well, that is kind of like a thin question; think a little bit harder." They try to help that person come up with a thick question or comment that someone's already mentioned [it]. They come up with the most amazing questions. "What were they doing?" in *The Lotus Seed*, they asked, "Are those people slaves?" They started this conversation by looking at the front cover. They noticed the clothing and this started another conversation and more questions. A student asked, "Why are they all dressed alike?" and then commented, "You can't tell if they are boys or girls, or if they are black or white.

One teacher offered advice regarding careful attention to children, listening to them and learning from them. The second-grade teachers had passion for the language of

children and their conversations. Research about instructional conversations and the support of children's language aligned with teachers' value of student talk (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2011). As one teacher stated, "Do less talking and more listening because if they are talking about their learning, they are thinking about it."

The teachers demonstrated the value of books and a passion for the work of teaching with children's literature. This passion paralleled research that described how teachers blended techniques and focused on high-quality children's literature and a book-rich environment (Pressley *et al.*, 2001c). A teacher reflected about a favorite book and the children's response. "With *All I See* by Cynthia Rylant, we were really going to focus in on an artist and the canvas, that part of it. They were interested in whales. They were pulling whale books from everywhere they could find!"

The love of reading aloud high-quality books was considered an essential for second-grade reading instruction and supported thinking as part of the curriculum. The enthusiasm for a challenging curriculum described here revealed a commitment to comprehension instruction as a joyful part of the curriculum. The joy often came from the children's love of literature and picture books used to model reading and writing strategies. Many of the books came from suggested lessons in Debbie Miller's book, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (2002). Researchers supported this instructional use of many texts in multiple genres (Pressley, 1998b; Block & Duffy, 2008; Keene, 2002 and 2010). As one teacher explained, "They have to have that rich thinking. They have to be challenged to think not just to read the words but to the thinking about what they are reading." Another teacher reflected about the power of children's books to motivate and excite students. Reading motivation and

provision of a complex thinking curriculum was research based (Timperley & Parr, 2007; Taylor *et al.*, 2011; Taylor *et al.*, 2003; Fisher & Frey, 2007, McNaughton *et al.*, 2006; Lipson *et al.*, 2004). Reflecting on the use of high quality books, a teacher said, “I see the children getting very excited about the learning. The books are becoming alive to them.”

The Stanmore teachers discovered what the researchers reported about the challenging nature of strategy instruction. The teachers found that strategy instruction was difficult to teach and consumed planning time. (El-Dinary *et al.*, 1992; El-Dinary, 2002; Duffy, 1997; Duffy, 1993a, 1993b, and 2005; Almasi, 2003). The passion for teaching comprehension as well as the challenge appeared in this teacher’s comment.

It is kind of scary to even think that I am in charge of building a child’s comprehension. I am. I have this job of teaching them to read and understand what they read and not just that but to enjoy it and be able to connect to it, reflect upon it and share with others. There is a lot that is involved with teaching comprehension!

The group as a whole expressed a desire and a strong sense of responsibility to support the children through reading difficulties. Through a lens of empathy, the teachers considered readers’ feelings when things grew difficult. This confirmed the teachers’ consideration of students’ emotions (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The teacher’s personal reading was opportune for connecting to students’ struggles.

Having to read hard text put me in my kids’ shoes and that is when the dots started connecting for me. I knew my kids had to be able to read hard text even if they had to read it two or three times much the same way I do as an adult reader.

The teachers expressed frustration regarding the daily timing of the literacy schedule as well as the timed reading tests. Teachers were concerned about how children perceived reading. This reflection demonstrated the teachers’ beliefs about taking the

time necessary to build meaning and find joy in reading. The teacher shared personal reading experiences to demonstrate reading for pleasure, a goal she had for her students.

Where we've had the schema and pulled things out and shared with our friends in the book club and had the visualizing and pulling out the snippets. It was such an enjoyable thing! There you go. I want the children to enjoy their understanding of a book and not just think it is a means to an end. I want them to really learn to love reading. Now they're timed and its bam, bam, bam, keep moving! Get this done! Not many of the children come up to me and say, "I love reading Mrs. D."

Adult book clubs and the teachers' deep learning in a supportive peer group built procedural and conditional knowledge about the strategy instruction as well as empathy for their students as readers (Almasi, 2003). "I have always cared about my children and cared about their learning but now even more so through the book club [experience]." This ethos of accountability demonstrated the grade level collaboration to improve reading instruction as reported by Taylor *et al.* (2011).

To provide prudent instruction guided by students' needs, the second-grade team monitored students' success. A teacher's feelings about responsibility for monitoring, adjusting, and designing student-centered goals for reading growth were demonstrated in the raw data. The emphasis on monitoring was supported by the National Reading Panel (2000) and others (Snow *et al.*, 1998; Raphael, 2010).

I have these children who depend on me. It is my job to be sure they get everything they need out of second-grade. If they leave out of here without something, a missing piece, then it is my fault. I try to monitor them and see what they need and make adjustments because their school life and their future depend on me.

The group's passion for teaching focused on children and a holistic approach to reading. The comments they made about their personal growth and the reality of their reading instruction occurred frequently in the raw data. A teacher's reflection about her

growth confirmed care and devotion to children and reading, two subthemes of the passion for teaching theme.

I have definitely grown as a teacher. My thinking process is so expanded from what my concept of being a teacher used to be. In the beginning, I thought it would just be an eight to three job! It is not that way when you really want to reach the children

Conclusion for passion for teaching. The theme of passion for teaching and the two subthemes of children and reading demonstrated the teachers focused on the seminal elements of powerful literacy instruction. In the next section, the teachers' passion for teaching and the dedication to children and reading created a sense of urgency to work together. The desire to develop professionally by community actions such as the participation in adult book clubs and lesson link demonstrated the teachers were professionals dedicated to improving their pedagogy.

Professional Community

The theme of professional community emerged from the data with a subtheme of improving instruction. Through their reflections, the second-grade team demonstrated a commitment to the children and to each other as they changed teaching practice. These themes of commitment paralleled the research on school reform (Joyce *et al.*, 1993; Teddlie & Stringfellow, 1993). The teachers met monthly in adult book clubs to deepen their comprehension strategy instruction. They planned lessons and researched student responses to the lessons by using lesson link, a process similar to lesson study. The self-initiated professional development confirmed the second-grade teachers were a professional community. The teachers' concern for the welfare of the students was affirmed in the data. A common focus was "to get this done" that implied a team

approach to delivering a coherent reading program. The teachers utilized grade level meetings to plan instruction for all of the second-grade students.

It's like we say, "What can we do as a team to get this done?" I cannot emphasize how much of a difference it makes, not only for you as a professional when you have a group that works together, but it also benefits what happens for the children.

In order to enhance instruction, the reflections of the professional community provided evidence of the group's professional expectations. Professional relationships among teachers created a culture focused on working for the children in second-grade, also a common thread in the literature (McNaughton & Lai, 2010; Taylor *et al*, 2011).

We just expect that when a person comes in and takes the place of someone that leaves...we just expect the one that comes in and takes their place... to just do the work. For the most part, I think everybody wants that team feeling and a system of sharing. I think everybody wants that.

A newer member of the grade level explained how second-grade colleagues supported her comprehension strategy instruction. Teachers modeled lessons and made anchor charts. The grade level meetings developed into professional development for the group. "If there is something I don't understand, the team gives me a lesson right there on the spot." The group iterated throughout the study how the support of powerful mentoring helped them to build reading content knowledge and practice in order to benefit the second-grade children. The mentoring to support the growth of instructional expertise was reported in the literature (McNaughton & Lai, 2010).

The newest member of the team, a second-year teacher, responded when asked how she fit all the pieces together to teach comprehension strategies, "The other second-grade teachers are my strength." The synergy between the caring professional community at Stanmore and the desire to learn, to improve instructional practice, and to teach children comprehension strategies created a spiral of co-constructed learning for teachers

and students. This was similar to successful school reform efforts that researchers referenced (Joyce *et al.*, 1993; Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

Both individually and through the group book club meetings, the teachers' knowledge about reading skills, practice, and concepts developed. Having the time together to read and discuss books was more than a professional development experience because the teachers chose books with universal themes and content. The reading of such books for professional development created a connection among the group according to this teacher.

It was particularly true with the Truman Capote books like *A Christmas Memory*. All of that was so powerful for me because I was able to connect so much. We were speaking freely among each other and talking about what meaning it had for us. It kind of cemented us, I think, together as a group of adults. It was not difficult for us to talk even though we did not all know each other closely. It was a different level of what we were sharing professionally as adult readers.

This teacher's explanation of reading among teachers whom "did not all know each other closely" reflected research about teacher book clubs. Kooy (2006) discovered that book clubs created a place for teachers to build, clarify, and deepen professional knowledge while creating a structure for professional communities of practice. The teachers built a community and voiced what they needed to make themselves better. A teacher reflected on the power of confidence, as supported by researchers (McNaughton & Lai, 2010). "The best thing as a teacher is to feel that you are doing a good job. Having confidence comes across loud and clear to the children. It is so important."

Conclusion for professional community. The subtheme of improving instruction was demonstrated in the teachers' words and actions. The second-grade professional community built teacher confidence regarding reading comprehension strategy instruction. The dedication to each other and the children was affirmed in the raw data as

well as the subtheme of improving instruction supported by book clubs and lesson link. Strategy instruction grew in the rich context of the second-grade teachers' professional community.

In the next section, the challenges and successes of the professional community related to the theme of commitment to strategy instruction will be explored. The teachers' professional learning community continued to build the commitment to strategy instruction.

Commitment to Strategy Instruction

The commitment to strategy instruction emerged in the interview transcripts with subthemes of teacher challenge, integration of strategies, and talk about books. The challenge to learn and teach the comprehension strategies did not overshadow the teachers' dedication to provide rigorous and inventive strategy instruction. Learning comprehension strategy work was a long and difficult process. The teachers' desire to teach these strategies enabled them to progress.

As I began to learn how to do the comprehension strategies, the most difficult thing was having enough time to learn the strategies and then for me to teach them right away. It was one new thing right after another for teachers new to Stanmore to get quickly, learn, and teach. I had to learn to make sure that my children used everything I was learning and teaching. So I used my new learning multiple times.

Descriptions of the teachers' struggle to learn and teach comprehension strategies were found in the interview transcripts. Comprehension strategy work was a difficult instructional technique to learn. The difficulty in learning to teach comprehension strategies was reported by Block and Duffy (2008). A teacher said, "The experience of finding out about comprehension strategy work at first was kind of overwhelming."

The second-grade teachers studied professional books, reflected on their teaching, mentored each other, and wrote units of study to put the pieces of strategy instruction together. The group stated that the adult book club supported them and created confidence in their ability to teach comprehension strategies. A teacher commented, “And so we struggled. We really learned a lot that first year and after too. The book clubs helped.”

The *Cornerstone Initiative* and the *Alabama Reading Initiative* coaches offered professional development opportunities and supports for the second-grade team to develop their instructional expertise and reflect about teaching comprehension strategies. The use of the primary resource for comprehension strategy instruction, Debbie Miller’s book, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (2002) was affirmed in the data. One teacher recommended the book by saying, “This book is by far one of the best books on how to teach comprehension strategies. I still go back and read it and reread it.”

Over the year, learning and teaching the strategies was anchored by daily instruction and lessons from Miller’s (2002) book. This focused support strengthened the teachers’ commitment to comprehension strategy instruction. A common emphasis on improving instructional practice and on teaching difficult reading content created a synergy of co-constructed learning between teachers and students similar to successful school reform efforts reported by researchers (Joyce *et al.*, 1993; Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

I think it is a vital part of teaching a child how to think. That should go on with them through their life, to break things down, to read to understand, to put their words into writing, and respond. So as far as being involved in that, I am very proud and I have learned to dig deeper. The reading is richer and I have learned to appreciate children's literature in a whole different way.

El-Dinary *et al.* (1992) and Pressley (2002b) reported on the need for comprehension strategies to work interactively as well as on the difficulty in this instruction. Schema, questioning, inference, determining importance, sensory imagery, monitoring meaning, and synthesis were the seven strategies the second-grade team taught in a daily session called crafting (Keene, 2008). In a daily read-aloud session, the second-grade teachers read high quality children's literature to model their use of the strategies. From a transcribed interview, a second-grade teacher explained her view of schema integrated with other strategies. "It is so important to keep it all going. You can't forget schema because schema is how you infer the answers to questions. Schema is how you visualize."

Keene and Zimmerman (1997) recommended using monitoring for meaning as a comprehension strategy to integrate cueing systems and strategies. In transcribed interviews, monitoring for meaning as a strategy was affirmed as significant to the second-grade teachers' strategy instruction. The second-grade reading data suggested the students needed support to learn and use this strategy; therefore, the teachers revisited their use of monitoring for meaning with renewed perspective. One teacher said, "Monitoring for meaning has filled me with freedom as a teacher and has made the students independent."

Study of the raw data clarified the teachers' focused work on two strategies, schema and monitoring for meaning. In teacher reflections on strategy instruction, teaching examples suggested these two strategies were integral to the use of the other five

strategies. From a teacher's interview, the use of schema emerged as a stimulant to support the integration of comprehension strategies, a subtheme of the commitment to teach strategies.

It has taught me that if you don't have schema, you miss out on the book. You don't even know you are missing out on it. You just skip over it and your brain does that to you. If I hadn't had the book club [experience] to talk about my reading and ask questions and listen to other readers, then I would have never known so much and still wouldn't have known.

From the interviews, another subtheme emerged, talk about books. Kooy (2006) published a longitudinal study on teacher book clubs with findings that affirmed the power of interactive dialogue in book clubs to sustain and support teachers' learning. The teacher's words from the raw data depicted a passionate feeling about their interactive dialogue. The emphasis on talk to support comprehension was also reported in reading research by McNaughton (2010).

This past year, during the book club I understood something important. You don't know someone until you have walked a mile in their [his/her] shoes. Well, in this book club I have been walking in the children's shoes. I am talking over a year ago when we started the book club and with *Beloved* then with *Night*; those were such hard readings but such powerful readings that I want my students to get this opportunity.

Conclusion for commitment to strategy instruction. The theme of commitment to strategy instruction had three subthemes, teacher challenge, integration of strategies, and talk about books. The second-grade teachers' commitment to comprehension strategy instruction was enhanced through their recursive sequence of professional development. The sequence included: initial exposure, trying out, reading "how to books", attending workshops and professional development, and going deeper with adult book clubs and lesson link study. All of these elements included concentrated reflection and collaborative instructional development as described by Almasi (2003), Block and Duffy

(2008), and Kooy (2007). This intricate process demonstrated a commitment to comprehension strategy instruction.

In the next section, the teachers' ability to use adaptive scholarship when the district changed reading policy demonstrates the commitment to strategy instruction and the teachers' ability to sustain the comprehension strategy work. This change to a basal reading series and learning stations impacted second-grade comprehension instruction and the literacy block.

Adaptive Scholarship

In the interviews, adaptive scholarship emerged with the two subthemes of change and building deep content knowledge. Throughout the descriptions of the first three themes of passion for teaching, professional community, and commitment to strategy instruction, adaptation and scholarship were present. Teachers' adaptation described by researchers in the literature included constant learning and flexible approaches to instruction (Bransford *et al.*, 2005).

Change at Stanmore occurred with an increasing emphasis on measuring and testing reading fluency and the school district's pending selection of a new reading series. This change from a *Cornerstone* workshop approach, grounded in independent reading, required a restructuring and adaptation of time schedules. Because the second-grade team's core beliefs differed from the philosophy supporting the impending changes, the teachers adapted to the changes and used deep content knowledge to sustain established comprehension strategy instruction.

The teachers' adaptive characteristics emerged in raw data. Researchers used the term adaptive to describe exemplary teachers (Hammerness *et al.*, 2005; Hatana & Oura,

2003). Adaptation as a teacher characteristic included a lifelong pursuit of expanding the breadth and depth of teaching repertoires (Bransford *et al.*, 2005). Teacher confidence supported adaptation (McNaughton & Lai, 2010). Adaptation also required support from school leaders to shape teachers' change efforts (Coburn, 2005). The deepening of teachers' content knowledge and the building of adaptive pedagogy were linked (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). The Stanmore second-grade team had these attributes as supported by the raw data.

The second-grade teachers reflected on their scholarship, including lessons learned from college and personal and professional reading. The youngest member of the second-grade team described an experience of learning to model thinking through crafting and reading aloud. She was the only teacher on the team with experience in comprehension strategy instruction prior to joining the Stanmore staff. The teacher reflected about the professor who taught her so much. "So I remember how to be a teacher by actually doing it like she did. She taught us crafting and read-aloud/think-aloud procedures."

After working in the private sector, three of the teachers entered college. The late start of formal education and a strong desire to pursue teacher certification emerged in the interviews. "To be where I am and to have the opportunity to go back to college means a lot. In college, it was all about wanting to do something. I wanted it. That is, I wanted to learn, to build myself into a teacher." For the teachers, working toward a degree required dedication to a four-year commitment while continuing formal jobs and caring for families. Learning for these teachers lasted for a lifetime as they continued their

study beyond undergraduate degrees. The data aligned with Bransford's *et al.* (2005) description of adaptive teachers as lifelong learners.

It took me four years to get my two-year degree. Then I transferred to the University of Georgia. I graduated at the age of 42. The day that I graduated from college, my oldest child graduated from high school. That was a very meaningful day. At age 50, I decided to get my Master's degree.

After the completion of college degrees, the personal decision to lead a scholarly life emerged. Ellin Keene's (2008) suggested practice of teachers' living literate lives through personal and professional study aligned with the interview data. This was necessary for teacher change and growth as noted by the *Center for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA; Taylor et al., 2002)*. One teacher shared her idea of living a literate life. "If I do not read, then I'm not learning and my kids aren't learning. As long as you are a teacher, you should be learning, all the time and reading and bettering yourself, and that's what I strive to do."

Another teacher described her desire to teach and grow. Two years prior to this study, the teacher participated with three other second-grade teachers in the process of National Board Certification. The time, effort, and expense to become certified included continual personal study demonstrating the teacher's scholarship and dedication.

I was doing National Board Certification and we were exploring how to integrate the wonderful stories with the national standards. We used some wonderful, wonderful stories that the children understood the meaning of and the reason why people left their country and came to America, all without using their textbook. That has enriched me and certainly has boosted my self-confidence. So that intellectually and emotionally, I have grown. Also, it is such an emotional experience. I have enjoyed the learning so much.

The grade level team owned copies of comprehension strategy professional books. Reading in study groups and independent study was a characteristic of the grade level. The "how to teach" books authored by Debbie Miller (2002), Ellin Keene, (2008)

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2007), Debbie Diller (2003), Gail Boushey (2006), and Roxanne Kriete (2002) were discussed in the interviews. The teachers studied professional books to learn specific teaching techniques the district and school encouraged. A common grade level adaptation to a recommended change such as integration of strategy instruction into social studies content was met by the team through reading and deep study of these books, sometimes together and often independently.

Debbie Miller's, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (2002) was useful as a lesson planning reference for anchor strategy lessons. All of the books discussed by the teachers explained teaching strategies and included narrated lessons. The second-grade classroom libraries contained all the recommended books found in Miller's (2002) text. The teachers' reading to learn and adapt was demonstrated in the transcribed interviews. One teacher reflects about her initial reactions to the Stanmore scholarly culture. "Coming to Stanmore was definitely a huge 'wake up' call. I had to read the teacher 'how to' books like Debbie Miller because none of the reading instruction had ever been modeled for me."

Adaptive scholarship developed in this grade level as a consequence of school wide practices, which included a focus on comprehension strategies and the change of district reading policy. Stanmore teachers were readers and their reading supported school change in teaching practice. The school culture encouraged professional growth to change instructional practice as noted in the school reform literature (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). A teacher reflected about a school wide study. "We have several professional books throughout the year that we read. *Strategies That Work* is one that we just finished in October."

The teachers grew in the ability to explain the significance of comprehension and its development. This ability was paramount when opportunities arose for the teachers to discuss their work with administrators and curriculum decision makers. The teachers' use of personal reading knowledge included instructional adaptation as well as advocacy for research-based practice. One teacher reflected on adult reading as an opportunity to experience the same process as students, a compelling technique supported by researchers (El-Dinary *et al.*, 1992; Duffy, 1993a and 1993b; Pressley, 1998a) and *Cornerstone* professional development. "It has been very powerful, and we have learned as an adult reading group that we go through the same things even though we are mature readers.

The book club deepened content knowledge necessary for building adaptive behavior. The teachers' content knowledge grew through scholarly reading in book clubs as well as through reading professional books. This extensive reading led to opinions about curriculum and the ability to express those research-based opinions. This excerpt from the raw data affirmed the teachers' confidence and adaptability, two characteristics of exemplary teachers (McNaughton & Lai, 2010).

I went straight to my assistant principal with another colleague who has been teaching these strategies for several years. We said, "We can't get rid of this and we still want to do this: the crafting, the read aloud, the teaching of the comprehension strategies." She worked with us and helped work out a viable schedule with methods so that we didn't have to give it up. She was supportive.

Conclusion for adaptive scholarship. The theme of adaptive scholarship emerged with two subthemes, change and deep content knowledge. With a change in district reading policy, the essence of the group, both personally and professionally, and the culture of the team was defined by the ability to adapt (Hammerness *et al.*, 2005; Hatana & Oura, 2003) and move forward with confidence (McNaughton & Lai, 2010) while embracing scholarship for all "sensemaking" (Coburn, 2001) regarding their literacy

work with children. As state reading policy changed to measure constrained reading skills, the teachers used their adaptive scholarship to advocate for pedagogy that supported a holistic approach to literacy.

Summary of Teacher Interviews.

This section presented the analysis of the teacher interviews finding themes of a passion for teaching, professional community, commitment to strategy instruction, and adaptive scholarship. In the analysis of the interview questions, four themes and nine subthemes emerged from the data.

The Research Frame

The research frame was drawn from my literature review. As a part of my analysis strategy, this section is divided into six domains of exemplary second-grade literacy teachers (Block *et al.* 2002b; Block & Mangieri, 2009). The six domains listed by Block *et al.* (2002b) were “dominate role, motivation, reteaching, relating to students, classroom qualities, and lesson characteristics” (p.188). In each domain, I used matching as an analysis strategy by placing raw data from primary and secondary data sources against research-based evidence presented in the literature review as a result new subthemes emerged.

Predominate Role

This domain included roles and responsibilities taken on by teachers and repeatedly performed. Second-grade teachers were characterized as modelers. In this role, they offered demonstrations of literacy processes building on student knowledge

(Block *et al.*, 2002b). Analysis included matching the data with a framework built from the research on exemplary second-grade teachers (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Block & Mangieri, 2009), reading demonstrations (Bauman, 1986; Bauman *et al.*, 1993; Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block *et al.*, 2009; Keene, 2008), culture and diversity (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Wiley, 2005; Cohen, 2009; Morrell, 2011), comprehension strategy instruction (Pressley, 1998b; Pearson *et al.*, 1992) and reflective professional development (Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002). In this segment the terms, demonstrators and modelers described the predominate role of the second-grade teachers.

Demonstrators and modelers. Matching raw data to the research literature revealed similarities between the case study teachers and research on exemplary second-grade teachers as demonstrators and modelers. The predominate role of exemplary second-grade teachers (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Block & Mangieri, 2009) included demonstrating processes to reveal what readers do when they comprehend. (Bauman, 1989; Bauman *et al.*, 1993; Block *et al.*, 2002a; Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block *et al.*, 2009; Keene, 2008)

Evidence of this predominate characteristic of exemplary second-grade teachers emerged in the raw data and confirmed the teachers chose modeling and demonstrations to “empower” themselves and children (Au, 2011, p. 14). There were also indications that the teachers held high standards for children (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Wiley, 2005; Cohen, 2009; Morrell, 2011) and a strong belief in diverse students’ critical thinking ability by building deep structure comprehension thinking strategies into their daily

lessons (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009) and a continuum for the school year. During a book club meeting, a teacher shared her role.

I am a teacher! I have this job of teaching them to read and understand what they read and not just that but to enjoy it and be able to connect to it, reflect upon it and share with others.

The second-grade teachers used and leaned the techniques of explicit instruction and modeling labeled in the *Cornerstone Framework* as crafting and in the *Alabama Reading Initiative* modules as “thinking aloud” (Bauman, *et al.*, 1993). Evidence of learning together in communities (Kruse *et al.*, 1994) and the significance of active reading to comprehend through teacher modeling and thinking aloud emerged. A teacher described the use of books to demonstrate and model comprehension strategies.

Well, first we modeled for the whole group. Then we read aloud and again I used *The Hungry Caterpillar*, the big book. I used it for the teaching of all of those monitoring for meaning strategies and the way that I did that was simple. I would take one strategy at a time, and I would model that strategy by reading it with the big book and using the strategy in the story.

Active reading and monitoring for meaning were valued components of the second-grade teachers’ instruction as demonstrated in their carefully orchestrated reading instruction that embraced surface structure skills as well as deep structure comprehension skills (Ruddell, 1997; International Reading Association, 2000; Snow *et al.*, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley *et al.*, 1992a; Rummelhart, 2004; *Cornerstone Framework*). This was sound pedagogy as noted by Paris *et al.* (1983). One teacher shared the way she orchestrated the strategy instruction by using professional books as a guide. “I basically curled up with the Debbie Miller book every night and tried to model what she did until I felt comfortable going out on my own.”

The team valued the use of their students’ prior knowledge and students’ schema as confirmed in the data. The teacher comments regarding students’ background

knowledge and pragmatics as a cueing system were significant (Anderson, 1977; Rummelhart, 1980; Anderson & Pearson, 1984) and demonstrated a connection to the students' culture and social identity as recommended by researchers in the literature (Delpit, 1995 and 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2005, and 2010). One teacher reflected on this process. "I guess the biggest thing is how important it is to talk about your reading and model. It [adult book club] has shown me that not having schema is a real problem."

The teachers were demonstrators of personal reading, and they were committed to pedagogy grounded in think-aloud procedures (Baumann, 1984; Loxterman *et al.*, 1994). They shared their reading lives and love for reading. During demonstrations they modeled higher-level thinking. (Paris & Ball, 2009; Delpit, 1995; Duffy, 1997; Pressley & El Dinary, 1997; Almasi, 2003; Au, 1998 and 2005; Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

I think you have to love to read and know how to comprehend in order to teach them [students] how to love to read and comprehend what they read. Just learning that schema is so much more than what you know was important.

The teachers modeled the strategies recommended in the research literature such as activating background knowledge, main idea, mental images, story grammar and structure, questioning, summarizing, and monitoring for meaning (Pressley, 1998b; Pearson *et al.*, 1992). Modeling monitoring for meaning as a strategy was sound practice (Paris *et al.*, 1983). The second-grade teachers increased the intensity of these monitoring demonstrations across the year. Berkeley's *et al.* (2010) report on the lack of comprehension strategy instruction in classrooms was in opposition to the extensive comprehension strategy instruction in the second-grade as affirmed in the data.

The second-grade teachers modeled and demonstrated comprehension strategies as a daily component of their reading instruction and extended the strategy instruction across the day to model the transactional nature of strategies (Pressley, 1998b). Sound comprehension strategy pedagogy emphasized modeling strategies in transaction with one another (El-Dinary *et al.*, 1992; Brown & Coy-gen, 1993; Gaskins *et al.*, 1993; Brown *et al.*, 1996; Block, 1991; Anderson & Roit, 1993). Using comprehension strategy anchor lessons from Miller (2002), the modeled lessons emphasized high-quality children's picture books as researchers reported in the literature. (Sipe, 1998; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007; Duke *et al.* 2011). Mention of packaged programs to be followed with scripts did not appear in the raw data (Taylor *et al.*, 2002; Raphael, 2010) but children's literature and picture books were discussed as a model text for thinking aloud about comprehension strategies. A culture of teacher modeling with opportunities for students to synthesize and create information as opposed to scripted programs (Au, 2005) emerged from the data.

The Stanmore second-grade teachers designed and conducted a lesson link to study their modeling. Researchers reported that teachers practicing lesson link experienced transformative interactions concerning demonstrations and modeling. Teachers participated in lesson link to improve instruction and students' understanding (Kratzer & Teplin, 2007).

In the figure, Teachers 1, 2, 3, and 4 refer to the four second grade teachers who used the lesson link process, a short version of lesson study. In between each lesson, the teacher reflected first and then invited colleagues to reflect. The teachers charted their reflections about modeling. The final reflection included synthesizing and charting

desired teacher and student behaviors and noting teacher professional development and materials needed.

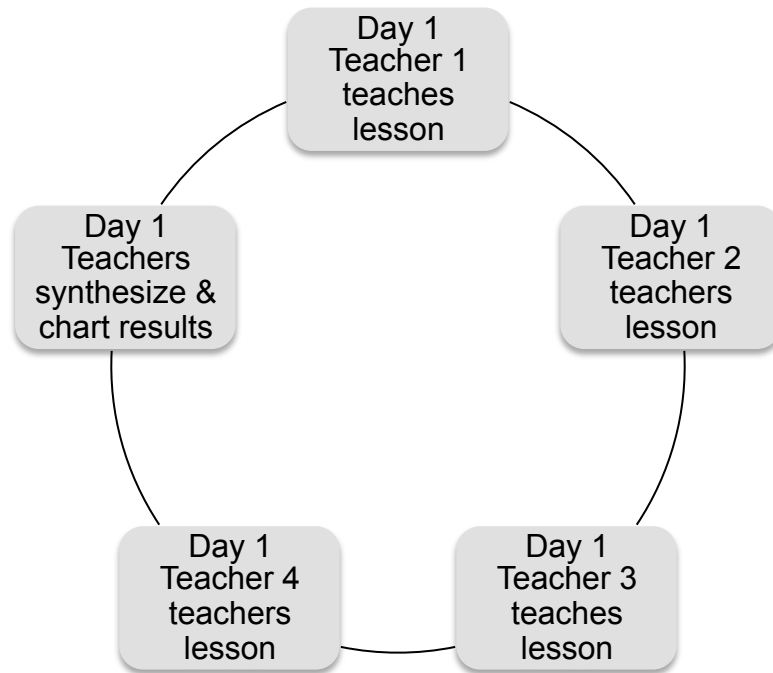


Figure 1. Lesson link cycle for second-grade study.

The lesson link was a time for the second-grade teachers to research instruction, determine if students were learning the intended curriculum, and collaborate on planning lessons focused on demonstrations of strategies that met rigorous standards and processes reported by researchers (Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002). The second-grade team used a variation of lesson study called lesson link (Kratzer & Teplin, 2007) presented in Figure 1. This well planned professional development and reflective practice guided change in teachers’

demonstrations and comprehension lessons as reported by Raphael (2010). In the debriefing sessions after each lesson link, the discussions created opportunities for reflections among the entire team.

Research reported by Coburn (2005) concerning the long time period necessary for sustained reflection when changing teaching practice aligned with raw data from the lesson link. This lesson link was sound practice for student and teacher reflections allowing for problem framing and solving dilemmas of practice as noted by Coburn (2006). The team framed their lesson link in the goals of the unit from the second-grade lesson plan: “We want to model how we can integrate strategy instruction across the curriculum, specifically in the content area of social studies.”

The teachers’ lesson link was an inquiry into their predominate role of demonstrators and modelers. One debriefing session included a teacher’s reflection about the students’ confusion between reviewing a book and responding to a book. This revelation affirmed that the lesson demonstration lacked clarity regarding students’ response to the teacher modeling. “This year we spent a lot of time on making connections. So they keep making connections. So they were trying to do a book review instead of a response.”

Block *et al.* (2009) described teachers who were best at comprehension strategy instruction as thinking teachers who adapted and responded to students’ needs. Teacher commitment to adapt and prioritize demonstrating and modeling as a support for learning comprehension strategies was evident in the data. An epiphany relating to the lack of clarity in modeling the lesson objective indicated a desire to be clear about what was

expected of students. A teacher reflected about her unclear modeling and the confusion this created for students.

Macalay is my highest reader and she didn't have the lesson as well as some of the others. She would do whatever I asked her to do if I made it clear to her. That lets me know that I am not really coming across!

In the lesson link, the second-grade teachers focused on their primary mission, "helping students learn" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 56). The group became a "community of change" (Paris & Ball, 2009, p. 390) through careful planning of curriculum and in solving problems to circumvent poor modeling. The second-grade teachers' pursuit of excellence was evident in their willingness to adapt and change during the lesson link. After the last lesson, the team generated a list of needed professional development and a plan for implementing better demonstrations.

Lesson link and adult book clubs were two inquiry processes used by the second-grade team. The book club was a self-selected professional development and a gradual collaborative effort to learn strategy work (Block & Duffy, 2008). The purpose for reading in the book club was set with these questions: "What did we notice about our reading? How does this impact our instruction of comprehension strategies?" As the teachers developed as demonstrators of strategies, their sensitivity to children grew just as Block and Duffy (2008) suggested. Modeling and demonstrating strategies required deep content knowledge with an awareness of students' background knowledge. Teachers' participation in the book club created this awareness. One teacher explained her thinking about this. "Book club actually had filled in the blank spaces and connected the dots for me. You know that you want your kids to have schema and you know you want to build the background knowledge, but you don't understand how important it is."

Kooy (2006) found that book club teachers were recipients of active teaching knowledge brought on by the book club itself. As a consequence of the book club, the second-grade teachers became aware of their own strategy use and moved beyond what Pressley and El-Dinary (1997) called the difficult process of demonstrating and modeling their mental or metacognitive activity as readers. As found in Kooy's (2006) research, the second-grade teachers created and carried instructional knowledge into their book club meetings, affirmed by the raw data.

The explicit modeling and thinking aloud conducted by the second-grade teachers included anchor charts that were an extensive record keeping tool for all books read during a social studies unit of study on immigration and migration. The chart was labeled, *Second-grade Social Studies Project*. This anchor chart listed all the books read aloud to model comprehension strategies for the second-grade students. This anchor chart was an artifact affirming the value teachers placed on modeling and demonstration of thinking.

Conclusion of predominate role. The three primary data sources and the secondary data sources indicated the predominate roles of the second-grade teachers were modelers and demonstrators of comprehension strategies. The second-grade lesson plans, a secondary data source, and anchor charts further confirmed that the teachers were committed demonstrators and modelers of comprehension strategies. Therefore, the second-grade teachers' roles closely aligned with research on exemplary literacy teachers (Block & Mangieri, 2009; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005), particularly of excellent second-grade literacy teachers (Block *et al.*, 2002b). The confirmation of these roles corroborated the

theme of commitment to strategy instruction presented in Table 1. The teachers' predominate role as demonstrators of comprehension strategies supports students in engaging in higher levels of thinking. In the act of modeling and demonstrating comprehension strategies, the second-grade teachers were using curricula considered by researchers as culturally relevant because of the higher level of thinking required (Paris & Ball, 2009; Delpit, 1995; Duffy, 1997; Pressley & El Dinary, 1997; Almasi, 2003; Au, 1998 and 2005; Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Analysis of the lesson link raw data affirmed the teachers focused on their primary mission, "helping students learn" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 56), a characteristic of culturally relevant pedagogy. The teachers used lesson link to investigate the predominate role of modeling. This process supported student learning and created a culturally relevant context similar to "communities of change" described by researchers (Paris & Ball, 2009, p. 390).

The book club data corroborated the other data sources about culturally responsive literacy instruction. The adult reading built an awareness of personal schema as a seminal component of comprehension strategy instruction. This awareness of personal schema and its significance led the second-grade teachers to model and demonstrate for their students how to use and consciously exploit funds of knowledge and schema as tools for comprehension (Moll, 1998).

In essence, the teachers engaged in lesson link and book clubs because of their passion for children and reading, a theme presented in Table 1. This reflective professional development resulted in a community of change (Paris & Ball, 2009, p. 390) focused on student learning and on teachers' implementing cultural relevance in their strategy demonstrations. The effect of these connections was the creation of a second-

grade curriculum that was culturally relevant because of the focused demonstrations of critical thinking. Hence, a new subtheme emerged, a community of change, related to the theme of professional community.

Motivation

Motivation was one of the domains used to describe what second-grade teachers do to engage their students as well as the motivational methods that characterized the classrooms. Analysis included matching the data with a framework built from the research on reading theory (Rummelhart, 2004; Keene, 2008), engagement and motivation (Taylor *et al.*, 2003; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Tharp *et al.*, 2000; McRae & Guthrie, 2009), and child development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). I used the terms of whole process enthusiast and big picture advocate to label this segment.

Whole Process Enthusiasts and Big Picture Advocates

The second-grade teachers orchestrated a literacy environment for comprehension reading strategies using the *Cornerstone Framework*, a whole process approach to literacy based on the interactive model of reading (Rummelhart, 2004; Keene, 2008). The teachers used this theory of reading to write curriculum that connected the students' ecological systems with the ultimate goal of supporting students as proficient readers. The schematic and pragmatic cueing systems required bidirectional action between student and environment. Therefore, a literacy environment predicated on the interactive model impacted the child, and similarly, the child impacted the environment. The recursive nature of students' impact on teaching and teachers' impact on students through the use of the interactive model was also found in the theory of Bronfenbrenner and

Morris (2006). The bidirectional nature of the second-grade literacy environment and the impact on student motivation was affirmed by the data.

Researchers concluded that reading instruction in high poverty settings required careful consideration (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). Using an interactive model of reading, the Stanmore second-grade teachers encouraged student independence and connections with literacy, thinking at high levels, and active involvement while supporting students' comprehension. Second-grade students became cognitively engaged through extensive coaching and modeling, pedagogy supported by researchers (Taylor *et al.*, 2003).

I would encourage the students as they had independent reading to report on the strategy we had just gone over, "Can you tell me about the strategy?" "Do you think you could use this strategy in your reading today?" and second-graders love challenges! They love it, so, of course, they said, "Well, sure we can use this strategy."

Teachers who co-created environments with students had great power to support children's learning (Cambourne, 2002; Hammerness *et al.*, 2005). Engagement and motivation of students were listed as defining characteristics of exemplary second-grade teachers (Block *et al.*, 2002b). The second-grade teachers' "layers of influence" (McNaughton, 2011, p. 125) on student motivation were demonstrated in the data. The teachers shared and modeled their own love and value of reading while demonstrating reading as a whole process. These personal connections motivated and engaged students as reported by Cambourne (2002). Researchers reported teachers' personal involvement with literacy developed student motivation (Block *et al.*, 2002b). The second-grade team modeled and emphasized monitoring for meaning, a highly engaging and motivating strategy that demonstrated reading as a whole process (Baker, 2002 and 2008).

Classrooms of exemplary primary grade teachers were characterized by high student motivation. The second-grade teachers were masterful at encouraging students

and pointing out their personal growth over time without comparing students to each other as noted by Pressley *et al.* (2001c). A teacher's reflection demonstrated an awareness of growth over time and use of student self-evaluation. "It is very exciting for them and a very eye opening experience for them, and they say, 'Wow, look at how much we have learned!' They can see it themselves and they can become evaluators of their own selves."

Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) reported that engaged readers comprehended better and were motivated. In classroom environments like those of the second-grade team, engagement and motivation connected when students were offered choice of reading materials, encouraged to make reading connections, and focused on goals and texts of interest. The second-grade teachers supported students as thinkers in a cognitively challenging way similar to research reported by Tharp *et al.* (2000). A teacher explained her cognitively challenging approach. "Like I said, I want to change the world! I want them to know how to think. I want them to back up their thoughts." As students were motivated and challenged cognitively so, too, were teachers. Tharp and colleagues suggested this level of cognitively challenging instruction kept teachers in a vital state. Cognitively challenging curriculum created an exciting and gratifying environment for second-grade students and teachers. Researchers also reported this vital state in the school change literature (Joyce *et al.*, 1993).

To impact intrinsic motivation, the second-grade teachers addressed reading relevance by modeling the reading process and their love of reading. During reading demonstrations, teachers explicitly modeled their thinking and provided relevant demonstrations with a few topics. The focused crafting lessons provided daily links to

background knowledge as suggested by researchers (McRae & Guthrie, 2009). By using the *g Framework*, the Stanmore teachers supported reading as a whole process, a seminal descriptor for motivation as noted by researchers in the exemplary teacher research (Block *et al.*, 2002b). A teacher reflected about students' intrinsic motivation.

I see the children getting very excited about their learning. I see children who have not been turned on to books change. The books are becoming alive to them. I see children spending independent time reading, more engaged in a book than I've seen before. I don't see students getting bored. I don't see as many behavior problems because they are so engaged.

Teachers as readers in the adult book club created opportunities to confront their personal struggles and shared the struggles in classroom demonstrations. Increased teacher empathy for student readers grew. Wright *et al.* (1997) noted the significance of teachers who feel empathy for their students. In a teacher's words, her personal struggle was explained. "When I read and I love to read, sometimes it puts me in my kids' shoes and makes me understand how they feel when they have a hard time reading and understanding. It opened my eyes to the fact that when kids read they don't automatically visualize or use strategies." The environment and instruction created by the second-grade teachers and specifically the reflection in adult book clubs impacted the students' instruction. This awareness and focus on students suggested that the students impacted the instruction alongside the teachers as described by child development theorists Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006).

Recently, Kooy and van Veen (2012) reported on the significance of highly skilled teachers. The researchers discussed the critical nature of teachers' skills and the impact on student achievement. The second-grade teachers' theoretical knowledge, skilled instruction of comprehension strategies, and use of reflection with discussion built a keen awareness of students' motivation; all were affirmed in the data. Furthermore, the

teachers designed lesson link studies to research their instruction regarding motivation, an important element necessary for the extensive reading required in second-grade (Paratore & McCormack, 2005).

As the second-grade teachers prepared for the lesson link, the team designed an immigration unit that utilized numerous compelling texts, which as noted by McRae and Guthrie (2009), has great value for engagement and motivation. Conceptual themes such as the second-grade immigration unit supported sustained engagement over long periods of reading. Evidence in the lesson link curriculum planning, lesson plans, interviews, and book clubs affirmed the second-grade teachers were invested in content and text choice likely to be highly motivating and engaging for students.

Strategy demonstrations in the second-grade lesson link focused on sensory images, monitoring for meaning, and schema. The lesson link context for deep student engagement was rich and theory based. Anderson and Hiddle (1971) reported the powerful nature of using sensory images for connecting readers and texts. Keene and Zimmerman (1997) noted a personal, passionate, individual response and increased text memory as a result of readers' use of sensory imagery. Personal experience and background knowledge were embedded in sensory imagery. As readers used sensory imagery, they developed a connection with the text and intrinsic motivation increased (McRae & Guthrie, 2009).

Yes, when we talked about being on that ship and visualizing. Being there and the storm and being sick and, you know, and then they get to write. They had all that schema. They already had that talk and schema for why the immigrants came and how they came. They had read all those stories. They were able to use all that in their writing!

The second-grade teachers built motivation and engagement into the lessons as well as into the lesson's delivery. The emphasis on motivation and engagement was

demonstrated by raw data. The lesson plans and lesson link units of study written by the teachers were archival records of teachers' attempt to engage and motivate the students over extended time through conceptual themes. Attention to engagement and motivation in lesson planning was noted as sound pedagogy by Block and Duffy (2008) as well as McRae and Guthrie (2009).

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) explained the recursive and interactive nature between the child and the environment. Students' responses created new teacher learning; therefore, students were generating curriculum alongside their teachers. This synergistic teaching and learning was suggested as a strong positive by researchers of critical literacy such as Ladson-Billings (1994) and Paris and Ball (2009). The teachers' lesson link reflections affirmed the teachers aligned child development, reading, and critical literacy theory to instruction. In a recursive pattern found in Figure 1, the teachers studied students' responses to lessons, revised instruction, and improved the classroom environment based on students' responses and their theoretical knowledge.

Conclusion of motivation. The second-grade teachers were motivators who demonstrated reading as a whole process as confirmed by the data. The teachers wrote plans that were supported by child development theory and the interactive model of reading, a whole process approach to literacy. The interactive model was based on systems. Two systems in particular, schematics and pragmatics, supported highly motivating learning environments with tenets of critical literacy. The teachers' work was influenced by child development, reading, and critical literacy theory. Another subtheme, theory based instruction, emerged for the theme of adaptive scholarship presented in Table 1.

The two self-initiated professional development strategies, lesson link and adult book clubs, led to instruction that increased motivation through whole process literacy instruction. This literacy instruction focused on the integration of schema, monitoring for meaning, and sensory images to support student independence, thinking at high levels, active involvement, and cognitive engagement. Lesson link and the adult book clubs corroborated the themes of professional community and commitment to strategy instruction presented in Table 1.

Reteach

Researchers defined reteach as, “actions taken to reteach” (Block *et al.*, 2002b, p. 37). In second-grade, exemplary teachers used many conferences with individual students as their guide. I used the terms of personalizers and connectors for this section. Analysis included matching the data with a framework built from the research on feedback (Hattie & Timperley; 2007; Dole *et al.*, 1991) and critical literacy and reading (Paris & Ball, 2009; Delpit, 1995; Duffy, 1997; Pressley & El Dinary, 1997; Almasi, 2003; Au, 1998 and 2005; Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Personalizers and Connectors.

Themes that related to personalized attention were found in the raw data. The evidence included re-teaching, connecting, and guiding students to become adept at the use of comprehension strategies and ultimately to understand deeply. Researchers of teacher expertise reported that exemplary teachers offered information and then gave students feedback in a reciprocal process (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The terms personalizers and connectors described teachers who implemented these steps. (Block *et al.*, 2002b)

Comprehension increased when teachers asked students questions while they were reading and provided instructional prompts similar to the second-grade teachers' conferences (Dole *et al.*, 1991). The Stanmore teachers used conversations called conferences to personalize and connect instruction by talking about reading and meaning while determining if more teacher support was needed.

We have the basic assessments we have to use and on top of that the reading and writing conferences are where you really monitor what the children are doing in their bag of books [independent reading] if they are getting it. If they're not, you pull them to help them.

Conferences were a strategy for connecting with students as the teachers delivered personalized instruction supporting independent use of strategies. Data confirmed the teachers focused on students not the strategies. A teacher described her experience, "I am amazed again at some of the strategies. They often say, 'Let me tell you about the strategy I used today,' and they would tell me." This quotation aligned with the research reported by Almasi and Hart (2011).

The second-grade teachers' pedagogy was based on high expectations, particularly in the methods used to teach and reteach the comprehension strategies. Their instructional stance included higher-level thinking and personalized instruction. Critical literacy scholars and reading comprehension researchers supported this pedagogy as noteworthy (Paris & Ball, 2009; Delpit, 1995; Duffy, 1997; Pressley & El Dinary, 1997; Almasi, 2003; Au, 1998 and 2005; Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Data analysis affirmed the teachers' stance of "pushing beyond the limits" to advocate for students and provide connections to solid instruction. In a reflection session, a second-grade teacher remarked, "You can see the gains your children are making even if they are small. I think that you have to go on what you're teaching and

how you see growth.” Another teacher stated, “I want them to leave second-grade knowing that they can read and understand and not only read and understand but apply it.”

The second-grade teachers acknowledged students’ issues beyond academics as recommended by Lisa Delpit (2002). As advocates, they viewed each student as a multidimensional whole (Moll *et al.*, 2005; *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Whole Child Initiative*, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2009; Copple, 2009). The teachers’ desire to face the issues at Stanmore, a place labeled as high poverty where children had many needs, was indicated in the raw data. In this reflection, a teacher described the Stanmore context. “The children need so much. Not only knowledge, but they need emotional care as well...they need to know that what they are doing is treasured and that this is a place for the kids.”

While facing issues beyond the school, the second-grade team continued to offer a rigorous comprehension curriculum requiring conferences to assess student understanding. The comprehension strategy instruction required the Stanmore students to learn more content as well as rigorous processes for sharing the content. The Stanmore teachers’ commitment to deep learning aligned with Lisa Delpit’s (2010) precepts for offering deeper content and holding higher expectations for students. The practice of probing students about their thinking was also supported in the reading research (Dewitz *et al.*, 1987) as well as teacher practitioner publications (Keene, 2002 and 2008; Miller, 2002).

I probe for deeper thinking now when last year I did not “dig”. If they had a small little statement like, “the grass is green,” I would reply, “Yes, the grass is green,” instead of saying, “Really, what made you think of that? Why are you saying that? Tell me what made you come up with that idea?”

During the lesson link each teacher requested that observers connect with one student and research that student’s response to the lesson objective. The second-grade team became a community of change with the lesson link process. As they researched students’ responses, the team transformed learning as teachers and students informed the lesson (Paris & Ball, 2009; Kratzer & Teplin, 2007). The lesson link was useful for practicing the processes of reteaching, connecting, and personalizing instruction, characteristics of exemplary second-grade literacy teachers (Block *et al.*, 2002b).

The teachers discovered a disparity between the lesson plan focus and the school’s required use of a writing checklist. In the reflection after the lesson, they discussed next steps to reteach the lesson to students who did not succeed. A teacher who observed the lesson described her observation of the student’s response to the classroom teacher.

He wrote three words and stopped and checked and then indented. He didn’t get the details part or sensory images. He did a strict retell. When you conferred with them about adding details, he put his hand on his head and listened to what you said to the child sitting next to him. He was getting the conventions. He never did add anything else with details though.

This exchange between the second-grade team resulted in an agreed upon formal professional development on literacy conferences. Professional development started immediately when the teachers realized the writing checklist focused students’ attention away from a meaningful response (Kratzer & Teplin, 2007). One teacher suggested a reteaching move to improve students’ responses. “We need to give them that next step,

and we need to teach them how to add to their writing. Maybe by questions like, ‘How do I add the details?’”

An important discovery developed during the reflection as teachers used language to mediate knowledge about the lesson (Vygotsky, 1986). Through a study of the students’ writing samples, the team realized the writing checklist missed the critical element of adding sensory details. Generativity (Ball, 2009) was demonstrated when immediate adaptations were made to the lesson based on the students’ responses and teacher conferences. A teacher described an adaptation to improve student conferences. “In a conference you could take Juan’s retell and say, ‘But what if you were there?’ Then take the first sentence he says while he tells what he feels as the first sentence for his paragraph.”

In the final lesson link, the second-grade teachers agreed to study videos on conferring and support students with thoughtful conferences. The team adapted and reviewed a chart with suggested moves for reading and writing conferences. Discussion continued about reteaching and revising the lesson. As the reflection ended, one teacher verbally revised the research lesson while others took notes.

I think the rubric [checklist] for today should have been: Did I draw my most vivid image? Did I write a paragraph? Did I include details? That’s really what we wanted them to do.

Conclusion of reteach. The second-grade teachers’ characteristics of connectors and personalizers (Block *et al.*, 2002b) were affirmed in the data. They used reteaching as a strategy with students who did not grasp the objective of a lesson. Lesson link concentrated on children and strategy instruction and shared a characteristic, generativity, with critical literacy theory (Ball, 2009). These two strategies, reteaching and lesson link, provided rich possibilities for instruction that connected and personalized

instruction; therefore, a new subtheme emerged, generative pedagogy, strengthening the theme of adaptive scholarship presented in Table 1.

Relationship to Students

Block *et al.* (2002b) reported teachers' relationships with students were an important domain for observing exemplary literacy teachers. Appreciating and listening to students' thoughts and conversations were characteristics of exemplary teachers. Teacher reflection with attentive listening and thoughtful interactions were traits of excellent teachers. These characteristics were manifest in conference-focused classrooms (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Keene, 2008).

Analysis included matching the data with a framework built from the research on cultural relevance (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Morrell, 2011; Ball, 2009; Ball & Tyson, 2011; Tatum, 2011; Hollins, 2011; Paris & Ball 2009), child development theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); conversations (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009; Raphael *et al.*, 1994; Raphael *et al.*, 2001; Reninger & Wilkinson 2010; Soter *et al.*, 2008; Wilkinson, 2010; Wilkinson & Son, 2010), and the interactive model of reading (Rummelhart, 2004; Keene, 2008). I used the terms of listeners and conference focused to label this segment.

Listeners and Conference Focused.

This section was devoted to analyzing the raw data related to student and teacher relationships and the way teachers listened and talked to students to support literacy learning. The analysis included matching raw data with the research. The Stanmore teachers advocated for students and provided rich learning opportunities excluding decontextualized, meaningless content (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009). To follow students' reading progress, they used attentive listening and reflection during reading and writing

conferences (*Cornerstone Framework*), as well as formative assessments using student read-aloud. Hattie and Timperley (2007) reported feedback and good instruction enhanced student learning. These teacher actions were found in the raw data in comments like the following: “Well, we pay attention to miscues on the Rigby. We record their miscues and we can use it to determine the source of their problem.”

The teachers’ careful monitoring of students’ reading progress aligned with Ladson-Billing’s (2001) culturally relevant instructional framework, which advocates for multiple assessments and student monitoring. Stanmore teachers monitored students’ reading and writing progress through benchmark assessments and other authentic measures. They kept and used notebooks of student literacy data and met with students to share the data. The teachers talked with students daily about their learning through one-to-one conferences and whole class reflection sessions. The literacy block included a time every day for students to reflect and talk with their classmates about their learning (*Cornerstone Framework*).

The second grade classroom communities connected with systems of support because the teachers worked as a professional learning community. They built relationships by caring for each other and the students to reduce isolation at school. Stanmore students’ culture differed from the teachers; therefore, the careful relationship building to create an inclusive community for all was critical as suggested by Bronfenbrenner’s theory (1979). A teacher reflected about her initial days at Stanmore, “I was really concerned about connections with the kids, and when they walked in on about the third day, I just fell head over heels in love with each and every one of them.”

Earnest Morrell (2011) stated that all successful learning was the result of meaningful connections. Ladson-Billings described factors beyond school that impacted content and pedagogy such as instruction dictated by teachers' culture (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Recognizing poverty as a powerful force in children's lives, the teachers built classrooms focused on the children, teaching, and learning, not themselves. As this teacher reflected, the focus was on service to students.

I know what it is like for kids to be poor. I have seen both sides of the spectrum. I know what it is to want and how it is to have what you want. I believe that everything happens for a reason and I personally feel like this is where I am supposed to serve. This is where I can make the biggest difference and the biggest impact.

The Stanmore teachers valued student diversity. Teachers used information collected during informal and formative student assessments as an instructional tool. A teacher described the teaching implications when considering student diversity at Stanmore. "We can see such a wide range of development of their capabilities. And that is what teaching at Stanmore means, there is such diversity here." Etta Hollins advocated for teacher involvement in "shared observations, collaborative inquiry, and problem solving based on evidence from classrooms with diverse and underserved students" (2011, p. 127). Ball and Tyson (2011) stated teachers must develop "the eye" for an "equity agenda" (p. 399). When second-grade teachers chose professional development such as adult book clubs and lesson link, which included shared observations, collaborative inquiry, and problem solving, they demonstrated their value of diversity.

Since diversity and culture were valued at Stanmore, the literacy framework chosen to support the reading work was critical as confirmed by Taylor *et al.* (2003). *Cornerstone* advocated the use of six interactive cueing systems, which depended on the reader, the text, and the context. The second-grade teachers were implementing this

model. The teachers' appreciation of children's culture, language, and background knowledge grew as they embedded the schematic and pragmatic cueing systems (Rummelhart, 2004; Keene, 2008). The relationships of listening, appreciation, and reflection that characterized *Cornerstone* classrooms using the interactive reading model were affirmed in the raw data. The second-grade teachers used the pragmatic cueing system and offered many opportunities for students to construct meaning jointly. Schematics provided the foundation for inclusion of students' background knowledge into the literacy classroom (Keene, 2008). Describing the process of learning to listen to students, a teacher said, "I went back and tried to do more listening than teaching." This comment illustrated an appreciation of students and a clear focus on readers. Ball (2009) described this interactive flow of learning between teacher and child as generative change. Reflecting with other colleagues, a teacher shared thoughts about learning to listen.

Sometimes they would say something that I thought really did not make any sense. Then when I would think about it later, they actually had a point, but I just was so caught up with the crafting and read-aloud/think-aloud. It took me a while to realize that they are involved with the reading as much as I am!

The teachers valued higher level thinking skills and made opportunities for students to use conversation with confidence (Reninger & Wilkinson, 2010). These opportunities for student talk about learning came with the use of the pragmatic cueing system. The students were brought together to sit on a carpet in close proximity to the teachers' reading demonstrations. Student talk was prolific during these crafting sessions as readers brought their own language and culture to bear on comprehension of texts; furthermore, the children taught others about their comprehension strategy use (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009; Raphael *et al.* 1994; Raphael *et al.*, 2001; Reninger & Wilkinson 2010; Soter

et al., 2008; Wilkinson, 2010; Wilkinson & Son, 2010). A teacher described why she learned to listen to students. "...listening carefully to student comments is going to tell me whether or not they are getting it. I am getting a lot more input from them because last year I just did not listen."

Ball (2009) suggested the use of student-teacher interactions to solve teaching problems. A teacher shared how she talked to the students about their thinking. "'I want to know what you are thinking!' I am just trying to really let it be more student directed than teacher directed." The second-grade teachers and their students grew in their metacognitive awareness of thinking about each other and literacy learning.

Conversations that I am having with my kids are building and growing, and the learning is also building a community in my classroom. The adult book club does the same thing for me. My understanding of strategies is deeper. Knowing what they are from my personal reading, I know what to look for in my kids, and I can see and hear what they are missing.

The adult book club built the Stanmore teachers' metacognitive awareness about teaching children who differed from them in race and culture while deepening their content knowledge. Researchers stated this responsiveness identified barriers to learning and supported instructional change to fit students' needs (Ball, 2009; Paris & Ball, 2009). This metacognitive awareness also meant teachers had personal awareness of reading strategies and carefully matched strategies to students' needs. A teacher shared the effectiveness of rereading, a technique learned in the adult book club. "I knew my kids had to be able to read hard text even if they had to read it two or three times much the same way I do as an adult reader." After their book club discussions, teachers often described observations of their students. A teacher reflected about a student's interpretation of *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1993).

I watched him and I watched him and I watched the expression on his face. He said, “I noticed in this story that the dad and son talked to each other. I wonder if that was one of the reasons that they were able to get, get along and live together at the airport? I wonder if that was one of the reasons that they were able to stay in the airport?”

Researchers found students’ talk about texts over an extended time built deep comprehension (Soter *et al.*, 2008). In a safe classroom environment like the second-grade classrooms, the analysis of texts often happened through focused discussion in a community built by teachers and students as reported by Tatum (2011). A teacher described the talk in her classroom. “. . .and they would talk back to me and we used turn and talk where students actually talk to each other.”

Reninger and Wilkinson (2010) reported that discussions offered striving readers a rich, sophisticated context for talking and thinking about texts. For readers who had poor comprehension due to sparse background knowledge and undeveloped reading strategies, discussions like the ones described in the raw data provided support for their comprehension. A teacher’s reflection captured a vision for student talk.

More and more students are speaking about something they learned or something they were able to do. It has been so powerful, so powerful for me this year and my students and they love it too! It shows what they are learning. It helps them to know, “Hey! I am valuable, what I have to say is important.” We learn from each other. The students learn so much from each other, too.

The comments on reflection, student talk, and learning from others confirmed the value placed on children and their social construction of understanding (Cambourne, 2002). The pragmatic cueing system was built into *Cornerstone* literacy instruction. The context created in the *Cornerstone* classrooms with the pragmatic and schematic cueing systems supported literacy learning that connected with diverse students. (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Rummelhart, 1980 and 2004).

The adult book club experiences created opportunities for teachers to speak up and

out about what they believed should be happening in their classrooms based on their own reading and classroom lesson link research. The teachers often asked and responded to difficult questions regarding the education of their students (Kooy, 2006). In this reflection, a teacher speaks about her change to connect her students with a book (Ball, 2009).

Without schema for the topic or author, they may remember the book but never really connect or "feel" it. For example, I have read *Koala Lou* (1994) for five years during our schema study. We can all connect with trying really hard at something to impress someone else and coming up short. However, until this year, my students have never "loved" this book like I have. They never really connected with it.

Deep appreciation for the schematic cueing system changed the teacher's instruction to move beyond the ordinary as suggested by Ball (2009). Describing how she changed her teaching, the teacher spoke about building background knowledge.

This year, I taught it different. I began by sharing with them who Mem Fox is and what I know about her. I even shared that I heard her speak and heard her read several of her books in Birmingham a few years back. We also looked at a picture of her on her website. I also decided to have a discussion about the Olympics. That was huge when I was little but not so much anymore. The Olympics is a huge part of the book and my students had no idea what it was. Once we built the background knowledge that we needed, I crafted the book. I made connections and so did they! We even listened to Mem Fox read the book from her website.

The teacher and students were in a process of generativity. As explained by Ball (2009), this interactive, recursive push and pull between students and teachers built understanding for both. Through the connection of personal and professional knowledge with the knowledge gained from students, new knowledge was generated to solve teaching problems that eventually moved students and teachers' learning forward.

My students will remember *Koala Lou* for a long time because they connected with it. They are constantly comparing other stories to this one. They felt it and they made deep connections to *Koala Lou* because they had all been in her position before. They also made deep connections because they knew about the author and the topic of the book and were excited to listen to it and think about it. It is just a simple story, but one that turned into so much more. If you build the excitement and knowledge students need to understand, the book becomes more enjoyable and deep comprehension is more evident.

In the adult book club, the second-grade teachers shared observations about using the schematic cueing system to build their diverse students' background knowledge. In the teaching example, the act of generativity (Ball, 2009) between students and teachers demonstrated how instruction was deepened by increased attention to building background knowledge.

Of particular significance was the teachers' deep understanding of schema and background knowledge since these two strategies were rooted in the students and in the knowledge they brought to reading events. The teachers had a strong desire to improve their instruction in this area. Ball (2009) stated the key to prepare teachers for work in schools like Stanmore required professional development supportive of teachers as generative practitioners. Development activities such as lesson link and adult book clubs were generative.

Daily opportunities for student talk were evident in the lesson plans. Teachers listened for understanding of students' text reflections. Turn and talk was useful to check for understanding and background knowledge (*Cornerstone Framework*).

Anchor charts also were analyzed for evidence reflecting an appreciation of students. A *Snippets Chosen by Students* chart displayed words that students loved. The words were called snippets because they were small bits of language that authors used to enhance and deepen the readers' experience with texts. The students' names and snippets

notes were displayed on the anchor chart. The artifacts, lesson plans and anchor charts corroborated the use of pragmatics and schematics as two highly regarded cueing systems in the second-grade teachers' reading instruction.

Conclusion of relationship to students. Examination of the data affirmed that the second-grade teachers were listeners and conference focused (Block *et al.*, 2002b). This focus built a metacognitive awareness of students that ensured teachers' specific feedback and response to student reading needs. The team paid careful attention to the talk of children; furthermore, the theme of a passion for teaching presented in Table 1 was corroborated by the raw data. The teachers relied heavily on two cueing systems, pragmatics and schematics, in their literacy instruction and book club professional development. They reflected during the book clubs and lesson link while using observations, collaborative inquiry, and problem solving to serve their students. They became generative in their thinking (Ball, 2009). Another finding was the teachers' metacognitive awareness of students was revealed during the lesson link process. A new subtheme emerged, metacognitive response, to strengthen the theme of passion for teaching presented in Table 1. Conversations were supported in the data to further corroborate the subtheme of talk about texts.

Classroom Qualities

Classroom qualities were the second most significant domain of second-grade exemplary literacy teachers' characteristics (Block *et al.*, 2002b). The second-grade classrooms were examples of learning environments supported by pragmatics. These literacy classrooms were relaxed, print rich, and filled with the energy of higher order thinking driven by a rigorous comprehension curriculum. Analysis included matching

the data with a framework built from the research on reading (Keene, 2008; Berkeley *et al.*, 2010; Block *et al.*, 2002b; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005), child development, (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Spencer, 2008a), culturally rich environments and pedagogy, (Lee, 2008; Delpit, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2010), critical literacy (Luke & Dooley, 2011; Comber, 2001), and the impact of teachers (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Hammerness *et al.*, 2005; Hatano & Oura, 2003; Block & Mangieri, 2009; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; McNaughton & Lai, 2009).

The second-grade teachers' use of the pragmatic and schematic cueing systems created a vibrant classroom with evidence of the children living and working in a space filled with talk about literature (Keene, 2008; Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005). I used the terms of creators of learning environments and users of pragmatics for the next section.

Creators of Learning Environments and Users of Pragmatics

The Stanmore second-grade classrooms, influenced by the *Cornerstone* model, had characteristics of rigor, inquiry, and intimacy (Keene, 2008). Teachers probed students to talk about their thinking, questions, and interests. All of these things influenced the curriculum. The emotional climate was filled with trust, respect, and freedom to make decisions about literacy work. Physical spaces allowed for large and small group meetings as well as independent work (Keene, 2008). The physical classroom environment and how students felt or perceived the environment were critical

for meaning making. For this reason as data were analyzed, equal attention was given to physical and emotional aspects of the classroom (Spencer, 2008a).

Teachers used the pragmatic cueing system to plan for student talk about literacy experiences. These interactions and exchanges about literacy learning deepened and revised students' thinking (Keene, 2008). Another system, schematics, was used in teachers' plans for building background knowledge and creating learning opportunities based on students' culture and language. The second-grade readers used schematics to build meaning at the whole text level. This system also aided the readers' storage and recall of information as well as the ability to manipulate strategies for understanding (Keene, 2008). The pragmatic and schematic systems were fully utilized in the second-grade classrooms.

Collective meaning making and use of background knowledge flourished in adult and student learning communities at Stanmore. The *Cornerstone* professional development model supported adult learning for the second-grade teachers and provided literacy learning similar to students' literacy experiences. The teachers' professional learning community was built upon their personal use of pragmatics and schematics. As they read professionally, the teachers used the two systems in lesson links, adult book clubs, and in weekly planning meetings. The teacher and student learning communities influenced each other in a recursive fashion around these two systems. (Joyce *et al.*, 1993).

While participating in the adult book club, the teachers used pragmatics and schematics as systems to support discussions. The data demonstrated that generative comprehension was a common result of teachers' book club talks (Wilkinson & Son,

2011). A teacher expressed an appreciation for conversations about reading. “The adult book club has really made an impact on my teaching by showing me that you really need to discuss what you are reading.” Researchers reported that distinguished classrooms were characterized by meaningful talk through teacher-student exchanges including text interpretation, higher-level thinking, and questioning (Ruddell, 1997).

The book club supported teachers’ thinking as they changed perspectives on the pragmatic and schematic cueing systems and made changes in their classrooms regarding the two systems. Through the experience of adult learning, the teachers affirmed their value of student conversations, as well as the important role teachers played in supporting and building students’ background knowledge. A teacher reflected about the change.

My teaching in the classroom changed too. We don’t talk enough in my classroom either. We don’t let them talk as much as we should and allow them to talk about what they know about the book before they actually read the book. Small groups or a book club for children would be ideal. Just allowing them to share what they know first is important.

As Lee (2008) recommended, culturally rich classroom environments included connecting content to learners’ daily experiences as a scaffold for deep levels of comprehension. A teacher’s comment, “...allow them to talk about what they know...” demonstrated initial steps toward Lee’s (2008) recommendations on student connections. The second-grade teachers valued culturally rich classroom environments, and they used pragmatic and schematic systems in their daily classroom routines. These two systems were conduits to culture since both systems grew from students’ lived experiences and intertwined with their culture, schema, and language. As teachers of second-grade students from diverse backgrounds, the second-grade team valued student language as a tool for learning. By honoring students’ talk and encouraging it in their classroom environments, the teachers aligned themselves with research that supported students’

taking meaningful classroom roles as they used their own language to talk about their thinking (Lee, 2008).

The support the teachers offered to students lacking background knowledge created an emotionally sensitive environment that relied on the teachers' deep content knowledge and literacy pedagogy. The desire to meet students' needs was demonstrated in this excerpt: "If they don't have schema for it, you have to build the schema for them. You have to bring in things that will help them understand." This supportive attitude aligned with research on meeting students' requirements for successful reading experiences and understanding the students' circumstances outside of school (Delpit, 1995; Duffy, 1997; Pressley & El Dinary, 1997; Almasi, 2003; Au, 1998 and 2005; Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The Stanmore halls and walls were teaching tools. Anchor charts served as places to "capture and celebrate increasing sophistication in oral language use" (Keene, 2008, p. 278). Other uses of anchor charts were for holding the co-construction of a concept that the second-grade classes were investigating. Teachers created anchor charts during crafting lessons to support learning the comprehension strategies. These charts were posted and used throughout a strategy study to support students' memory. The second-grade classrooms were flooded with the anchor charts. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory highlighted the interaction between children and their environment through bidirectional means. One impact the anchor charts had on the classroom environment and development of literacy skills was in the use of students' words and names to display their thinking. Lee reported the use of student language as a positive way to build culturally rich classrooms (2008). These charts were filled with

student language, and they were useful to hold ideas for scaffolding students' comprehension. A teacher discussed anchor charts as a method of affirming students and holding memories of beloved books. "It is amazing when they come in and they see their work and how proud they are of it. They say things like, 'And oh! I remember that book, the whales, the whale book!'"

An anchor chart about *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1993) reflected the teacher and students' inquiry approach when reading books. In one second-grade classroom, the teacher posted the chart and a student wrote the question, "Why is the boy sad?" on a sticky note. This student's interaction with the anchor chart demonstrated bidirectionality between the child and the environment as explained by Bronfenbrenner (1979) in the ecological systems theory of development. The classroom environment supported deep thinking among the students during the read-aloud of the book, *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1993). The students, in turn, impacted the classroom environment and each other through their own inquiries about the book. Ellin Keene (2008) suggested the charts captured the developing language and thinking of the students. Preserving this content on a chart made thinking and questions visual and important because of the chart's size and prominent display in the classroom. The teachers and students referred to the charts often, and the teachers honored the students' thinking by posting their names and words.

The teachers valued rich classroom resources that connected to life and real experiences as confirmed by the data. One teacher explained the significance of making connections and said it was a critical component of her environment. Her goal was to build a classroom filled with opportunities for application of learning that connected to

the students. “I want them to make the connections. Sometimes we teach like in a bubble, and they don’t connect to anything in that bubble.”

A teacher reflected with the second-grade team and suggested that the team always ask students: “How is this going to help us in our real life and why do we need to learn this?” The teacher’s words from the raw data reflected Delpit’s theory of “culturally responsive pedagogies” (Delpit, 2010, p. 167). The pedagogy Delpit described included a conscious and carefully planned environment like the second-grade environments. The classrooms connected information to the students and built vocabulary through lived experiences. These lived experiences included community interviews conducted by the students to inquire into topics of interest to them.

The teachers devoted careful attention to the strategy instruction. One teacher offered, “You have to do it step by step...” They spent a significant amount of time planning comprehension lessons and using rich resources such as enlarged texts for student exploration. Valuing the use of authentic high-quality literature, the teachers used the same books for many different purposes. The second-grade teachers designed literacy learning environments as defined in *The Definition of Terms*, “...a classroom that focuses on the theory and practice of literacy learning” (Meeks & Austin, 2003, p. 1).

Keene (2008) distinguished authentic environments as places that honored learners as well as the process of learning. The literacy learning environment was a highly significant component of reading instruction in the second-grade at Stanmore. The teacher’s instructional role included demonstrations; however, the learner’s goals and engagement took precedence over the teacher’s role and demonstrations (Cambourne, 2002). Learners were encouraged to see their potential as readers.

The adult book club created time and a place for the teachers to share instructional practices after they discussed their reading selection. One conversation in the book club started with this comment about schema. “I think Tamra said that *Beloved* (Morrison, 1987) helped us put ourselves in our students’ shoes by reading a book we had absolutely no schema for and no, no understanding.” The conversation continued, and the teacher shared the intense questions her students asked about *The Lotus Seed*, which sparked a conversation among the teachers. This teacher related how her class questioned the books’ unfamiliar setting, clothing, and food crops just by studying the pictures on the book’s cover.

What are they growing? Are they growing lotus because the book is about the lotus seed? But there is a picture of a rice field at the bottom. But on the front of *The Lotus Seed* there are the rice fields with the people working the rice fields. It doesn’t mention anything in the book about it. Then they wanted to know what are they doing and why they are wearing those hats!

The description above of the classroom had similarities to a meta-analysis of comprehension strategy work demonstrating that questioning was useful for improving students’ comprehension (Berkeley *et al.*, 2010).

The opportunity the students had to connect *The Lotus Seed* book and video (Burton, Buttino, & Liggett, 1994) to a real life occurrence, harvesting rice, and to build schema for a real place provided what Delpit (2010) called a curriculum to build vocabulary. This curriculum grew out of a well-planned environment that enhanced the students’ book learning by using video to learn about the foreign setting and unfamiliar cultural activities. Instructional tools in the second-grade classrooms included multimodal materials in visual, aural, and digital formats. Classroom support of this nature was affirmed in the critical literacy research (Luke & Dooley, 2011). The

discussion continued and the team explored the students' responses to video, a tool to motivate inquiry.

The video shows how she hides the seed under the altar. The children wanted to hear it again, so I had to rewind it so they could hear the different language. And I think all of that came from us just spending more time on the book. Talking about it and building that schema was important because we talked all about the time period and the war and how the French came in and took over. So they understood the book more and wanted to know more.

This last comment, "...we talked about the time period and the war and how the French came in and took over. So they understood the book more and wanted to know more," demonstrated how the second-grade classroom discussion was opened for critical conversation. Comber described the opportunity for the children to talk about books in a way that, "involves people using language to exercise power, to enhance everyday life and to question practices of privilege and injustice" (Comber, 2001, p. 173). The class discussion of *The Lotus Seed* was an example of how critical pedagogy of this type deepens comprehension.

The book club conversations about student response to children's literature and the teachers' description of students' engagement with *The Lotus Seed* rendered a snapshot of a conversation that grew from a high-quality children's book. These conversations were daily occurrences documented in the second-grade lesson plans. A teacher acknowledged commitment to the time required for modeling strategies with children's books when she commented, "And I think all of that came from us just spending more time on the book." The daily lesson plan synthesis presented in Table 2: *Phases of Comprehension Strategy Instruction* affirmed the integration of strategies with a children's literature focus. Picture books were an instrumental part of the second-grade instruction and teachers were committed to teach comprehension strategies using

engaging books over extended time periods. Keene described essential literacy teaching as “...teach a few concepts of great import (what’s essential), teach them in depth over a long period of time, and apply them in a variety of texts and contexts” (Keene, 2008, p. 31).

A teacher reflected, “So they understood the book more and wanted to know more.” The students’ desire to know more increased their motivation to investigate critical topics. By assimilating book information into their existing schema, second-grade students accommodated the new learning and absorbed it into their memory. Keene stated, “Linking new understandings to other stored knowledge makes it easier to remember and reapply the new information” (Keene, 2008, p. 247).

Students developed background knowledge about *The Lotus Seed*. Even more schema was addressed as students developed a stance of inquiry through their desire to learn more. The richness of the book, the unusual cultural activities, and the mood developed through the characters’ actions motivated and engaged the readers. Based on higher order thinking, this study of *The Lotus Seed* was an example of instruction grounded in research (Keene, 2008; Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Taylor & Pearson, 2005).

Classroom environments inundated with children’s literature like the Stanmore second-grade were not the national norm. Students’ joyful book responses like those in the second-grade were unusual or nonexistent according to an icon of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2010). Gloria Ladson-Billings (2010) offered a significant response to this dilemma that grew out of her fear of losing children to unconnected curricula. Ladson-Billings disparaged the lack of joyfulness in reading and language in

current classroom environments. She stated her concern about school systems requiring textbooks and books with no connection to children (Ladson-Billings, 2010). Based on data analysis, the second-grade teachers' dedication to their students, to culturally relevant pedagogy, and to joyful reading offered a more hopeful context than the one Ladson-Billings described. The teachers' value of pragmatics and schematics supported and ensured a different classroom environment.

Analysis of the final data source included a synthesis of the second-grade lesson plans on comprehension strategy instruction. The findings demonstrated the use of *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (Miller, 2002) for strategy anchor lessons. The comprehension strategies were taught in phases using authors and books recommended by Miller (2002) as well as books from the extensive picture book collection belonging to the second-grade team. Heavy emphasis was placed on schema and monitoring for meaning for the first three months of school. Gradually, social studies and science units were integrated into the strategy instruction. During the second semester all strategies were taught with an increasing emphasis on flexible and adaptive integration through the readers' choice of strategy use (Pressley *et al.*, 1992a; Duffy, 1993b; Wilkinson & Son, 2011). High-quality picture books, not programs, drove second-grade strategy instruction (Taylor *et al.*, 2011) because the *Cornerstone* model of reading was based on the text, the reader, and the context.

A supportive atmosphere for students and teachers, use of rich print resources, challenging comprehension work, and classroom environments driven by the pragmatic and schematic cueing systems were affirmed in the data. The environment supported culturally relevant pedagogy, which demonstrated the attention teachers gave to building

background knowledge, to authentic student roles, and to books that connected to children's lives. The students received encouragement to use their own language when describing their thinking (Lee, 2008). Working to build understanding and teach each other, the students and teachers grew together (Joyce *et al.*, 1993).

According to Pressley (1998b), the teaching of strategies would not proliferate in classrooms until teachers developed awareness of their own metacognitive strategy use. The second-grade teachers worked alongside their students and their colleagues to develop metacognition and deep understanding of the strategies. Throughout the school year the adult book clubs built the second-grade teachers knowledge of strategies as they thought about their comprehension processes. As a result, the classroom environments were permeated with teacher and student metacognitive awareness about their reading.

The qualities of a supportive atmosphere, rich print resources, rigorous comprehension work, and embedded use of two cueing systems, pragmatics and schematics were reflected in the data collected (Block *et al.*, 2002b). The reading work the teachers modeled for the students was based on proficient reading, metacognitive thinking, literacy scholarship, collaboration, and conversation. The second-grade teachers were creators of leaning environments and users of pragmatics (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block & Mangieri, 2009). The significance of these qualities was evident in the data analysis.

The teachers were important environmental resources in their classrooms. This phenomenon concurs with researchers who stated that teachers were the most powerful classroom force even beyond materials (Hammerness *et al.*, 2005). Because of their flexibility, thoughtfulness, collaboration, reflection, and adaptation, the teachers were

important to the education of second-grade children (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Hammerness *et al.*, 2005; Hatano & Oura, 2003; Block & Mangieri, 2009; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002; McNaughton & Lai, 2009).

Conclusion of classroom qualities. Data collected in this study confirmed the second-grade teachers created literacy learning environments by relying on pragmatics and schematics. They were also personal users of pragmatics in their study together (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block & Mangieri, 2009). The teachers' use of the *Cornerstone Framework* influenced the development of literacy environments that included the pragmatics and schematics of reading. The theme of adaptive scholarship presented in Table 1 suggested the teachers had deep content knowledge that supported their adaptation when change threatened their core beliefs. They adapted and used that knowledge and pedagogical language to exercise power and to question practices that were contrary to pragmatics and schematics. Adaptation, exercise of power, and questioning authority are characteristic behaviors noted in critical literacy theory by Comber (2001) and Luke and Dooley (2011).

The teachers taught comprehension strategies by using themselves as the primary resource in the learning environment. In book clubs and lesson link as adult learners, they reflected using two systems, pragmatics and schematics. The teachers realized they were a powerful force in the reading lives of students; therefore, they used their metacognitive awareness of students to guide instruction using pragmatics and schematics. Simultaneously they were developing themselves for swift and targeted response to students' use of comprehension strategies. A new subtheme emerged, teacher

as primary resource, to strengthen the theme of a passion for teaching presented in Table 1.

Lesson Characteristics.

This last section was devoted to analyzing the data related to lesson characteristics, the most significant domain for the observation of exemplary second-grade teachers (Block *et al.* 2002b). Analysis included matching the data with a framework built from the research on lesson differentiation, lesson creativity, and innovative conceptual teaching (Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Block *et al.*, 2009; Miller, 2002; Keene, 2008; Block & Mangieri, 2009; McRae & Guthrie, 2009; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007; Duke *et al.* 2011; Paratore & McCormack, 2005) as well as how teachers plan lessons to connect with students' culture and diversity (Lee, 2008; Paris & Ball, 2009; Ball, 2009; Delpit, 2010). The context for change was considered through the school reform literature (Taylor *et al.*, 2011; Au *et al.*, 2008; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Lai *et al.*, 2009; Lipson *et al.*, 2004; McNaughton & Lai, 2010; Mosenthal *et al.*, 2002; Raphael, 2010; Taylor *et al.*, 2000; Taylor *et al.*, 2002; Taylor *et al.*, 2003; Timperley & Parr, 2007; Coburn & Stein, 2010) as well as theory (Vygotsky, 1986; Cambourne, 2002; Rummelhart, 2004; Tracey & Morrow, 2006) and comprehension strategy research (Garner, 1987; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Cain *et al.*, 2004; Baker 2008; Pearson *et al.*, 1992).

Creative Differentiators

Disparities in children's school experiences in high poverty districts like Stanmore increased school reform efforts nationally and internationally (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). Successful professional development initiatives were designed to support

teachers' instruction. *Cornerstone* professional development experts were working at Stanmore to address disparities in reading instruction in Talmedge County, a rural high poverty community. Many such efforts made an impact on student achievement. (Au *et al.*, 2008; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Lai *et al.*, 2009; Lipson *et al.*, 2004; McNaughton & Lai, 2010; Mosenthal *et al.*, 2002; Raphael, 2010; Taylor *et al.*, 2000; Taylor *et al.*, 2002; Taylor *et al.*, 2003; Timperley & Parr, 2007; Coburn & Stein, 2010; Taylor *et al.*, 2011)

Professional learning communities studied and worked together, wrote lesson plans, looked at student work, studied data, and planned lesson studies (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). The second-grade teachers implemented all of these components as a professional learning community. The Stanmore teachers, like those described by Kruse *et al.* (1994), "... worked collectively to set and enforce standards of instruction and learning" (p. 4). McNaughton and Lai (2010) reported research on successful schools and found inquiry, data study, and use of knowledgeable others were connected to teachers' improved content and instruction. The team of teachers at Stanmore utilized inquiry and data study with the support of knowledgeable others in lesson link; therefore, the second-grade team aligned with research-based practices in successful school reform efforts that increased student achievement. This use of inquiry and data study was confirmed in the data.

The second-grade classroom climates had characteristics of rigor, inquiry, and intimacy, goals of the *Cornerstone Framework* (Keene, 2008). The strategy lessons in second grade were rigorous, offering discussion, debate, and probing for deep and thoughtful reading responses (Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Keene, 2008). These excellent strategy lessons included questioning and inquiry with a context of intimacy. Use of students' and teachers' background knowledge and their language contributed to

the development of intimacy (Lee, 2008). Keene (2008) also suggested that exemplary literacy classrooms supported “ferveat learning” (p. 57) and explicit instruction as found in the *Cornerstone Framework*. The Stanmore teachers developed a yearlong plan for the second-grade crafting lessons based on these qualities. In Table 2: *Phases of Comprehension Strategy Instruction*, an abbreviated syntheses of lesson plans demonstrated the phases of comprehension strategies conducted through explicit modeling with think-aloud protocols, crafting sessions, and the strategies used in transaction (See Table 2).

Table 2

Phases of Comprehension Strategy Instruction

Sequence	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Month	Aug.-Sept.	Oct.-Nov.	Dec.-Jan.-Feb.	Mar.-Apr.-May
Strategy	Monitoring for Meaning	Questioning	Sensory Images	Integration & Synthesis
Strategy	Schema		Inference	Determining Importance

The syntheses of the yearlong plan affirmed high quality literature and book rich environments were components of the second-grade teachers’ classrooms and lessons (Pressley *et al.*, 2001c; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Miller, 2002). Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) found that picture books helped readers to interpret and connect to the books. The interaction with the picture books to create meaning was an element of the *Cornerstone Framework* and the crafting lessons taught by the second-grade teachers.

Reading aloud was an instructional technique for teaching comprehension strategies in the teachers' daily plans. This instructional strategy was regarded highly by researchers and was listed as the most significant activity for building readers. Adams (1990) stated that reading aloud was especially important to engage students' active attention. The profound effect of thoughtful reading aloud is illustrated by this teacher's reflective comment regarding *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993).

I think my kids this year compared to last year are really into the books we read out loud. Last year we went through that book in two days. This year it was about two weeks. We went really deep. We talked about it.

The teachers designed thought provoking curricula that connected and integrated literature throughout the day. Connected curricula were supported in Cambourne's teaching dimensions (2002). Two of the four dimensions that connected learning were mindful teaching and instruction built on context. One Stanmore teacher described Cambourne's connected instruction of mindful, context-laden lessons and careful planning when she said, "I would like everything in my room to be connected with everything else. I think it would benefit them [students] and everything would be flowing and they could see how everything connects."

As a component of integrated curricula, vocabulary instruction was significant for building extensive word level understanding across the day in content literacy (Miller, 2002; Keene, 2008; Duke *et al.*, 2011; Block *et al.*, 2009). Building vocabulary was an important lesson component in culturally relevant pedagogy (Delpit, 2010), and in the second-grade classrooms. One teacher expressed an interest in vocabulary strategies and reflected on her possible use of these strategies in science and social studies when she related, "With the comprehension strategies, of course, we are doing them in science and

social studies. We will let them read all day and let them determine the importance of the science and social studies nonfiction books.

The second-grade teachers incorporated fluency in their lessons. Bringing surface and deep structure cueing systems together in fluency lessons, teachers described the use of texts for multiple purposes as suggested in the *Cornerstone Framework*. Surface work, like the fluency instruction, was taught using multiple instructional strategies. As suggested by researchers, Paratore and McCormack (2005) and Block *et al.* (2002b), the Stanmore teachers went beyond what had been taught in kindergarten and first-grade. For instance, the literacy stations created by the team included multiple engaging activities to build fluency by rereading books. One teacher reflected on the use of big books, large versions of authentic literature. Teachers discussed literacy stations and the impact on reading fluency. One teacher described the station, “They are able to use their comprehension strategy like with a big book. They are also able to use their decoding skills and still work on their fluency [by reading and rereading].”

The literacy stations were organized by school administration to offer more reading practice for students because fluency was a school wide issue at Stanmore. The stations were created to differentiate instruction in small groups. While the majority of students were engaged with fluency work in the literacy stations, teachers brought together small groups of readers with similar need. One teacher reflected about the impact of small group instruction when she noted, “This has been another empowering thing for me to see what an impact it has on the students to meet in small groups.”

As the year progressed, tension developed regarding the overcrowded curriculum, DIBELS progress monitoring, and the lack of time to teach the in-depth comprehension

lessons. One teacher solved the dilemma by extending the strategy work into social studies instruction. Teachers took a generative stance (Ball, 2009) as demonstrated in the following teacher comment: “The social studies time is still an open door. When we do our immigration unit and other social studies units of study, we can really bring in the strategies at that time. I am thinking that would be the place to put it.”

As the district requirements increased and took more time away from the comprehension strategy instruction, the teachers continued their self-initiated staff development, adult book clubs and lesson link, with many discussions about solving the overcrowded literacy block. Still struggling to reconcile the dilemma of time, a teacher explained her feelings in the following manner: “Well, the way that I can reconcile that [curricula constraints] is I continue to try to teach the strategies to the best of my ability. I continue to teach what good readers do.” Another teacher discussed the value of monitoring for meaning as a strategy. One recurring discussion throughout the data analysis was the teachers’ value and use of monitoring for meaning lessons. In these lessons, active readers build their reading awareness to adapt and adjust (Garner, 1987; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Cain *et al.*, 2004; Baker 2008). The importance of this instruction is illustrated by this comment from a Stanmore teacher:

I would like to talk about a boy. When he came to me, he was struggling with reading and he didn’t have a lot of strategies for helping him figure out a word and what the word meant. I have seen him grow by leaps and bounds. Monitoring for meaning is an important strategy, especially so for this boy.

The discussion continued with more lesson descriptions of the monitoring for meaning strategy. Explaining the process for making decisions, one teacher noted data and timing as key to her decision-making about monitoring for meaning lessons. Her awareness of adapting and adjusting lessons to students’ needs demonstrated a value of

differentiation and adjusting for students. The Stanmore teachers reflected about the students coming into the second-grade. One teacher observed, “I think it was the data and the timing that caused us to go deep with monitoring for meaning.”

The teachers continued the discussion. The remarks affirmed the team’s use of the interactive model of reading using surface and deep systems in an interactive manner. Another teacher reiterated the usefulness of the monitoring for meaning strategies that were powerful for the second-grade readers. Recognition of success with the monitoring for meaning strategy instruction was acknowledged by one teacher who remarked, “I’m feeling like this is the most successful year of really showing them the monitoring for meaning strategy of ‘what do you do when you come to a word you don’t know?’”

Another important finding was the teachers’ use of their own comprehension strategy of schema to generate lessons using the schematic cueing system. Keene (2008) stated, “We must ourselves rise to the occasion, think at high levels, explore the potency of our own intellect and focus on what’s most essential in our own lives.” (p. 40). The analysis of the lesson plans supported the exemplary lesson characteristic of deep structure comprehension taught daily alongside surface structure. Evidence that daily strategy instruction spread to social studies and science instruction was found in the lesson plans.

Conclusion of lesson characteristics. The second-grade teachers were creative differentiators in their lessons (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block & Mangieri, 2009) as indicated in the data. The *Cornerstone Framework* was a guide for the development of literacy environments and lessons through the use of the interactive model of reading. The use of the six systems provided opportunities for creative lessons that used surface and deep

structure systems. The analysis also affirmed the second-grade teachers were creators of learning environments that supported comprehension with daily models of comprehension strategies using a read-aloud to demonstrate thinking. These lessons were called crafting and were conducted in the literacy block as well as in other content areas. Multiple data drawn from several sources such as the lesson link, the adult book club, the interviews, and lesson plans corroborated this finding.

The teachers used lesson link to become generative teachers metacognitively aware of students' responses to lessons (Ball, 2009). They chose to use lesson link as a tool to study student response to strategy lessons. They acted on that response by improving their strategy instruction through personal reading in adult book clubs. In essence, the teachers made deep connections with their students through lessons that they differentiated based on students' backgrounds and schema. The teachers and students became generative (Ball, 2009) through the carefully planned strategy lessons drawn from the interactive model of reading (Rummelhart, 2004). A new subtheme emerged, thought driven lessons, to strengthen the theme of commitment to strategy instruction as presented in Table 1.

Summary of the Research Frame.

The previous sections were organized from my literature review that included child development, school reform, culture and diversity, critical literacy, teacher expertise, the interactive model of reading, and comprehension strategy work. The research on exemplary second-grade teachers influenced the organization of The Research Frame. There were no new themes; however, new subthemes emerged as presented in the next section, *Review of Themes and Subthemes*.

Review of Themes and Subthemes.

The second-grade teachers exhibited all of characteristics of exemplary second-grade literacy teachers: demonstrators and modelers, whole process enthusiast and big picture advocates, personalizers and connectors, listeners and conference focused, creators of environments and users of pragmatics, and creative differentiators (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block & Mangieri, 2009). All of these characteristics supported the theme of a passion for teaching as presented in Table 1. As a result of this cumulative analysis within The Research Frame, a new subtheme emerged for passion for teaching, exemplary instruction. In the following paragraphs, each of the four themes will be presented with the additional subthemes.

The four themes, *passion for teaching*, *professional community*, *commitment to strategy instruction*, and *adaptive scholarship*, were corroborated with multiple data sources throughout this section, The Research Frame. Consequently, additional subthemes emerged for each of the four themes as:

- 1) *passion for teaching* additional subthemes: exemplary instruction, metacognitive response, and teacher as primary resource
- 2) *professional community* additional subthemes: community of change
- 3) *commitment to strategy instruction*: thought driven lessons
- 4) *adaptive scholarship*: theory based instruction and generative pedagogy

The analysis process for this study answered the questions: How do four second-grade teachers at Stanmore Elementary describe their comprehension strategies instruction and reflect about their teaching? How, why, and with what influences do the teachers engage

in professional development to improve their comprehension instruction? The findings are presented in the following paragraphs.

Findings

My role in Stanmore allowed access to the daily-embedded professional development experienced by the second-grade teachers. I attended the *Alabama Reading Initiative* and *Cornerstone Literacy* professional development with the teachers. Coaching the teachers to implement this research-based pedagogy meant that I was a part of their community through participant observation (Spradley, 1980).

The second-grade teachers and I were partners as we constructed meaning about literacy instruction and talked through our understanding of reading theory. A year prior to collecting data for this study I moved to another position and no longer met with the teachers formally. The time away from the intense daily coaching of the second-grade teachers was one of deep reflection for me as I began the process of designing my study. I developed three theoretical propositions from my literature review, my questions, and a pilot case study conducted prior to this research (Yin, 2009). My general analytic strategy was the development of three theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009). The propositions framed the scope of the research and centered on how the teachers instructed comprehension, how they developed as comprehension strategy teachers, and how they studied their instruction as a group.

Review of Theoretical Propositions and Rival Explanations.

The second-grade team was the critical case to test the theoretical propositions built from my literature review. Yin (2009) suggested that the critical case offered an

opportunity to test theoretical propositions and rival explanations; therefore, I developed three theoretical propositions and three rival explanations for this study that will be discussed in the following section.

Theoretical Proposition One and the Rival Explanation

Theoretical proposition one was confirmed. The case study demonstrated how schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) and social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986 and 1987) supported teachers' development of comprehension strategy instruction (Pearson *et al.*, 1992) over a school year while participating in adult book clubs (El-Dinary, 2002; Keene, 2002; Kooy, 2006 and 2007). The teachers built their adaptive scholarship in the adult book clubs, which accounted for their ability to articulate reading pedagogy and advocate for comprehension strategy instruction. Multiple data sources affirmed the teachers built knowledge of the comprehension strategies during their adult book club meetings, particularly schema and monitoring for meaning. As adult learners, the teachers also relied on two cueing systems, schematic and pragmatic, in their book club discussions. As suggested by Pressley (1998a), the teachers developed awareness of their own metacognitive strategy use as an important step to ascertain strategy instruction in their classrooms. As they became aware of their own strategy use in the adult book clubs, they were moving beyond what Pressley and El-Dinary (1997) called the difficult process of demonstrating and modeling their mental or metacognitive activity as readers.

However, there was evidence for the rival explanation that stated: The case demonstrated why the adult book club was not sufficient to support the teachers' development of comprehension strategy instruction and exemplary reading instruction

(Taylor *et al.*, 2011). The teachers' deep content knowledge was partially developed through the adult book clubs, but another explanation was the teachers' independent study of the "how to" books written by professional developers and excellent strategy teachers such as Ellin Keene and Debbie Miller. Taylor *et al.* (2003) found study of professional literature necessary for teachers' successful change that impacted student achievement; therefore, the second-grade teachers' reading of "how to" books was a variable in developing their comprehension strategy instruction as exemplary literacy teachers.

Theoretical Proposition Two and the Rival Explanation.

The analysis also confirmed theoretical proposition two. The case study demonstrated how concentrated reflection and instructional development over time through adult learning in a gradual collaborative effort (Block & Duffy, 2008) of adult book clubs (El-Dinary, 2002; Keene, 2002; Kooy, 2006 and 2007) and lesson study/link (Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; O'Shea, 2005) deepened teachers' understanding of comprehension strategies (Pearson *et al.*, 1992) and connected instructional practices (Block *et al.*, 2002b). Through the book clubs, the teachers developed declarative knowledge of what the comprehension strategies were as they used them. In addition to the adult book clubs, the teachers' lesson link provided another professional development opportunity that deepened the procedural and conditional knowledge of the comprehension strategies (Almasi, 2003). The procedural and conditional knowledge, the how and why of comprehension strategy instruction, were best learned while teaching, as was suggested by the research on lesson study (Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Lewis & Tsuchida 1998; O'Shea,

2005; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Watanabe, 2002). The lesson link supported the deepening of the teachers' instruction of the strategies. The interaction of the adult book clubs and the lesson link created the teachers' adaptive scholarship that included requisite declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of the comprehension strategies. Therefore, as Almasi (2003) suggested, the teachers deepened their what, how, and why of strategy instruction.

There was evidence for the rival explanation. The case demonstrated why concentrated reflection and instructional development over time through adult learning in a gradual collaborative effort was not fully sufficient to deepen teachers' understanding of comprehension strategies and connected instructional practices (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). One prerequisite suggested by the researchers was the desire to teach and learn the strategies (El-Dinary *et al.*, 1992; El-Dinary, 2002; Duffy, 1997, 1993a, 1993b, and 2005). A theme of passion for teaching with subthemes of children and reading was demonstrated in the data analysis. The professional development in book clubs and lesson link were partially responsible for the teachers' learning. However, the strategies were hard to learn and teach. The difficulty level of the new learning required teacher dedication and great effort over three years (Hall & Hord, 1987; Brown & Coy-Ogan, 1993; Duffy, 1993b; El-Dinary, 2002; Almasi, 2003). The teachers' commitment to strategy instruction was one alternative explanation to this second theoretical proposition.

Theoretical Proposition Three and the Rival Explanation

The analysis confirmed theoretical proposition three. The case study demonstrated how working in learning communities through lesson study/link and adult book clubs supported teachers' professional knowledge and practice (Taylor *et al.*, 2011;

Coburn, 2005; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Lewis & Tsuchida 1998; O'Shea, 2005; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Watanabe, 2002) and developed some exemplary teacher characteristics listed in the research (Block & Duffy, 2008; Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block & Mangieri, 2009). The second-grade teachers functioned as a professional community, which was supported in the literature as a trait for successful school and teacher change (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). The data collected in this study affirmed their professional community was committed to improving instruction and changing practice through their group efforts. The teachers' self-initiated professional development of lesson link and adult book clubs confirmed their ethos of working together to improve.

There was evidence for the rival explanation: The case study also demonstrated how learning communities connected to lesson study and adult book clubs for teacher development were not exclusively responsible for the development of the teachers' exemplary characteristics (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). Analysis of teacher interviews indicated a theme of commitment to strategy instruction. This commitment partially accounted for a rival explanation. Data suggested the teachers came to Stanmore with a strong desire to serve children. Data collected in the interviews revealed the journey and determination to become teachers started prior to their work at Stanmore. The common thread of a passion for teaching and deep care for children and reading emerged as a characteristic of the group and accounted for an alternative explanation.

A surprise revelation was the parallel between culturally relevant pedagogy and the practices of adult book clubs and lesson link in synergy with each other. The generative process of these two active professional development practices created a

context for appreciation and cultural awareness of others. The depth of appreciation and awareness found in the data was an indication of many factors. The Research Frame offered a new way to see connections between the interactive model of reading and culturally relevant pedagogy. Ball's generativity theory (2009) provided a deeper view, as well as a new way to think about adult book clubs and lesson link to build and support metacognitive awareness of students and teachers. As supported by the data, the teachers used their metacognitive awareness of students to design lessons and units relying on schematics and pragmatics. Furthermore, lesson link and book club meetings provided continual learning and development that built a context for immediate and focused response to students' comprehension strategy development based on the teachers' metacognitive awareness.

There were other unexpected findings regarding the self-initiated professional development of adult book clubs and lesson link. Through this active teacher-guided professional development, the teachers' voices grew to articulate the significance of comprehension strategy instruction. The interview data offered insight about the willingness of each teacher to speak to administrators and decision makers regarding the change in the district's reading policy. They were not only willing to speak but also to present research and theoretical support for their position. As a professional community, they exercised power in questioning the practices of timed fluency tests and DIBELS. Because their work was grounded in reading theory and scholarship, they could explain their deep belief about the significance of the comprehension strategy work (Comber, 2001; Luke & Dooley, 2011).

The teachers' advocacy for the comprehension strategy worked was based upon deep knowledge of a reading model that supports the use of schematics and pragmatics, two systems emphasizing learners and their work together. This stimulated thinking about a question Gerald Duffy (1997) posed: *Powerful models or powerful teachers?* Duffy explained that the answer was not about which model but how to use the instructional model. From the data collected in this study, the theme of adaptive scholarship emerged which supported an argument for both of Duffy's factors: powerful models as well as adaptive, thoughtful teachers using the models.

The teachers were important environmental resources in their classrooms. This finding concurs with researchers who stated that teachers were the most powerful classroom force even beyond materials (Hammerness *et al.*, 2005). Because of their flexibility, thoughtfulness, collaboration, reflection, and adaptation, the teachers were important to the education of second-grade children (Block *et al.*, 2002a and 2002b; Hammerness *et al.*, 2005; Hatano & Oura, 2003; Block & Mangieri, 2009; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002 and 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002; McNaughton & Lai, 2009). The four second-grade teachers were passionate about teaching, children, and reading. They worked in concert as a professional community. The group was committed to strategy instruction that they developed through adult book clubs and lesson link study. As their instructional context changed and mandates mounted, their adaptation to the change was supported by their deep content knowledge. As a professional community, the team used their knowledge of theory and the interactive model of reading to explain their literacy pedagogy to decision makers and to advocate for the nonnegotiable content, comprehension strategy instruction for their children.

Using a theory-based approach to reading, critical literacy, and child development, as well as their own experience, the Stanmore teachers looked to theory for deep understanding of their work (Tracey & Morrow, 2006) and took action when their theory-based pedagogy was not supported by the district's decisions (Comber, 2001; Luke & Dooley, 2011)

Summary of the Findings

There were five findings that were confirmed in the data.

- 1) Reading theory on the schematic and pragmatic systems scaffolded the teachers' development of comprehension strategy instruction in adult book clubs resulting in adaptive scholarship and the ability to articulate reading pedagogy while advocating for comprehension strategy instruction.
- 2) The three professional development practices that supported and sustained the second-grade professional learning community's adaptive scholarship of the comprehension strategies were adult book clubs, lesson link, and professional reading. The synergy among the three practices reinforced three kinds of comprehension strategy knowledge: declarative, procedural, and conditional. A caveat for this finding on the professional development of comprehension strategy instruction is the prerequisite desire and dedication of these teachers to learn the strategy work.
- 3) As a result of participation in the adult book clubs and the lesson link, two active self-initiated professional development processes, the four second-grade teachers could reflect in action. This reflection in and on practice was similar to Schon's (1983) descriptions of reflective practitioners.

Two unexpected findings emerged. These findings were:

1. Adult book clubs and lesson link that supported culturally relevant pedagogy when used together appeared to create conditions to develop the four teachers' metacognitive awareness about their students' learning and their practice of the comprehension strategies.
2. Teachers' knowledge of reading models and the instructional use of the models are useful when teachers develop expertise in comprehension strategy instruction. When used in conjunction, the two professional development models of adult book clubs and lesson link strengthen each other. Adult book clubs support teachers' active construction of the meaning of reading models while the process of lesson link scaffolds the instructional use of the models.

This case study occurred over one school year and the context of this study was limited for that period of time and cannot account for the years prior to the study. The study demonstrated that the team of second-grade teachers brought rich and varied backgrounds as well as unique skill sets when they arrived at Stanmore. All of these components intersected to create the Stanmore second-grade team and their year of learning the comprehension strategies as a professional community, the critical case for this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview of the Study

The context of this study was in a rural Alabama elementary school engaged in two reading initiatives, the *Alabama Reading Initiative* and *Cornerstone Literacy*. At the time of the study, total participant student ethnicity was 70% African American, 29% Caucasian, and 1% Hispanic. The participants were four Euro-American second-grade teachers who had a range of teaching experience from one to eighteen years. Three teachers received extensive reading professional development from both reading initiatives.

The purpose of this study was to determine what influenced four second-grade teachers in a rural high poverty community as they utilized an interactive model of reading to teach literacy. The interactive model incorporated metacognitive strategy instruction with authentic text in place of a commercial reading program. The researcher of this study sought to determine the details of the second-grade teachers' stories (Coburn & Stein, 2010) and how they overcame contextual dilemmas by developing themselves as reading comprehension teachers using adult book clubs and lesson study that were focused on comprehension strategy instruction. The dilemmas for the teachers were the difficulty to learn, as well as how to teach the strategies (Block & Parris, 2008; Block & Duffy, 2008). The second-grade teachers were selected because of their unusual

approach to the dilemma. This was a study with a purposeful sample of participants. The how and why research questions led to a case study of the second-grade teachers' instruction and professional development over a year (Yin, 2009). The two research questions were the following:

1. How do four second-grade teachers at Stanmore Elementary describe their comprehension strategy instruction and reflect about teaching?
2. How, why, and with what influences do the teachers engage in professional development to improve their comprehension instruction?

I used qualitative inquiry in the form of a case study to answer the research questions and to interpret the teachers' actions (Yin, 2009). Since the boundaries between what was happening with the second-grade teachers' instruction and professional development were context specific, I used case study research to answer the how and why questions. Employing Yin's method (2009) of building a set of three theoretical propositions based on my literature review, I collected relevant information about the second-grade teachers.

The review synthesized literature in these areas: child development, school reform, culture and diversity, critical literacy, teacher expertise, the interactive model of reading, and comprehension strategy work. Scarce literature has been accomplished in two areas: the professional development of reading comprehension teachers (Sailors, 2009) and the link between reading comprehension and culturally relevant pedagogy (Fairbanks *et al.*, 2009). In another article by Berkeley's *et al.* (2010), it was noted that few teachers were actually implementing comprehension strategies.

Data Analysis

Case study data sources were transcribed teacher interviews, book club discussions, and the discussions of the lesson link debriefs. Secondary data sources were written documentation of lessons, archival records of strategy instruction, lesson plans for the year, a blog of book club responses, and photographs of comprehension strategy anchor charts.

Three theories were (Yin, 2009) utilized as a general analytic strategy for choosing and identifying themes and patterns from the literature: comprehension strategies, characteristics of exemplary teachers, professional learning communities, and cultural connections. As data were transcribed, first, I used “bracketing” (Denzin, 1989, p. 76) and pattern matching (Yin, 2009) across data sources to seek themes. This was a pre-coding stratagem. As I found themes, I grouped examples together in a narrative seeking areas where data triangulated to increase reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reliability of the study was also strengthened by the year of prolonged engagement and my data collection protocol. Member checking and peer debriefing were used to increase the credibility of my study. Finally, I used an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to connect findings to the original sources.

The qualitative inquiry captured the actual practices of the second-grade teachers. Slices of life created new understanding about the processes of learning about how second-grade teachers became exemplary in reading comprehension. This is discussed with four findings reported in Chapter IV. The findings were reading theory, specifically the schematic and pragmatic systems, scaffolding the teachers’ development of comprehension strategy instruction in adult book clubs. The adult book clubs, lesson

link, and professional reading supported and sustained the professional community with the synergistic affect of developing declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of comprehension strategy instruction because of the teachers' desire and dedication to learn the strategy work. This resulted in the teachers' adaptive scholarship. Ultimately the teachers were able to advocate for comprehension strategy instruction among peers.

Findings

The qualitative inquiry captured the actual practices of the second-grade teachers. Slices of life created new understanding about the processes of learning about how second-grade teachers became exemplary in reading comprehension. This is discussed with five findings reported in Chapter IV. The findings were reading theory, specifically the schematic and pragmatic systems, scaffolding the teachers' development of comprehension strategy instruction in adult book clubs. The adult book clubs, lesson link, and professional reading supported and sustained the professional community with the synergistic affect of developing declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of comprehension strategy instruction because of the teachers' desire and dedication to learn the strategy work. This resulted in the teachers' adaptive scholarship. Ultimately the teachers were able to advocate for comprehension strategy instruction among peers. Another finding was that the four second-grade teachers could reflect in action. This reflection in and on practice was similar to Schon's (1983) descriptions of reflective practitioners.

There were two unexpected findings. The first related to Fairbanks' *et al.* (2009) point about linking reading comprehension to culturally relevant pedagogy. The adult

book clubs and the lesson link that supported culturally relevant pedagogy together appeared to create conditions to develop the four teachers' metacognitive awareness about their students' learning and their practice of the comprehension strategies. The second unexpected finding was that teachers' knowledge about the instructional use of reading models was beneficial when teachers simultaneously developed expertise in comprehension strategy instruction. When utilized in conjunction, adult book clubs and lesson link strengthened professional development. Adult book clubs supported teachers' active construction of the meaning of reading models while the process of lesson link scaffolds the instructional use of the models.

Discussion of the Themes and Findings

Four themes emerged from the data. The themes were: (1) passion for teaching; (2) professional community; (3) commitment to strategy instruction; and (4) adaptive scholarship. There were numerous subthemes to support these four themes. A discussion of the findings is organized by the themes.

Passion for Teaching

The second-grade teachers were passionate about teaching, reading, and children. They were focused on their primary mission, "helping students learn" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 56). The passion led to two reflective group practices: adult book clubs and lesson link. These reflective practices were focused on the goal of improving their comprehension strategy instruction and implementing the interactive model of reading. Utilizing this model, six systems were highly connected to students' language and culture. Two of these systems, schematic and pragmatic cueing systems, were connected

directly to students' language and culture. Both systems connected directly to students. Therefore, culture and language were highly valued in the model that was aligned with culturally relevant pedagogy. This Fairbanks' *et al.* quote, "...how individuals come to their comprehension of texts is inextricably linked with their social and cultural identities," supported the use of the interactive model in the Stanmore context (2009, p. 601).

Bringing many strong personal attributes to teaching, the group implemented the capacity for their talents in order to develop characteristics of exemplary teachers as noted by researchers (Block *et al.*, 2002b). Characteristics noted as exemplary teaching were these: dominate role, motivation, reteaching, relating to students, classroom qualities, and lesson characteristics" (Block *et al.* 2002b, p. 188). The second-grade teachers exhibited similar characteristics. For example, the dominant role of second-grade teachers was modeling and demonstrating comprehension strategies with high quality children's books. The highly motivating modeled lessons written from the interactive model of reading supported a culturally relevant curriculum through schematics and pragmatics that related to the students. After the modeled lesson, called crafting, students moved into a co-constructed literacy environment where they composed meaning using many texts. As the students read, the teachers supported literacy growth through one-to-one conferences and small groups. When the literacy workshop ended, the students reconvened on a carpet to teach each other about what they learned. This practice was recursive daily, and yearly. It was a snapshot of second-grade exemplary practice as supported by researchers (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Block & Mangieri, 2009).

In this environment, the second-grade teachers were the primary resource. They had metacognitive awareness about students' needs and conferenced with them daily. They demonstrated talk-focused lessons called crafting. The two professional development practices, the adult book clubs and lesson link also supported the ethos of a metacognitive awareness about students' literacy development, a characteristic of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ball, 2009; Paris & Ball, 2009).

In conclusion, the adult literacy book clubs created a context for the teachers to renegotiate and reconstruct knowledge about students as well as develop reading theory and content knowledge. While "constructing a cohesive community committed to learning and teaching" (Kooy, 2006, p. 66), they were able to adapt. Supported by the combination of adult literacy book clubs and the lesson link, the teachers developed as literacy teachers. As they implemented the interactive model of reading and the comprehension strategies, the teachers developed content knowledge and theory. They refined comprehension strategy instruction through professional development. Adaptation of scholarship into instruction assisted growth over the year. The four teachers passionately shared what they learned at the end of the year with school administrators to advocate for comprehension strategy work for all of the school faculty.

Professional Learning Community

Passion and commitment to the Stanmore children and to teaching reading led the second-grade teachers to become more collaborate to improve comprehension strategy instruction. Over time, the four teachers commitment and knowledge expanded to encompass this focus. Researchers of school change supported this type of joint effort (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

As a group, the teachers chose teacher-driven, active professional development built upon the research-based practices of adult literacy book clubs (Kooy, 2006 and 2007). Lesson link (Kratzer & Teplin, 2007) added to the practice. Focus on the active understanding of the interactive reading model while reading in the adult book clubs and verifying instruction in lesson link, particularly the schematic and practice cueing systems, built the teachers' confidence. Confidence was an element necessary for change as was reported by researchers (McNaughton & Lai, 2010). The group's confidence grew as the professional development continued and as they deepened their abilities to name the strategies, how to implement them, and the conditions of when to apply them. This was particularly evident by mid-year during the lesson link.

Throughout the year, the teachers developed into a community of change particularly in the careful planning of curriculum and modeling comprehension strategies. In this process, as Block and Duffy (2008) and Ball (2009) suggested, the four teachers' sensitivity and metacognitive awareness of children grew. They continued a gradual collaborative effort (Block & Duffy, 2008). Their usage of the interactive model of reading deepened and they focused more attention on children's language and culture. These characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy were consistent with Ball's work (2009).

In summary, the group focused on how children best learn to read. The four teachers' instructional practice and perception of success grew with both. With this success, confidence increased until they became advocates for comprehension strategy instruction by adapting available and relevant scholarship and using a group voice to try to influence district reading policy (McNaughton & Lai, 2010).

Commitment to Strategy Instruction

Demonstrating a commitment to reflection and improvement of strategy instruction, the teachers' choice of adult book clubs and implementing lesson link as professional development for comprehension strategy instruction helped them develop as literacy teachers. They wanted to meet the students' need for exemplary comprehension instruction by integrating an active thinking curriculum throughout the day. Early researchers, Pressley and El-Dinary (1997) reported comprehension strategy instruction was difficult for teachers (Pressley, 1998a; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997), and this was affirmed by Lai and colleagues (Lai *et al.*, 2009). The second-grade teachers also found the comprehension strategy instruction to be very challenging. They were determined and committed to continue implementation of the work.

In the early months of the adult literacy book club, the four teachers became meta-cognitively aware of how they employed schema and monitoring for meaning as they read. They transferred this to students' habits when reading. This coincided with classroom units of study on schema and monitoring for meaning. Hence, they were learning the two strategies as adults and teaching them simultaneously. From reflective metacognitive awareness, the teachers' developed reflective practice in the book clubs. They began to integrate strategies as recommended by (Pressley *et al.*, 1992a) because how they perceived that they were learning. This was a condition that Pressley (1998a) named as essential to implementing classroom strategy instruction.

The adult literacy book club was an experience and tool to help these four teachers' explain and teach strategies in an integrative way. They adapted instructional practice to ensure integration of literacy strategies. During this same period, the teachers

further recognized the importance of the book club discussions. Building schema and enhancing how to monitor for meaning created a spiral affect. The group recommitted to a more pragmatic classroom environment that allowed the students' to build a schematic cueing system to become fully active throughout literacy conversations. The pragmatic cueing system described in the *Cornerstone Framework* was becoming more meaning to the teachers because of having adult conversations in the book clubs, as the reflective sessions had been a very powerful for them.

Through professional study, book clubs, and lesson links, the teachers' knowledge nurtured in the three kinds of knowledge: (a) declarative, (b) procedural, and (c) conditional. All were necessary for powerful comprehension strategy instruction. Almasi (2003) suggested that teacher's personal understanding of these types of knowledge was necessary for successful strategy literacy instruction. In the lesson link process, the teachers deepened this knowledge, particularly, procedural and conditional knowledge, as reflected in the thought-driven lessons that grew from the lesson link as well as in their daily lesson plans. They sharpened their awareness of the content of the lesson link and ability to explain the lesson's purpose. Thereby, they all improved how to use "instructional talk" as was supported by Duffy *et al.*'s (1986a) research.

The teachers implemented the interactive model of reading through the *Cornerstone Framework*. Therefore, they developed and researched a more actively thinking and reflecting curriculum across the day (Schon, 1983). This was reflecting in action, which was an ultimate goal. This came to fruition in unit planning for the lesson link as they sought to integrate social studies content with reading.

In conclusion, the team was becoming more committed, adaptive, and responsive to students' needs while implementing the interactive model of reading. They were moving toward what Block *et al.* (2009) labeled as the best teachers of literacy comprehension strategy work.

Adaptive Scholarship

The second-grade teachers came to Stanmore bringing rich and varied backgrounds with a common trait of knowing about literacy scholarship. As they entered the work place, each one realized that instructional change was a cultural occurrence at Stanmore. Change based on scholarship was encouraged at this school. However, a disruptive change occurred when the district reading policy as well as Alabama testing focused on constrained reading skills that were benchmarked frequently. At this time *Cornerstone Literacy* and the *Alabama Reading Initiative* literacy content were embedded in the daily teaching practices for the Stanmore teachers. Teachers were using professional learning communities to improve instruction, and lesson link was used school wide. The two initiatives were predicated on school change, teachers' content knowledge, and the building of adaptive pedagogy as reported in the literature (Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

School structures and time schedules were built around reading and writing workshops. The literacy block became overcrowded with the addition of testing and progress monitoring. These changes forced teachers to adapt by integrating comprehension strategy work into science and social studies, a practice recommended by Ruddell (1997). The teachers' lesson link goal was to merge literacy and social studies.

The school ethos was one of constant learning and use of flexible approaches to instruction, a culture labeled as adaptive by researchers (Bransford *et al.*, 2005). Embedded professional development, professional reading, and school wide book studies were part of the Stanmore school culture, and the second-grade team fully embraced all of the practices. Reading theory was a component of the *Alabama Reading Initiative* and *Cornerstone*. Building deep content knowledge about reading pedagogy was a school goal at Stanmore. When new teachers entered the school's professional development system, they were expected to fully embrace the learning culture and develop deep content knowledge. The second-grade teachers wrote lessons based on theory-based instruction from the *Cornerstone Framework*. They instituted adult literacy book clubs and lessons link as a dual approach to improve the teaching of literacy comprehension strategies. The team embodied characteristics of exemplary teachers. They were flexible, thoughtful, collaborative, reflective, and adaptive (Block *et al.*, 2002b; Hammerness *et al.*, 2005; Hatana & Oura, 2003; Block & Mangieri, 2009; Hiebert *et al.*, 2003; Boss, 2001; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, 2002, 2003; Hiebert *et al.*, 2002; McNaughton & Lai, 2010).

The adult book clubs and lesson link concentrated on improving reading instruction within the classroom environments for children when teaching comprehension strategies. The teachers' processes to accomplish this goal shared a characteristic, generativity, with critical literacy theory (Ball, 2009). These professional development practices, adult book clubs and lesson link, provided rich possibilities for instruction that connected and personalized instruction. Therefore, the teachers built their pedagogy and focused on children's language and culture by adapting scholarship. Ball (2009)

suggested that professional development supportive of teachers as generative practitioners were the key for preparing teachers to work in diverse schools. Development activities such as lesson link and adult book clubs were generative and created conditions for adaptive scholarship to impact schools.

Implications

Beyond the school itself, there were no intentions to generalize the findings of this study to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). In qualitative inquiry, there are no generalizations. The work accomplished is transferable to other like settings or to others' who may discover similarities in the particular findings. Primary implications are the necessity for the continuation of the second-grade reading comprehension instruction at Stanmore and the teachers' continued use of adaptive scholarship.

However, some implications that might be useful to schools like Stanmore are the use of lesson link as a reflective analysis tool for comprehension strategy instruction. The use of adult literacy book clubs as a model of adult learning to deepen knowledge about comprehension strategies and how to best implement them into instruction could be salient to other like settings. Implementation of lesson link and adult literacy book clubs together are methods to extend teachers' knowledge and instruction implementation of reading might be assistive to similar schools. Adult book clubs and lesson link combined with a reading model that utilizes schematics and pragmatics could support culturally relevant pedagogy. I will address each implication and settings where the implications might be applicable.

1. Lesson link as a reflective analysis tool for comprehension strategy instruction. Because comprehension strategy work is difficult “to teach and learn” (Lai *et al.*, 2009, p. 13), schools implementing this practice might consider lesson link or lesson study. Researchers studying lesson link reported findings that group interactions were transformed. Individual teachers’ instruction improved and students’ achievement increased (Krazer & Teplin, 2007). Lesson study and lesson link are context specific and require a school culture based on reflection, collaboration, and change (Lewis & Hurd, 2011; Schon, 1983). Therefore, these prerequisite conditions for lesson link would be a necessary element for success.
2. Adult book clubs as a model of adult learning to build deep knowledge of comprehension strategy instruction. Teachers’ personal learning of the strategies was a condition named as essential for implementing classroom strategy instruction (Pressley, 1998a). Keene (2002) suggested exemplary comprehension strategy teachers were reflective. Exemplary teachers researched their own reading and metacognitive habits while reading adult selections of literature and discussing their reading processes in professional development sessions and learning communities. A condition necessary for this adult model would be teacher choice to participate in the adult book club.
3. The use of lesson link and adult book clubs together to deepen teachers’ knowledge of reading models and the instructional use of the models. Continuous professional development models have an adult component of trying the strategies through personal reading. Some organizations using this model also encourage lesson link and lesson study as a professional development tool to intensify

instruction and encourage reflection. These professional development formats might be considered a combination of these two methods to strengthen their professional development model.

4. Adult book clubs and lesson link combined with a reading model that utilizes schematics and pragmatics could support culturally relevant pedagogy.

Professional development specialists serving in diverse schools and districts might consider the process used by the second-grade teachers. Supporting underserved students, Hollins (2011) suggested actions similar to adult book clubs and lesson link, “shared observations, collaborative inquiry, and problem solving based on evidence from classrooms with diverse and underserved students” (p. 127). Schematics and pragmatics are two cueing systems highly supportive of students’ culture and language, tenets of critical literacy (Ball, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Fairbanks *et al.* (2009) asserted that “...how individuals come to their comprehension of texts is inextricably linked with their social and cultural identities” (p. 601). For teachers working in diverse school settings, the use of adult book clubs and lesson link together would provide a strong professional development model to support instruction of comprehension strategy work in a culturally relevant manner.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a body of work on comprehension strategies but few studies focused on professional development of reading comprehension teachers (Sailors, 2009). More research is needed on how to develop teachers to employ the newest findings from the

research findings about reading comprehension such as the fluid process of comprehending suggested by Block and Duffy (2008). There is a need to investigate how to develop teachers to use the ideas offered by researchers.

Block and Duffy (2008) discussed the trend to teach fewer comprehension strategies and the need to be aware that core reading programs and teacher's manuals present too many skills and strategies. Researchers stated that core reading programs limited comprehension development and growth for readers who struggled (Block *et al.*, 2009). More research needs to focus on the tools and materials including the professional development needed to support teachers to be successful comprehension strategies teachers.

Fairbanks *et al.* (2009) declared that more reading comprehension research should be conducted to provide a fresh look at the role that culture plays. More research conducted in schools to show how culturally responsive instruction impacted students' comprehension would strengthen existing qualitative research findings. I agree with this suggestion.

I propose the following recommendations for future research based on the findings of this research study:

1. Investigate the use of adult book clubs and lesson link as active professional development models to support teachers learning and teaching comprehension strategies. This case study was limited to four second-grade teachers in one school. Perhaps, a larger study including multiple grade levels would yield findings to support comprehension strategy instruction and new ways to view the process.

2. Investigate active teacher driven professional development in school settings serving diverse student populations. Include perspectives beyond the classroom such as principals and district office staff would offer perspectives on the implementation and sustainability of this type of professional development.
3. Conduct more case studies of teachers using active professional development to support their comprehension strategy instruction to discern the “layers of influence” (McNaughton, 2011, p. 125) teachers experience as they teach comprehension.

Conclusion

Margaret Beal Spencer (2011) rebuked the media’s portrayal of minority youth challenges as pathological and I agree with Dr. Spencer. The most troubling aspect of my service in high poverty communities has been the labeling of schools, teachers, and students as deficit.

This case study demonstrated one story of one group of teachers who defied those labels because they believed in themselves and their students. The second-grade teachers were passionate about their students, their reading, and their teaching. They each brought unique talents to their professional community as they focused on changing their instruction. In daily reflection, the teachers “put themselves in the role of the students and allowed themselves to experience and reveal the confusions they had always assumed they were expected to suppress or keep private” (Schon, 1983, p. 299).

The Stanmore teachers' commitment to comprehension strategy instruction was evident through their choice of two active professional development processes of adult book clubs and lesson link. In these processes, the teachers overcame some of the challenges of comprehension strategy instruction as well as the challenges brought on by the new reading policies mandated by the state. As they talked about books in the adult book club, they integrated strategies and they spoke often of two cueing systems, schematics and pragmatics. The interaction of these two systems created conditions for the teachers' metacognitive awareness of the second-grade students. Schon (1983) described actions similar to the second-grade teachers as artful.

An artful teacher sees a child's difficulty in learning to read not as a defect in the child but as a defect "of his own instruction." So he must find a way of explaining what is bothering the pupil. (Schon, 1983, p. 66)

The lesson link study provided structure for a day of reflection about the students and their interaction with the teachers' carefully planned instruction. Throughout the school year the teachers built their knowledge of reading theory, comprehension strategies, and generative pedagogy with an end result of adaptive scholarship. Being able to advocate for and explain their comprehension instruction came from reflecting in and reflecting on their daily work and how the second-grade children responded to that work (Schon, 1983).

A focus on constrained skills and assessments measuring those skills, forced the team to rethink their comprehension instruction. Fear was a word they used repeatedly as they described their adaptation to constant challenges to their developmentally appropriate practices. Schon (1983) described the need for professionals having difficulty in their context to "acquire enough voice in the situation to be able" to claim their rightful professional status (p. 298). The second-grade teachers acquired voice and

they used that voice to advocate for their students. I believe these teachers were acting at the highest level of professionalism.

Cynthia Coburn and Mary Stein (2010) expressed a desire for more teachers and schools to share success stories in a way that would reveal the “inner workings” of the process of change to improve schooling for children (p. 2). The Stanmore teachers opened their professional community to me and fearlessly expressed their thoughts throughout the year that we worked together. They allowed me to use their words as a testament of hope and what can happen when teachers become “reflective practitioners” (Schon, 1983). This case study attempted to demonstrate how the second-grade teachers utilized research and practice to accelerate positive growth and change in their work, a true success story as defined by Coburn and Stein (2010). I believe more case study research must be a priority if we are to overcome the media’s negative portrayal of schools, teachers, and children.

Teachers like the Stanmore team deserve excellent professional development and they need time to reflect to develop generative and appropriate pedagogy. In a compelling statement, Sailors (2009) addressed the lack of research on teachers’ professional development concerning comprehension instruction. Sailors stated:

...it is unclear under what conditions teachers best learn to improve their practices and those features of professional development that are helpful to children in improving their comprehension. Simply stated, the importance of the professional development for preservice and inservice teachers is evident in policy, but simply has not been addressed in research (Sailors, 2009, p. 645).

If policy and research connected so as to address the importance of teachers’ professional development of comprehension, more children would experience the instruction they deserve. In summary, Duke and Carlisle (2011) stated that a problem facing the reading field was the critical need to develop teachers’ ability to design, plan,

and implement purposeful comprehension instruction with consideration to differentiation for students' varied needs. The leading researchers offer a compelling case for addressing these problems. I believe this is a problem that can be solved by focusing time, money and resources on the development of teachers, the most powerful force in our schools.

The four teachers in this study were a powerful and joyful force at Stanmore. The teachers at Stanmore never wait for someone else from a distance to solve their dilemmas. Instead, they keep adapting and moving to the rhythm of their children. Much in the same way that Schon (1983) described teachers, this second-grade team improvised, they had a “feel” for reading and they made “on-the-spot adjustments” (p. 55) to their students' reading needs. In celebration, the teachers acted much like Schon's description of a jazz ensemble. “As the musicians [teachers] feel the direction of the music that is developing out of their interwoven contributions, they make sense of it and adjust their performance to the new sense they have made” (1983, p. 55). I feel gratitude that these four teachers continue to make sense of their instruction and always seek meaningful reading experiences for their children as well as for themselves. Their teaching has truly grown from good to memorable (Keene, 2002).

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol and Questions (Siedman, 2005)

Purpose: Establishing a context for exploring second-grade teachers' reading comprehension instruction.

Interview one (life history, 90 minutes): How did you come into the teaching profession? What was your life history before becoming a teacher? Please tell as much about yourself as you can up until the present time. Please reconstruct early family, school, neighborhood, and work experiences. Try to put your teaching in your life context.

Interview two (contemporary experience; the details; 90 minutes): What is it like teaching second-grade? Particularly, what is your teaching of reading comprehension like? What do you do in lieu of a reading program? How does your adult reading impact your teaching of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension? How does your own reading impact the way you teach your students to read? What is it like teaching reading at Stanmore Elementary? Please try to reconstruct the details of your reading instruction and how your teaching has evolved. What do you actually do on the job every day? How do you study your own teaching? Please share a day in your teaching week. Divulge any stories that you feel are pertinent to understanding your work.

Interview three (reflection on meaning): What does it mean to you to be a reading teacher involved in the teaching of comprehension strategies? How do you make sense of your work as a second-grade-reading teacher at your school? Please reflect on the meaning of your teaching experience by addressing the intellectual and emotional connections between your work and your life. How do you understand the teaching of reading comprehension in light of your previous experience before becoming a teacher and in the beginning of your career?

APPENDIX B
IRB PROTOCOL

Form 4: IRB Approval Form
Identification and Certification of Research
Projects Involving Human Subjects

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The Assurance number is FWA00005960 and it expires on January 24, 2017. The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56.

Principal Investigator: BURDETTE MCKAY, REBECCA

Co-Investigator(s):

Protocol Number: **X070430004**

Protocol Title: *A Case Study of Second-Grade Teachers' Comprehension Instruction*

The IRB reviewed and approved the above named project on 2-14-12. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This Project will be subject to Annual continuing review as provided in that Assurance.

This project received EXPEDITED review.

IRB Approval Date: 2-14-12

Date IRB Approval Issued: 2-14-12

Marilyn Doss

Marilyn Doss, M.A.

Vice Chair of the Institutional Review
Board for Human Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

The IRB approved consent form used in the study must contain the IRB approval date and expiration date.

IRB approval is given for one year unless otherwise noted. For projects subject to annual review research activities may not continue past the one year anniversary of the IRB approval date.

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form must be submitted for review and approval to the IRB prior to implementation.

Adverse Events and/or unanticipated risks to subjects or others at UAB or other participating institutions must be reported promptly to the IRB.

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APPENDIX C
TEACHER VIGNETTES

TEACHER VIGNETTES

The following profiles, developed from verbatim transcriptions of tape-recorded interviews, provided a context for this study. Vygotsky's theory (1986) suggested a deep valuing of every word spoken by a person. Vygotsky considered spoken words as a representation of a person's consciousness. Thoughts were embodied within every human utterance. In the analysis of the interviews, there was a focus on the exact phrasing from participants in order to ensure what Seidman (2005) termed a strict adherence to the data.

The goal of this case study was to leave an account of the work of the second-grade teachers. Descriptive language was used to explain the teachers' accounts of their work. The participants in this case study ranged in teaching experience from two years to eighteen years. Three of the teachers spent their career at Stanmore Elementary. Each of the four teachers was given a pseudonym. The participants read the full interview transcripts and marked passages that they chose to delete from the data analysis which is termed member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Participant One: Sarah

Sarah, participant number 1, taught five years at Stanmore. A young teacher with a specialist degree in elementary education with five years of teaching experience, Sarah relied on research and practitioner books such as Debbie Miller's, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (2002). After her first year at Stanmore Elementary, described by Sarah as "horrible," she settled into teaching with

a more profound understanding of how to set rituals and routines in place for her second-grade students, while developing a reflective stance toward her daily work.

Interview one: Sarah's life context. In the following excerpts, Sarah described her grandmother's influence. She spent many days with her extended family and her memories were vivid. As she spoke her face reflected her love for this special woman in her life. "I got my passion for books from my grandmother. She told stories to me as she read books. She would read books, and it was like we were in the story; she was a wonderful storyteller and really good at reading out loud."

Later in life, Sarah struggled with part of her college experience. However one experience was memorable because of a professor who served as a role model for her future teaching. This professor taught Sarah and other students the procedures of thinking aloud, shared reading, and many practices that supported Sarah at Stanmore.

Dr. Hampton, a professor at my university, was crazy but wonderful. There was never a day that she didn't come in with a smile on her face saying "Happy New Day" or something like that. Her class was all about us being the students. So I remember how to be a teacher by actually doing it like she did. She taught us crafting and read aloud/think aloud procedures.

Influenced by many women in her life, Sarah's personal and professional life was woven together with a thread of independent thinking. This characteristic was very evident when Sarah spoke about the passion she held for children and teaching. This was a part of Sarah's stance toward instructional decision-making alongside a deep desire to do what was in the best interest of students.

I believe that all my experiences work together. I am going to do in my classroom what I need to do. Administrators can show me the schedule and I will do it and everything, but I am fitting in literacy conferences and I am fitting in that bag of books time for independent reading. Anything that is going to help children, then second-grade teachers want to do it.

Always possessing the deep desire to become a teacher, Sarah shared her story and

academic struggles. With an indomitable spirit, Sarah kept working toward her goal of becoming

a teacher throughout difficult times of her life. Often connecting with peers, Sarah had close relationships with classmates, teachers, and her second-grade children.

I had a professor whom I called the devil. She failed me on every lesson plan that I wrote. She said I wouldn't be a good teacher. But I survived and aced all the other tests. I had a friend who had cancer and she was struggling and she encouraged me to not quit during that time. It was hard but I kept going.

This spirit was an inseparable part of this young teacher and was heightened the minute she walked into her classroom every morning.

After her "horrible" first year at Stanmore, Sarah described how she became more reflective. She thought carefully about lessons, her classroom environment, and how she explained reading to her students. Desperate to be successful, she requested the literacy coaches to observe and critique her instruction. Videotaped lessons of her comprehension instruction were a constant source of study as a technique to improve her work. "I reflect on everything I do in my life. My second year, it was good because I was videotaping myself and if something would go wrong, then I would try and fix it."

Teaching in the first few years at this school was lonely for Sarah. A principal devoted to supporting teachers gave Sarah feedback on management and routines to support her classroom. Struggling with timing of lessons and response to students with many needs was difficult for all teachers but especially for Sarah. Describing a period of time when personal growth was stimulated, Sarah explained a professional learning experience in her first year of teaching at Stanmore. "Sometimes I felt really alone and by myself in my first year. I learned so much that first year. I learned how to teach and set up my classroom."

Interview two: Sarah's reconstruction of the past year and comprehension

instruction. As Sarah reconstructed the past school year, she explained why she enjoyed teaching children in second-grade. Developmentally appropriate practice was significant to her and she often spoke of observing her students, listening to them, and guiding them through difficult lessons. She had a passion for comprehension strategy instruction, particularly instruction with children's picture books and certain authors.

Teaching second-grade to me is the perfect age and the perfect grade. I have been here teaching second-grade for 5 years. I am able to teach them more how to think and how to get into those comprehension strategies. Where they have to think on a different level, and not just who was the character, or what was the plot, but really think what was the author trying to tell us, and make pictures in your mind.

According to Sarah, starting the comprehension work required a careful look at the skill of retelling and story elements. Influenced by careful study of research and personal study, she made certain her second-grade students had opportunities to talk about their reading.

I start out with the basic things. Then we go in to the deep structure comprehension strategies and actually take what they know about a character and use their schema to help them understand how that character feels or really think deeply about the connections they are making and about how they would feel if they were in that situation.

Sarah shared her reliance on Debbie Miller's (2002) book, *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades*. She reported her use of many resources, but she relied heavily on this book as a mentor text for teaching comprehension. We follow Debbie Miller's book, *Reading With Meaning*, pretty much to a "T." "We use all of the books that she recommends to use. We use her anchor lessons then create our lessons from that, kind of based on hers."

Designing units of study with the comprehension strategies in collaboration with the second-grade team and devising graphic organizers and response sheets to show student thinking were important elements in the comprehension instruction used by this teacher and her team. Sarah described how the team plans. Collaboration and a culture of working for the benefit of all the second-grade students was a characteristic of Sarah's personality. "Of course, we work very closely together and we are always looking and finding new things and sharing with each other. When we start to plan a new strategy, we will pull everything that we have to go with that strategy."

Sarah's passion to serve the children at Stanmore and to develop her reading comprehension strategy instruction grew through her continual study. Sarah explained how learning as an adult reader made an impact on her comprehension strategy instruction. The book club made an impact of her comprehension instruction.

I have gone from knowing nothing to wanting to change the world. The reason I wrote that was because when I came here I knew what schema meant; I knew you needed to ask questions to understand a book. I knew the basic comprehension strategies; however, I had no clue how to teach them. I had no clue how to take the kids to that deeper level and really I didn't know until the book club. I really didn't get it.

From the adult book club, Sarah recognized important teacher qualities. One attribute, the teacher as a reader, was developing throughout the year of this study. In using and discussing the strategies, the teachers cultivated a love for reading.

Okay, I have said this before, but I have always been a struggling reader. I never really liked to read. I have never been good at reading very fast. It took me forever to get through a book. I think that me enjoying these books in our adult book club and wanting to talk about them and learning from the group has helped me just be more passionate about reading. I guess my love of reading shows in my teaching, because I will sit down and say, Oh! This is one of my favorite books,” and the kids say, “ Oh! Mrs. S. you always say that is one my favorite books.”

Reflection was evident in Sarah’s life, personally as well as professionally. Realizing the importance of modeling for students, she recognized that teachers must read and love to read to serve as role models for their students. Sarah shared the power in talking about what you read when she described her struggle with Toni Morrison’s book *Beloved* (1987).

I think first of all, I think, I don’t know how; I don’t know how anybody teaches reading without enjoying reading themselves. To get it across in a way that your kids are going to be excited about it, I think you have to read books and you have to talk about books with people. The discussion part of it is huge and the need to allow my kids to talk more is important.

The strong desire to have children think and act on how they think is an important part of Sarah’s vision for her class and demonstrated her value of thinking as a reader. “. . . I want to change the world! I want all my kids to be able to think. They can regurgitate information all day. I want them to go deeper and to really think and to be able to back up their thinking.”

Continual growth and learning were seminal characteristics of Sarah as a teacher. Her candid response to content that she struggled to learn and the attitude that she took about going deeper with a topic, schema, a strategy studied for several years, demonstrated the sheer joy she feels when she is learning. Her true motivation for the way she pushed herself was clear when she spoke about her search to find a way to break through to students who struggled to read. “With this schema part, all those different levels of

schema I have learned this year, there are different types of schema and I was able to use this to better serve my students, the ones who struggled”

Changes in school and how she dealt with the change also revealed a dimension of Sarah’s responses to and how the rest of the second-grade teachers developed comprehension with children’s books rather than using a commercial reading program. Time constraints shortened the read aloud time, as well as the time for teachers’ modeling. The read aloud was continued, but Sarah was troubled about more changes that might happen.

You know now we are using one book a week. We have that little fifteen-minute time which is about all they need as they are listening and thinking on the carpet. Having our big long crafting time and all that and it was just like, “Oh! What am I going to do?” Centers, when are we going to fit them in? Now it is working out so much better and I kind of like the short crafting time. I am kind of terrified about the adoption of a reading series next year. I just feel like everything is going to be gone.

When asked how she holds on to the good parts, Sarah explained how she and the other second-grade teachers worked through difficulties. “Oh, I am sure we can work through this too. I have my ideas. Well, you have to do what you’re told to do. And if you’re given a basal series, you have to teach it. But there are still ways to do what you know is right.”

A decrease in staff development and disconnect with Alabama Reading Initiative were Sarah’s great heartbreaks in her current growth cycle. As the Stanmore teachers adjusted to the changes they faced in the materials as well as the time constraints of the new state mandates, they also discussed changes in the professional development opportunities in which they engaged. Sadness was the word Sarah used to describe her feelings.

I kind of feel sad; you know, we had professional development all the time on the reading comprehension and the literacy block and writing. You know we had

writing institutes all the time and now we have nothing. Like our planning as a grade level is hit and miss. It is not like it used to be.

Interview three: Sarah’s reflection over the previous interviews and what it means to teach reading comprehension at Stanmore. In this last interview, Sarah described what being a teacher of comprehension meant to her. Sarah felt a responsibility to her students. The overwhelming job of teaching second-grade children to read with deep comprehension was reflected in Sarah’s words.

It is kind of scary to even think about I am in charge of building a child’s comprehension. I am. I have this job of teaching them to read and understand what they read and not just that but to enjoy it and be able to connect to it, reflect upon it and share with others.

Reflecting over the impact of the last year, Sarah added more insight into how she saw her role as a teacher of reading comprehension. “I think you have to love to read and know how to comprehend in order to teach them how to love to read and comprehend what they read. Just learning that schema is so much more than what you know.”

Explaining the importance of schema as a strategy and as a concept, Sarah said that the book club members helped each other to overcome lapses in background knowledge and schema. “. . . I didn’t have the schema for a lot of things the older people had when we read the Truman Capote (1956 and 1968) books, and to be able to share the schema with other people was huge in my comprehension, which changed my teaching in the classroom, too.”

Sarah elaborated on how her schema was supported by her colleagues’ background knowledge. The Stanmore teachers took conversations in the book club meetings to a higher level. They realized that they were supporting each member’s comprehension through the sharing of their own understanding of text.

I just want to say it was amazing the different conclusions and impressions that we made based on our schema, too. That was so weird because I would be thinking one thing completely different and someone else would say some of what they knew versus what I know.

Describing how she made sense of all that she was required to do as a reading teacher, Sarah talked about her obsession. “It encompasses my life; it is my life, my whole life. Teaching is my life; I dream about it. How do I make sense of it? Well, that is what I chose to do and I love it and I can’t separate it from anything else.” This young teacher continued and described the origin of her passion for teaching. In her own life, a few teachers devoted themselves to her success; she stated that this is what she wants to do, too.

I can tell you that as a child, I had a couple of teachers, just a couple, that spent that kind of time with me. I want to be that kind of teacher for them for my kids. That is what I want to give them in second-grade. I want them to leave second-grade knowing that they can read and understand and not only read and understand but apply it.

Sarah expressed her growth in learning how to teach reading comprehension and the strategies. Her journey, marked by a feeling of not being able to do anything right, was difficult in the beginning. “Oh my gosh, that is huge. My first years I learned more than my whole five years in college. I was kind of always learning on my own.” The time period that Sarah described was the year that three second-grade teachers went through the certification process for the *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards*.

“Everybody was so busy here and so wrapped up in the work when I came to Stanmore. Anything they were doing I tried it. It didn’t go well sometimes but I tried it.”

When asked what advice, she would offer other teachers, Sarah described a principle she lived by as a teacher. “One thing that I kind of live by is give me one thing and let me do it well before you give me something else. I get so overwhelmed so easily.” Sarah also

discussed that an adult book club is a way to keep maturing as a reader. Mentioning the conversation around the books as being a primary avenue for building adult learning opportunities, she described how the active nature of a discussion sustains learning.

I think our book club went really well. I don't want to stop it; I am still learning. I don't know it all, and I am very far from knowing it all. I guess you never stop learning, and there is a lot more I want to know. I think book clubs are the way to get it. It is relaxed and you're learning from other people and that is how I learn. I can't learn from just sitting there reading. An adult book club is a good way to keep growing.

Sarah talked about the books the teachers read in the book club and the value of talking about reading. "I love the variety of text we read in our book club, and I would never have read them if I hadn't been in the book club. I enjoyed all of them because of the conversation." She offered more information about the adult book club. Summarizing her adult learning experiences and ending with a sensitive reminder, she stated that she was learning the comprehension strategies from a "child's point of view."

With the book club I think it is very important that we focused on a certain strategy at a time, and I think that is important, too, because you learn in depth about that strategy. I know we really focused on schema for a while; then we really focused on visualizing for a while, and, of course, we were synthesizing throughout all of it, doing some of the other strategies through out all of it. Because once you understand that one strategy, you are able to use it to help with the next one. I never knew to, like hone in, on certain nonfiction conventions to help me. I am literally learning from a child's point of view.

Participant Two: Tamra

Tamra, participant number 2, a teacher with two years of experience, was the newest member of the second-grade team. After graduating from a local university, she began her teaching career with ten years of work experience, some of it as a supervisor in a factory. As a 27-year-old mother, Tamra entered college while working two part-time jobs, all to fulfill her dream of becoming a teacher.

Interview one: Tamra's life context. Tamra described her college teachers and the impact they had on her. The description explained the emotional and intellectual connections Tamra made while at this university. "Being older made me work harder and earn the respect of my professors. I had a really good experience with my professors. They helped me so much and made learning easy and simple to understand."

Tamra's explanation of the impact her college professors had on her defined her current practice. "I want to make sure my students understand even if I have to say something many times. I just want them to feel respected and loved and for them to be able to ask me if they need help." Tamra explained her motivation for providing a positive learning experience for her students. "I want them to have a much better experience than I did."

Professional learning during the first year at Stanmore prepared Tamra to meet her goal of becoming a "good reading teacher." She shared her professional reading in Debbie Miller's, *Reading for Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (2002). "My goal is to be a really good reading teacher and I am trying to do this every day. I have become aware of how it is hard to relate to the story and not being able to visualize."

The entire second-grade team relied on reading professionally to support how to understand the comprehension strategies as well as how to teach them. After Tamra's initial misunderstanding about reading aloud, or crafting, she found a resource that helped her learn more about teaching reading comprehension. "Then I was given the Debbie Miller book. This is the book! When Tamra visited Stanmore, she was introduced to the second-grade teachers and they shared the professional books they read. Tamra richly

described this meeting (Geertz, 1983). “The second-grade teachers said this was a must read. I thought ok, read the book. I wrote down every word Debbie Miller said, and I would do what she said word for word. I didn’t know what to do with strategy instruction.”

This second year teacher explained her process of growth in teaching comprehension. Tamra discovered the usefulness of anchor lessons in Miller’s book (2002). The second-grade teachers also supported her instruction by sharing their lessons as well as materials from their comprehension strategy work. The teachers clarified many of their think-aloud techniques to Tamra.

My first year I didn’t understand enough about it and wasn’t able to teach it the way I can now. Besides Debbie Miller’s work, some of the other teachers have helped me to really be able to teach the use of schema as a thinking strategy. I rely more on modeling for the kids now. I have learned to break it down for them by thinking out loud.

Colleagues worked with Tamra and influenced her instructional practice while supporting her as a grade level team member. “The other second-grade teachers are my strength. We plan together and our friendships last forever because we all pull the best out of each other. Where one of us is weak, the others are strong. Weekly grade level planning sessions are professional development . . .”

According to Tamra, being a teacher required action and determination. “I believe that the better teachers take on the job. And the teachers who just want to make it through the year, just float through.” Speaking of life experiences, Tamra described her childhood and not having many of her needs adequately met. She further described why she traveled one hour to work at Stanmore.

I know how it is to want and I know how it is to have what you want. I believe that everything happens for a reason and I personally feel like this is where I am

supposed to serve. This is where I can make the biggest difference and the biggest impact.

Interview two: Tamra's reconstruction of the past year and comprehension

instruction. As Tamra began the second interview, she expressed her appreciation to the second-grade team and for the professional community they had created. She expounded upon her desire to continue working with second-grade students. “Well, of course, the second-grade team is an inspiration to me. I love these ladies that I work with and they are just awesome. I just love the kids. They are at the right age. They reach the expectations I have for them.”

Illuminating why she teaches with an attitude of such care, Tamra described teaching as more than a job. “To be honest I think this work is a calling that was put on my heart a long time ago. For me to be able to do it the way I do it, I had to go through many things.” Describing her feelings about beginning her teaching career later in her life, Tamra revealed her inner nature and the value she placed on her journey to become a teacher.

To be where I am and to have the opportunity to go back to college means a lot. If I had gone straight to college from high school, I would not be on the path I am now. I think waiting later in life, working as hard as I did, caused me to learn in ways that are paying off now.

In thinking about her first year, Tamra reflected about her experience and drew conclusions based upon those experiences during a self-described “flying blind” the first year of teaching. Reflection was critical to Tamra. Her description of the lesson link process affirmed the powerful nature of observing her colleagues teach.

Well, the first year I did a lot of reflection on my reading comprehension instruction because there were no classes at my university that said “reading comprehension” so that was something else that I really worked on. I wanted to be good at that. With the crafting I had a mentor but I never saw a lesson until we did the lesson link. That was the first lessons I had ever seen done!

Tamra shared how she prepared to build her knowledge about reading, content, and instructional practice for comprehension. Furthermore, she described how reading with her colleagues in the adult book club helped her to construct her understanding and be able to apply it to children’s learning. Having a sense of humor allowed her to laughingly describe how she misunderstood the crafting technique of using literature among second-graders to teach reading comprehension.

When I walked in the door last year, I’m like a “blank slate.” We are going to do crafts. I went home and told mom, “Hey! They have arts and crafts!” Because I really thought we were going to do crafts. I really thought they had arts and crafts. I did not understand what the teachers were talking about when they said they did crafting.

Tamra described her struggle when she began teaching at Stanmore. Her richly described reflection demonstrated that she knew a great deal about herself as a learner (Geertz, 1983). “I needed to see the teaching. So I basically curled up with the Debbie Miller book every night and tried to model what she did until I felt comfortable going out on my own.” Reflection was a common practice at Stanmore (Schon, 1983). Tamra described her next steps after the first year. “. . . the adult book club connected the dots, because I did not see how the strategy instruction all fit. The book club is what has helped me with that. So I am flying blind the first year, and tried to do it better the second year!”

In her growth over a year, Tamra, a first-year teacher, entered her second year of teaching and began to realize the time schedule impact of the *Alabama Reading Initiative* mandates on the second-grade literacy block. “The literacy block is very much on a tight

schedule now. I am constantly watching the clock, and it is hard to get it to all fit in the fifteen minutes that's allowed." Tamra revealed her resilient nature and her ability to make the best of the literacy block time change as mandated by *Alabama Reading Initiative*. "I think this tightening up of the time has really made a difference with me because I would rather listen to the children, than listen to myself."

Tamra described the development that she experienced during the processes of lesson link and in the adult book clubs. The impact of watching other experienced second-grade teachers utilize comprehension strategies in their literacy block was evident. Her ability to envision the entirety of how comprehension strategy instruction developed as a result of seeing other teachers work and by discussing the strategies through adult book clubs was captured in the following statement. "It was very neat to see the different techniques and the different ways the second-grade teachers taught the strategies during the lesson link. It kind of let me know what I was doing and that I was on the right track." Tamra discussed the concept of seeing the outcome of the comprehension instruction.

But still it took the full year of my teaching all of it to see the end results. Before when I was teaching, I had no direction of where I was supposed to end up. I needed to see the end so I would know where I needed to go. I would be teaching every day not knowing how I was supposed to end up. I just did not get the big picture until the lesson link. The adult book club helped me too. The discussions help me to see the big picture.

When asked what advice she would offer to other teachers, Tamra responded by pointing out the importance of learning from the children and following their lead. It provided a window into her philosophy of teaching and how the adult book club supported her learning. "I would say listen to your kids. Learn from your kids. Give them more time to talk to you. Do less talking and more listening because if they are talking about their learning, they are thinking about it."

Concluding, Tamra ended the second interview with a declaration of her intention to stay at Stanmore “as long as they will let her.” She is fully committed to teaching at Stanmore.

I don't plan on going anywhere else because I love Stanmore and the other teachers there. That's what I want to do. It's my life. I live basically an hour away. I go to school; I come home; I go to bed. I read, read, and then go to bed. Then I go back to school the next day.

Interview 3: Tamra's reflection over the previous interviews and what it means to teach reading comprehension. The final interview opened with Tamra sharing many concerns since the school district adopted a new reading series. Tamra's honesty was based upon apprehension for her students and their reading comprehension.

I am kind of concerned about the reading series that the county has adopted. We touched on the strategies a lot over the last year when we were crafting a lot more with children's literature. I am worried that the comprehension will not gain as much as last year. I am just really concerned about that.

As Tamra described what she knew about the district's adoption of the reading series, and why it was buying a reading series she said the following. “The DIBELS is what everybody looks at, and that is what we are going to be measured by. The new reading series is supposed to make a huge difference in that, and our comprehension scores are going to be way low.”

When asked what she thought about possibilities to get comprehension through the strategy of crafting by using children's literature to teach the strategies, Tamra problem solved out loud as a way to ease her worries. “I can see that we could work with comprehension strategies. The social studies is also an open door.”

Reflecting on the comprehension strategy work and how she saw herself as a teacher of reading comprehension, Tamra evaluated herself as a teacher of instructional reading strategies. In this quotation, she explained comments she made to a district curriculum director when questioned about the DIBELS scores in second-grade.

Tamara's spirited attitude and desire to explain the circumstances of the second-grade teachers' reading instruction provided a multi-dimensional portrait of Tamra's concepts about constrained and unconstrained skills. "I feel very confident in my ability to teach the comprehension strategies. I feel very confident that my children learn what I am teaching about the comprehension strategies. I got my end of the year DIBELS scores. Let's see how do I want to say this?" Stopping midsentence and quietly dropping her voice, Tamra explained the dilemma facing the second-grade teachers. ". . . when we got our end of the year DIBELS scores, the reading fluency scores do not show that much improvement but the reading comprehension more than doubled. When we met with Mr. Brookfield that was the big thing the second-grade team showed."

Tamra's courage to express the disconnect between DIBELS scores, measures of correct words per minute, and reading comprehension to develop thinking affirmed the depth of her understanding of two elements of reading, the surface structure and the deeper, multi-layered, more profound structure.

I want to say at least more of the intensive students as measured by DIBELS can comprehend. I also brought up the point to Mr. Brookfield in that meeting. We have taught them to comprehend, to think about what they are reading. When they do the DIBELS, they are still trying to do what we taught them during our comprehension work, think about what you're reading, and if you're thinking about what you are reading, then you automatically slow your reading down. That was the big point we were trying to make to Mr. Brookfield.

Standing her ground on the comprehension instruction, Tamra explained the context of the meeting with Mr. Brookfield and how she created an opportunity to be open.

It was a meeting. Of course, our principal and the other second grade teachers were there. I remember distinctly that he was sitting next to me, and I looked him straight in the eye and said, “I have students that can read 113 words a minute, and they can tell me 3 words on a retell. I have students that can read 36 words a minute and can tell me 28 to 30 words retell that is accurate and correct. He [Mr. Brookfield] kind of shook his head and agreed with me so it was like strange.

When probed about what makes it possible for her to be so truthful and honest, Tamra explained her openness. “I think there are a lot of teachers who don’t tell what they think. Even though I have these thoughts, I still do what I am supposed to do, and I work as hard as I can to be sure that I do DIBELS.” Tamra’s response was unwavering as she put together an explanation of the disconnect between what the state required with the DIBELS tests and what she learned about reading comprehension.

I have seen huge increases [Rigby]; my children, almost 80% of my children were on reading level. They just weren’t reading fast enough, and that is where I keep coming back to. I just feel like with them their growth came from the comprehension work. It came from the strategy work because they did comprehend what they were reading. With the Rigby you take an account of the accuracy as much as the comprehension. Mostly more of the comprehension, they had to read so many words per minute, but they had to really be able to comprehend what they were reading. Most of my kids read on the second-grade level, and it was just the DIBELS that they struggled with.

Tamra summarized how she her reconciled DIBELS and the measure of constrained skills. “It is here and it is going to stay, but I just don’t feel that it should be the only assessment. Resigned to the fact that DIBELS was an assessment tool required by the state and that it was not going away, Tamra expressed frustration with the choice of this assessment.

The state should base the information on more than one measure. Just because you can read 130 words or 90 words per minute does not mean that you are on a second-grade reading level. Well, the way that I can reconcile that is I continue to try to teach the strategies to the best of my ability. I continue to teach what good readers do. They look at the word; they stop, and they reread. I know that messes up DIBELS a little bit. I just know when it comes down to DIBELS I just say do your best reading; I don't say we are going to speed read and read to the end. I just say do your best reading.

When asked how the strategy work will continue, Tamra took a long time and finally thought aloud. She mentioned the power of the lesson link study completed earlier in the year, the need to mentor new teachers, and the use of Debbie Miller's (2002) book as a text to read for all new teachers. Thinking aloud, Tamra described the fact that teachers must understand that comprehension has to be taught and that they must know, "some people don't comprehend."

You know we did that lesson study in immigration. It was really amazing to see how the children responded. And you have got to build the schema, and with immigration you have to have schema so they can understand that time period. We are going to have to continue because like I said no program hits on those strategies as strong. Our only hope to spread this work and keep it going would be for veteran teachers to mentor the newer teachers and teach them how to put the comprehension instruction in the content area. Yes! This is key for a brand new teacher that has never heard of anything like the comprehension strategies or understands the importance of them. As a brand new teacher, as a parent, a person who is thirty-one years old, I thought children comprehended. I didn't know that some people didn't comprehend. I thought everybody read the way I read.

Completing the picture about teaching reading, Tamra explained her desire to remain open and flexible to monitor her students for directions on next teaching moves, and to ask others for help when things were not going well. Her weighty sense of responsibility for the well being of her students and their learning was clear.

If it is not working in my room, then I fix it and talk somebody into helping me! I am going to cry. You know, this year I believe I have these children who depend on me, and it is my job to be sure they get everything they need out of second grade from me.

Participant Three: Janet

Janet, participant number 3, taught for eighteen years. Four of those years were at Stanmore. Janet, an older member of the second-grade Stanmore team and the most experienced teacher, returned to her home county to teach after an absence of thirty years. Her reentry into the community where she grew up was an expected move planned for her husband's retirement. The two moved to Talmedge County and built a home near Janet's elderly mother.

Interview one: Janet's life context. Janet shared her background and addressed her early years. As she spoke, she was honest about her background and her early-married life. Janet was inspired by her mother's choice to pursue an opportunity to become a licensed practical nurse. Her decision to marry at 18 did not deter her from pursuing an opportunity to attend beauty school.

When I was in tenth grade, mom got her G.E.D. and became an L.P.N. So that inspired me to believe I could do anything. I married early at the age of 18 when I was a senior in high school. We got married early because he was in the Army. I lived at home and went to the army base in Georgia. Then he was sent to Vietnam. I went to beauty school while he was overseas.

As Janet became involved in the schooling of her sons, she discovered something important about herself that ultimately led her to pursue a teaching degree. She worked in Georgia for most of her career. In this quotation, Janet explained how she became interested in becoming a certified teacher.

When we moved to Georgia, I loved the school system. Within four months of moving there, the school asked me to work. I worked there a year, but my interest was with children. So I moved to a teaching assistant position. And this is how I decided to become a teacher!

As an experienced teacher coming from another state, Janet described what happened to her as she stepped into a school immersed in comprehension strategy instruction. “It was hard and I struggled. An ingredient that I would say that is essential is to give new teachers time to learn the strategies and seeing best practices a lot over and over until you get it. This is so important and thirdly encouragement is very powerful.” Janet continued to explain her difficulty in learning how to teach the reading comprehension strategies. “As I began to learn how to do the comprehension strategies, the most difficult thing was having enough time to learn the strategies and then for me to teach them right away.”

What happened to Janet as she began her journey in developing the habit of reading professionally was shown in her personal dedication to a mentor text: *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (Miller, 2002). The teachers’ reliance on this book went beyond the lessons that they utilized for their comprehension instruction. Miller’s (2002) book became a source of inspiration for Janet and her colleagues.

How I feel about learning and the comprehension strategies involves the Debbie Miller book. This book is by far one of the best books on how to teach comprehension strategies. I bought it the beginning of my second year. I still go back and read it and reread it. It helps you become more powerful in the classroom.

Interview two: Janet’s reconstruction of the past year and comprehension instruction. Janet described her love of second-grade as she shared her teaching story. “I loved the children and I loved the enthusiasm. There is so much that can be said about

the maturity sometimes with second-graders and their ability to read.” Offering details about how second-graders “come alive” during this school year in relation to their reading, Janet explained how strategy instruction worked for her and the children. An author study of Eve Bunting and a discussion of the book, *Fly Away Home* (1993), demonstrated Janet’s value of students’ talk and discussion.

Recently, we were reading a story by Eve Bunting called *Fly Away Home*. I have also learned, let me back up and say that in getting children to understand a story better, they do have to have schema before they can understand it better. Many of the students that I have taught especially the students this year do not have a lot of schema about an airport. Some did, some didn’t. We questioned at the very beginning, “What do you know about an airport?” And we charted on our anchor chart what we knew about airports and what goes on. So we questioned, and I had to find out from the students, “What do you know about an airport?” A few students knew a few things, but the more we talked, the more the students learned about an airport. I shared some of my experiences about an airport because I had been flown recently.

When building conceptual understanding of words, Janet explained how a student learned the nuances of vocabulary instruction. Using a read aloud of the provocative children’s picture book, *Fly Away Home* (1993), Janet shared a story about a child who struggled but often surprised her with his deep thinking.

One of the strategies that the family in *Fly Away Home* used for living at the airport was not being noticed. That was a word we used a lot. At first the students didn’t know a lot about being noticed. I watched him and I watched the expression on his face. He said, “I noticed in this story that the dad and son talked to each other. I wonder if that was one of the reasons that they were able to get along and live together at the airport.

Describing monitoring for meaning as a strategy, Janet shared a particular student’s growth in figuring out unknown words and how this built confidence to use other strategies especially questioning. “Monitoring for meaning is an important strategy especially so for this boy. The more we delved into the story, some of the questions he

was able to ask were amazing. I understood why in the beginning he did not ask very many questions. He needed confidence.”

Janet continued to explain monitoring for meaning at the word, phrase, and whole text level. The value she placed on this strategy and its usefulness to her students’ independent reading was expressed. She often mentioned reflection about the things they learned about themselves as readers.

Monitoring for meaning has filled me with freedom as a teacher and has made the students independent. When they come to words they don’t understand, they can read across a word in a sentence and maybe they were able to sound it out, but they had no meaning and no understanding of the meaning. I have seen them apply the strategies many times. I am amazed again at some of the strategies. They often say, “Let me tell you about the strategy I used today.”

Describing the teaching of strategies, especially monitoring for meaning, Janet explained the process as starting “little fires” among students as they reflect and share with others about their reading.

When the children actually are independently reading and can use those strategies on their own and then come back and tell you about it. That really counts. And then that ignites a fire. Another child here does it and that ignites another fire. The little fire gets to be a big fire, and it is wonderful. So it has made a difference. Yes!

In the following quotation, Janet shared the powerful memories the students built for the strategies and how they used them. “The last week of school I still had students tell me about a big word they conquered by using one of the strategies.”

Focus, clarity, and reflection time with many opportunities for children to practice and reread text characterized the design of literacy stations. This design stimulated student motivation and the desire to read. Student reflection allowed Janet to determine the impact of the stations.

I see the children getting very excited about the learning. I see children who have not been turned on to books change. The books are becoming alive to them.

I see children spending independent time reading, more engaged in a book than I've seen before

When pressed for more information about independent reading and the students' reading in the stations, Janet added the following information. "They are doing well with independent reading and the bag of books time. Sometimes I would say they are doing exceptional, but sometimes our time frame or schedule does not allow for as much independent reading."

Explaining again how she focused more attention on fewer tools and strategies and allowed more time for student practice, Janet described the change in her own practice, which was spending more time on fewer things. She labeled this as taking "baby steps" and ended by saying the steps became "giant steps." Throughout the commentary there was a thread of moving students to independence through a gradual release of her responsibility transferring it to the students. Gathering meaningful information was essential in Janet's work. Over time, she thought about her work and the changes she made to suit students' needs. Speaking of the strategy work, Janet elaborated on independent use. "They help those students become successful for themselves, and now they are more likely to do it. They are thinking about the meaning from reading the book."

As this interview ended, Janet reflected deeply about everything she wanted to say. She reiterated her growing understanding of staying focused, spending more time on fewer concepts, and working intensely to realize meaning. She called this "deep learning." "We have tried again to include all the components: the modeling, the crafting, the explicit teaching, the reflecting, and the actual doing it themselves or independent work. This year is not as rushed as I have said and we have given the children time."

Janet described a vision for Stanmore, the children, and the community, to which she was committed to over the last three years. “I think Stanmore could do some things to improve. The first thing that I am thinking about is uniformity from the kindergarten through the upper grades. The children need the uniformity, the structure from grade to grade and the consistency day in and day out.” She continued with how the second-grade teachers channeled their thinking toward improving through focus on key instructional elements. Ending with the powerful statement, “*reflection is down on the master schedule, as a part of our instruction,*” she concluded that working toward things that have more meaning and enabling students’ independence were key.

I think the key word is focus. We needed to focus on, four elements maybe, how the strategies work for decoding, so that the monitoring for meaning strategy could be utilized. Secondly, the sight words have been another focus. The comprehension strategies are key and we decided less is more. To add to that another focus was on reflection. What we are doing are things that have more meaning and power for the students to enable them to work independently.

When asked to think about her personal reading in the adult book club, Janet shared that empathy for readers who struggled to build meaning knew no age boundary. Janet reconfirmed that for readers of any age time to reflect was essential.

As adults, we were able to sympathize and empathize at the same time with what the students go through as they’re having difficulty in the books. One adult would talk about a particular piece that was meaningful to her in our adult book. Then that would make me think, “Oh yes!” I had a similar thought, and that would help me to think, “Well, hey! That is what is going on in my classroom.” That is what I want to hear in my classroom.

Janet stated that having schema and background knowledge supported conversations that “cemented” readers together. As a community of readers, the teachers assisted each other when they struggled with texts by taking the text apart through conversations. Janet suggested that the same experience happened in classrooms when

we slow down and take a longer time on books. Feeling this as an adult reader, Janet now has the “freedom” to do the same in her classroom work.

We were able to talk through the books using our schema, and we were able to connect. It was particularly true with the Truman Capote books like *A Christmas Memory*. All of that was so powerful for me because I was able to connect so much. We were speaking freely among each other and talking about what meaning it had for us. It kind of cemented us, I think, together as a group of adults.

Understanding the power of background knowledge and a reader’s ability to use schema as a strategy left Janet with a resolution to work diligently to support her students’ connections through different avenues. As she described it, “getting readers to feel it,” allowed for meaning to be constructed.

Okay, schema is a big, big, big deal. I had schema. What a difference it’s made for their learning! I mean if they are there with their feelings and second-graders have lots of feelings, they are very emotional and mostly very compassionate. If they can feel it, they are going to learn it much better. If they can feel it, they are going to learn more.

As the interview ended, the socio-cultural aspects of reading and how they fit within Janet’s beliefs of teaching reading comprehension were revealed through these final words of the interview. “If . . . they [children] are not comfortable in the school environment, and if they don’t feel a part, then you are not going to bring them to a level of the meaning. And that’s very important that those students feel comfortable enough to share in their environment.”

Interview three: Janet’s reflection over the previous interviews and what it means to teach reading comprehension at Stanmore. Janet began by responding to a question about what it means to her to be a reading teacher who teaches comprehension strategies. “First off I would like to say that it is an exciting time to be teaching strategies

to second-graders. I enjoy it very much and I consider it a calling. I consider it a challenge and I also think that it is exciting to do.”

Changes over the last years forced Janet to reflect on her work. She expressed her appreciation of the process for herself as a teacher as well as for her students. Reflection became a seminal component of her work. “It takes a lengthy process to help a second-grader get from the beginning of the year as a somewhat good word re-caller to the point of end of the year when there is great growth in comprehension.”

The school district purchased a basal reading series. When asked how she would connect the comprehension instruction with this series, Janet expressed her desire to hold on to the good work that is already in place.

I will never ever leave my seven strategies for teaching comprehension. They are going to be there in my teaching. I can apply the same process we have always used; for example, if a child doesn't have schema and a connection in that story, their meaning and their understanding and getting into that story is not going to work as much for them. I can apply those same skills and strategies.

Expressing a strong conviction that she was absolutely certain that the strategy work would work with any teaching tool or text, Janet explained how she came to embrace strategy work and why she would continue her instruction of strategies. In this quotation, Janet also explained the strategies and the manner in which she learned them as making a critical difference in her instruction.

I have used the strategies for the last years now, and I have seen what I call outstanding and dramatic results of their understanding and comprehension in ways that children came alive in their understanding of the stories. I have seen what a difference through our adult book club if you don't have understanding and schema. I am using that particular strategy, but the others as well: inferring, synthesizing, and visualizing. What a difference those made for me in the book club!

Stating that she learned to use the strategies over time and through many experiences, especially the adult book club, Janet explained the time to get the strategy work under control.

I think it might be different for every teacher. For me, I'll say it is like the climax last year. I think the adult book club helped me to see that. The more we talked the strategies in the book club, the more I understood and applied them in my classroom. I would have to say four years for me.

When asked to reflect on Debbie Miller's book and what stood out to her as an example of something that helped her with a concept or an idea, Janet responded with the following example of an anchor chart that Miller used in her classroom. "I work on creating a community in my classroom. We build a document we call our promise to each other. We want to become better readers, better writers. Our promise to each other is always on an anchor chart."

Reflecting on how the children progressed during the school year, Janet shared the comprehension scores and the reading levels on the Rigby and the DIBELS fluency growth. "Even when things were crazy we kept on. Now did these children score on grade level on DIBELS? They did not score as well on the final DIBELS test. But ninety something percent of them increased their comprehension score tremendously on what they did read on Rigby and in their DIBELS. We were so excited and our principal brought out Mr. Brookfield, the curriculum superintendent to talk to us at the end of the school year for us to show him and tell him all the great things that were happening in our

classrooms. That happened in all four of our classrooms. We brought the children up and there was a significant comprehension increase.

Janet's teaching philosophy was explained in her own words. "I feel that if students see me excited about what I am doing and if they see me smiling, if they hear me reading, and I model for them, it is going to be contagious for them."

Participant Four: Deanna

Deanna, participant number 4, was the most experienced of teachers at Stanmore. She spent her entire ten-year career at this school. Deanna was involved in the school's effort to use comprehension strategies over many years. She was the only current second-grade teacher at the school when the strategy work was initiated through the *Cornerstone Initiative Literacy Framework*.

Interview one: Deanna's life context. Deanna's becoming a teacher was similar to Janet's journey. This teacher's early life was described in great detail and included reference to an early desire to become a teacher.

I became engaged to my high school sweetheart really early. I continued to go to school, and I graduated from high school in 1970 at the top of my class. We planned to get married after I graduated high school. My parents couldn't arrange to send me to college, but they had arranged for me to go to a business college. I settled for a legal secretary job. I worked for two attorneys. I knew I didn't want to do this forever. I remember going through school talking about what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I wanted to be a teacher. I don't remember when the idea came into my head, but I know I have always wanted to be a teacher. Teachers in my community were respected.

On returning to school to become a teacher, Deanna explained a strong desire to reach this goal and a sadness that her parents did not live to see her achievement. "It was just always in the back of my mind to go to college. If I ever did get to go to college, then I wanted to be a teacher."

After earning her degree in elementary education, Deanna described a timeline of the first years of her career. “I started out in a high poverty school. So I came on board as an aid and followed that one group of children. I stayed in that position for a whole year. So my experiences have mainly been with Title 1 students.”

The daunting task of learning the comprehension strategies stayed with Deanna even after ten years of building a repertoire of strategy lessons. “The experience of finding out about comprehension strategy work at first was kind of overwhelming. I didn’t understand the scope of it.” Deanna expressed her frustration in learning the strategy work in the same terms as other teachers as well as her second-grade colleagues. “That first year was a struggle to help me wrap my head around the work. But I had a really good mentor who helped me get through it. And so we struggled. We really learned a lot that first year.”

Interview two: Deanna’s reconstruction of the past year and comprehension instruction. Deanna explained her passion for teaching second-grade and her belief that learning about children took time and experience, which created a practice filled with expertise based on reflection. “If I have my choice, I wouldn’t want to teach any other grade ever-ever again. I think the more I teach them the more I know about them, and the better I become. Second-graders are becoming very independent and yet, very moldable.” Deanna’s passion for second-grade matched her passion for teaching reading comprehension and for using notable children’s literature. The teachers diligently sought to maintain their self-designed comprehension instruction that was based on their second-grade students. Their effort had begun to impact their content area reading, and they

were interested in researching how comprehension instruction made a difference in social studies. However, change brought new time constraints on their literacy block.

The second-grade teachers were able to keep the multi-layered structure of reading comprehension in the literacy block that was being whittled into short time slots. Even though the time was condensed, the second-grade team held on to the strategy work. “Last year when we were discussing shortening the literacy block into stations, I was adamant that I did not like it.”

Continuing to talk about the comprehension strategy instruction, Deanna stated that work done in previous years was a good fit with the *Alabama Reading Initiative*, but the time periods were now rigid and short for the literacy block components. An assistant principal continued to support the second-grade teachers’ efforts to maintain the literacy block components they considered essential. “We were frustrated in having to change what we were doing, and feeling uncertain. I felt we were all on the same page, but we thought that we might be losing what we had been working on so long . . .”

Deanna described the *Alabama Reading Initiative* and the stress placed on the DIBELS assessment and its impact. The timing to complete the requirements mandated by the testing and benchmarking were consuming the students’ opportunities to read in small groups and talk to the teachers about their reading. A constant struggle to keep the overcrowded schedule was described as frustrating to the children as well as to Deanna. “I am still struggling with that [time] and the need to have some individual time to conference. Some of my children are begging me to let them read to me. They love the guided reading groups because they read to me.”

DIBELS was described in Deanna's conversation as a test that drove joyful reading instruction away. She concluded that the bottom line was that the numbers were reported to the state. In the explanation of the dichotomy between reading fast and reading with expression, Deanna's words affirmed the confusion caused when an assessment does not match the comprehension instruction.

DIBELS takes the enjoyment out of teaching reading because instead of having a conference with a child and having them read to me, the progress monitoring is "Okay, read this passage and here's what you have got to do now and fast. If I tell you where, just skip and keep going and read as fast as you can." Because I have children that are really laid back like myself, they will start reading a passage and just read with feeling and pause if they come to a part they are not sure of. They go back and reread because that's what we've taught them to do. During progress monitoring we say, don't do that. So the bottom line is it's very frustrating, and it's all about the numbers that we report to state.

Deanna shared a concern about how children viewed reading. Her concerns, again, revolved around the time issue and the timed tests the children were required to take.

I want the children to enjoy their understanding of a book and not just think it is a means to an end. I want them to really learn to love reading. Now they're timed...its bam, bam, bam, keep moving, get this done! Not many of the children come up to me and say, "I love reading Mrs. D."

The adult book club provided time for the teachers to reflect about what was happening to instruction, particularly the worry over time schedules. As the pressures mounted, Deanna shared how the teachers felt as they met. "We had such camaraderie. We loved meeting together and venting!" She also described how the book club made an impact on her teaching of reading. Being put in the shoes of her children developed a hyper-awareness within her. From her own reading she learned not to assume that students understood what they read. This description vividly portrayed the impact of the book club on this teacher's comprehension instruction.

I was just thinking about the book club this morning; it is a circle, an ongoing cycle. For years I have taught the comprehension strategies to the children; it becomes more embedded in my psyche. But when we started this book club, we had those really good books, especially *Beloved*, those books where we had to stop and struggle to get the understanding. Well, then I put myself in the shoes of my children. But by being in their shoes now, when I am teaching for the understanding, it has made me feel like I am a richer teacher by making sure they understand it even more so.

In a reminder of Deanna's passion for comprehension strategy instruction, she described how the book club built a desire to offer opportunities for her children that would inspire them as readers.

This past year during the book club I understood something important. You don't know someone until you have walked a mile in their shoes. Well, in this book club I have been walking in the children's shoes. I am talking over a year ago when we started the book club with *Beloved* then with *Night*; those were such hard readings but such powerful reading that I want my students to get this opportunity. I don't know how we got *Beloved*, but, however it was, it was divine intervention as far as I am concerned. I want to make sure that they understand even more so. I don't want them to think that they are just taking up time until the next task. I want them to think about their reading.

The comprehension instruction at Stanmore was difficult to assess since it was based on students' descriptions about thinking. When asked how she assessed the instruction she planned, Deanna replied with clear conviction that she knows based upon her students' reflections. "I see it in the students. I see it in how they are responding to me and how they are getting it. So a lot of it comes from how they reflect. The reflection is my guide. If they are not getting it then, I reflect on: "What have I done, how have I done it, what should I do to change it?"

When asked if there is anything else of import that we should discuss, Deanna thought out loud, "The book club can not do anything but help my teaching of the children. Teachers through the ages do what needs to be done. Right now we are having to stress the surface structure to improve our DIBELS scores; that's what we are doing."

Interview three: Deanna's reflection over the previous interviews and what it means to teach reading comprehension at Stanmore. Opening the interview, Deanna thought out loud about being a reading teacher involved in comprehension strategy instruction. When asked what meaning this held for her, she replied in the following way.

I have loved reading all my life. I was introduced to the teaching of comprehension through *Cornerstone*. It was like a whole new world opened up, things I never thought of, and I struggled for a while. The book by Ellin Keene, *Mosaic of Thought*, was one of the book studies going on at the time. I started thinking about reading in a totally new manner: breaking it down, the different kinds of comprehension, the schema, the questioning, and the synthesizing of thought. Through the years I have grown to love it. I think it is a vital part of teaching a child how to think that should go on with them through their life. The reading is richer, and I have learned to appreciate children's literature in a whole different way.

Deanna discussed the depth of the children's literature and how her children responded to some of the difficult concepts in the literature. Many of the picture books the teachers read aloud had provocative themes written to evoke strong emotion. Often, these books were read aloud many times because the students loved them very much. Deanne explained the children's response to this literature. "A lot of the children that we teach, they experience a lot of dramatic things in their own home life. They seem to be empathetic to some of the literature. It seems to me they understood, and they were extremely interested. I thought they really connected with that. I think they, their writings and their drawings, I think they really made good connections with the books and totally understood and appreciated it. It didn't seem over their heads at all or too difficult for them emotionally."

As a final part of this third interview, Deanna spoke about how she made sense of her reading instruction at Stanmore. She reflected and carefully stated a fear of the

changes ahead. With that fear, Deanna stated that the strategy work was an important and appropriate element of the second-grade teachers' instruction.

I just kind of do what is needed to be done, and I do what is asked of us. We have had some changes, and we keep trying. We have taught these comprehension strategies for several years. They are so ingrained in us that it is so difficult for us if someone broaches a different method, and we are going to be making some changes. We are very fearful of what these changes might hold. These comprehension strategies can't be wrong. It can't be wrong to teach these strategies. It would be very difficult to turn loose of them, of the teaching of them

When asked to expand on the earlier comment of "the instruction cannot be wrong," Deanna responded and tried to explain how a teacher comes to understand within herself that comprehension strategy instruction cannot be wrong. The reflective manner of Deanna's explanation demonstrated that she had thought deeply before speaking on this subject.

I guess you develop, what you would call a sixth sense. This is my tenth year of teaching here. It has evolved, and I feel I have grown so much as a reading teacher. Two years ago when we were talking about stations and blocking off time, I went straight to my assistant principal with another colleague who has been teaching these strategies for several years. We said we can't get rid of this, and we want to still do this: the crafting, the read aloud, the teaching of the comprehension strategies.

The change came with much stress for Deanna and her colleagues who had grown to appreciate the comprehension instruction in new ways since their adult book club experiences. Fear was a word Deanna chose to describe her feelings. Sharing their passion and love for the literature, Deanna affirmed that the books were a part of who the teachers were and what they had become, powerful teachers of comprehension.

We are very fearful. We love our literature that we have, that was given to us through the Teacher of the Year grant. Yes, yes, we love those books, and we do not want to give them up. They have become part of us, part of our teaching, part of who we are! We don't know what is going to happen this year with our new reading series.

Deanna explained that the strategy instruction and learning it as a teacher was complicated. She made sense of her work as a reading teacher through the love of the literature. She explained, "Yes, yes, if the literature makes sense, then we are going to love presenting it. The children are going to love it." She also shared her growth as a teacher and how her teaching meant more than she thought possible. "I have definitely grown as a teacher. My thinking process is so expanded. . . . In the beginning, I thought it would just be an eight to three job! It is not that way when you're really wanting to reach the children." Deanna continued by offering details about the relationship she had with her colleagues.

We know what each other is thinking almost with a look. We have worked together so long and so well together. Emotionally, I think the sharing, the sharing of my thoughts with them, the things I am proud of, the things I'm frustrated about because these are the highs and lows of teaching here.

Deanna reflected about how her reading instruction impacted her life, the people she loved, and who she was as a person. The book club experience described by Deanna went beyond her teaching and created a way for her to connect all the important parts of her life.

My, the last couple of years when we have participated in the adult book club, that has brought the comprehension to a new level from applying it as a teacher and applying it to myself, and to use those same strategies and to vocalize about them with my peers. It has been an eye opener as well as a wonderful experience. One of the last books we studied and discussed was *To Kill A Mockingbird*, which is one of my favorites anyway. But to dive into it as much as we did caused me to look at it in such a whole different way.

Becoming a teacher of comprehension truly encompassed Deanna's life. She lived her reading instruction and made connections through every aspect of who she was as a teacher and the esteem she held for books and reading. Deanna linked her reading instruction to her family in a vivid description. "This spring I had the opportunity to meet a couple of the characters that were in the movie [*To Kill a Mockingbird*]. I was able to take my grandchildren. My grandson had read the book and he had a concept of it."

Deanna continued to describe the impact of sharing her love of reading with her grandchildren. The feeling described by Deanna affirmed a deep connection to reading, books, and the sharing of stories with others. The emotion of the book club experience, as described by Deanna, confirmed that this experience was deeply meaningful to her.

So I had the joy of talking about it, and the joy of explaining what a wonderful experience it was for me to read it with my friends. And so I feel that that is an indirect link of my teaching of reading, my personal reading, and my family. The concept of teaching the strategies and then applying it to myself in the book club, and then sharing that experience with my grandchildren, was just a special, a very special event for me.

Speaking of the adult book club, Deanna explained how the second-grade teachers read differently because of this personal reading experience and the use of the strategies in their instruction. Reading together with the other teachers was special to Deanna and she expressed her fondness for reading, the fun the teachers experienced together, and the appreciation of the strategies as a tool to attend to the nuances of reading.

The book club has enriched my life. I read a lot, and in second-grade we kid around. We don't read a book, all of us in second grade, without talking about the strategies. When something is a pretty wonderful description, we stop and reread it out loud just because it was a wonderful description. Earlier, before we knew about the strategies, we might have just skipped it and just kept on reading.

The adult book club served as a connector for the teachers and supported friendships. The bond among them grew into a special part of their personal lives and went beyond daily work. "The book club really did help us make those special connections, learning that our childhoods were so similar and the humor of the South, and all of the books that we read. It made a much more special bond, I think, in a whole different level for us."

Deanna characterized the reading she did over the last years in the second-grade book club as priceless. The love of good literature and opportunities for talking with her children and colleagues about her reading of books was a source of joy for her. She taught the students how to pick a just right book for their independent reading and shared *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) as her example.

It was suggested that we get some books from the teachers' perspective that were too hard, too complicated, and then one that is what we call a good fit. Here is a book and I read a paragraph from it and I love the story. I introduced it and I told the children, once again about a book I have read and love to read. I showed them the book and they were shocked. They said, "You don't want to kill a bird Mrs. D.!" So there again that book has made an impact on my life, and I am just extending it on to my students. That book will continue to be in my heart and teaching. I see *To Kill a Mockingbird* sitting there on my book ledge and I hold it in my hand to show my children. The teaching of reading strategies and applying them to myself as a grown up and with the adult book club and this book is just priceless.

The book club and the second-grade teachers were important in Deanna's conceptual understanding of who she was as a teacher. Her closing words, "We have a family and I am really proud of our group," spoke to the commitment these teachers have to each other and the Stanmore children.

The second-grade teachers, we are all so different. We have different personalities, but I think we mesh pretty well, and in the book club we respected everyone's thoughts. We respected everyone's opinion. Some days before we got started enjoying the book club, we would have to speak our mind on the frustrations of the day. On a day- to-day basis it can be very weary and wearying. We all face those things together, and we know we are all in it together from the teaching, to the management, to working together. We have a family and I am really proud of our group.