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Reading Workshop & Formative Assessment: Maximizing Quality Reading Instruction

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**READING WORKSHOP & FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:
MAXIMIZING QUALITY READING INSTRUCTION**

by

Katherine Lindner

**A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy
in Urban Education**

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ABSTRACT

READING WORKSHOP & FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: MAXIMIZING QUALITY READING INSTRUCTION

by
Katherine Lindner

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017
Under the Supervision of Professor Dr. Jennifer Mueller

The purpose of this study was to closely examine an elementary teacher's classroom practices in implementing reading workshop, to observe her assessment practices within this model and to see if, when, and how her assessment practices support or enhance constructivist practices within reading workshop. This qualitative case study was designed to examine, in depth, the teaching practices of one teacher attempting to implement constructivist teaching and learning practices in literacy instruction (reading in particular) in her classroom. The findings revealed that teachers implementing reading, in combination with formative assessment practices, can use those practices to enhance and grow students' reading development by using a variety of supports that build strong reading practices. The data also highlighted reading workshop as a constructivist model: where students were engaged in authentic literacy tasks that supported their reading development, where there were continual constructivist assessment practices tied to the learning students were doing, and where the teacher's use of assessment practices was critical to increasing student's awareness of their learning, leading to their independence and reading growth.

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Dedication

To my team, there are so many of you. I could not have realized this incredible goal without you all. I am forever grateful for your kindness and support.

Especially to my core support team: Aidan, Ava and Royce.

- ★ Aidan, your words of encouragement, identifying me as the definition of perseverance, and your kisses on the top of my head when I was working got me through. Love your tender heart.**
- ★ Ava, your hand-written notes reminding me how tough I am and that I can do anything, smiles and kisses on my cheek, they kept me going. Love your ability to know when I need your words of encouragement.**
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In this paper I present a case study of the teaching practices of a second grade teacher who is implementing a model of teaching reading in her classroom called reading workshop. This instructional model is based in constructivism and represents an important move forward in effective reading instruction. As a constructivist model, the children are engaged in authentic tasks to support their development as readers. Within this model, as I will show, continual assessment that is closely tied to the activities and learning of the children help to support its constructivist nature.

Teaching young children to read and write is a very complex task with a long, varied, and contested history in schools. Assessing children's progress and their development in this process has also had a storied history. The related literature tends to be heavier on practice-based theory, and has included very little study of actual classroom practices. Here I argue that a close study of a teacher implementing this model is valuable in highlighting the details and complexities of the work. Further, since close assessment is a natural part of the work, examining the ways that this teacher used assessment practices to support her students' reading development helps us to understand the variety of supports necessary to build strong readers, and to help teachers to improve their instructional practices in the teaching of reading. Additionally, this close study also helps us to understand the challenges that arise for teachers and students in using this complex model, and the ways that the constructivist framework is appropriate in addressing those challenges.

Situating the Study

The development of literacy skills is a universal goal in US schools and occupies a good deal of instructional time and resources, especially in early grades (Allington, 2002; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). While this goal of a literate populace is agreed upon, what is not always clear is the best way to support this learning. A variety of instructional approaches have been identified for the teaching of reading, all using different approaches to varying success. These approaches have ranged from very isolated skills-oriented, prescriptive, and directed models (basal readers), to very naturalistic approaches (whole language) with less focus on scaffolding and building in instructional supports. Modern approaches have focused on what has been known as a “balanced approach” where teachers integrate instruction with authentic reading and writing experiences so that students learn how to use literacy strategies and skills and have opportunities to apply what they are learning. The components of a “balanced literacy” approach include: read-aloud, shared reading, interactive writing, shared writing, reading workshop, writing workshop, and word study. Reading workshop is one part of a balanced approach and will be studied in depth in this study. The first part of this chapter provides an argument for studying constructivist models of reading instruction and offers a brief introduction to assessment as a part of literacy instruction.

Teaching and Learning in a Constructivist Framework

As I will discuss in more detail in a later chapter, I framed my approaches to this study, and to teaching and learning in literacy, using constructivism as my foundation. This means that I believe learning is socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1978), meaning learners are the meaning makers; it involves teachers and students in authentic (Bruner, 1960), student-centered teaching

and learning that are grounded in real-life application (Dewey, 1938). Teaching through a constructivist lens emphasizes the belief that students grow when they are actively, not passively, involved in the context of their lives as learners. Teaching should involve presenting information that invites problem solving (Piaget, 1952) and critical thinking, both of which lead to meaning construction. Such learning comes from teaching that focuses on the learners' efforts to make sense of what they are learning. Constructivist teaching is also based on the premise that students come to learning situations with some kind of background knowledge and make meaning during learning situations by questioning, challenging, adding to, and/or adapting that knowledge. Students make their own meaning based on what they know or think they know. Studying constructivist teaching practices allows educators an opportunity to explore ways in which they can better meet the needs of their students and provide opportunities for them to do this kind of learning.

In teaching young children to read, readers develop in different ways, at different rates; they come to reading experiences with differing background knowledge, and need different amounts of support to develop each of the skills required to become a fluent reader. Because of this, emergent readers need instruction that is personalized to their needs in order to ensure growth, and a constructivist framework supports this individualized approach. In this framework, reading development is rooted in authentic reading tasks that reflect real-life reading to encourage transfer and application beyond classroom walls. Further, constructivist theory purports that learning is social and collaborative, suggesting that children learning to read will need opportunities to engage with peers and with more experienced others. This study will

demonstrate the constructivist tenets—and details—of a reading workshop classroom, specifying the ways in which this approach is effective and supportive of student growth and learning.

As we shall see, assessment of learning is a complex task, and within reading and literacy instruction this complexity certainly holds true. Given the social and individualized nature of learning that I support, assessment is an important part of teaching and learning in a constructivist framework (Wren, 2004). Constructivist teachers encourage students to assess themselves and their learning constantly while also doing this themselves, and then work to teach into what students need next in order to grow. Assessment and reflection help teachers and students figure out what they know and where they are, and then instruction and learning can be matched more exactly to what students need (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). One way to approach studying assessment practices is through the lens of formative assessment. Important to mention about research on formative assessment is that this approach is distinct from other approaches in the following ways: (a) it is used by teachers and students; (b) it takes place during instruction; (c) it provides assessment-based feedback to teachers and students; and (d) its function is to help teachers and students make adjustments that will improve student achievement (Heritage, 2007; Popham, 2008). For these reasons, formative assessment, and its structure, also embodies constructivist teaching and learning practices and supports the theory that undergirds this research study.

The rest of this chapter lays out how this study came to be. It takes teaching and learning in a constructivist framework, and brings in a discussion about reading workshop and formative assessment—two approaches that fit under the constructivist umbrella. Included is the problem

statement, the research questions that guided this study, and the organization of this particular study.

Problem Statement

As I will argue, reading workshop and formative assessment share many of the same constructivist tenets and make for an almost natural coupling. Both approaches share that learning is an active process, learning can be scaffolded and tailored to meet students where they are in learning a particular concept or skill, and learning is authentic in that teachers involve students in the actual practices of a discipline or field of study. Scholars in the field have written extensively to support reading workshop as an effective literacy framework (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 2010; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Routman, 2003; Serafini, 2001; Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2008). However, what is lacking is empirical research on this instructional practice. More specifically, missing in the research is more information and additional empirical studies that specifically explore a closer understanding of the nuances, challenges, and benefits of the actual classroom implementation of reading workshop as an instructional model—an implementation that inherently includes assessing readers.

Moreover, as with reading workshop, formative assessment as a practice has been widely discussed in professional development texts (Greenstein, 2010; Heritage, 2010; Popham, 2008; Serafini, 2001). However, little empirical research has examined its actual classroom implementation. Given this lack of empirical study, the study of assessment practices within reading workshop is very limited.

This study, then, was designed to examine, in depth, the teaching practices of one teacher attempting to implement constructivist teaching and learning practices in literacy instruction

(reading in particular) in her classroom. The purpose of this study was to closely examine her classroom practices in implementing reading workshop, to examine her assessment practices within this model, and to see if, when, and how her assessment practices support or enhance constructivist practices within reading workshop.

Research Questions

Answers to the following questions were sought to address the purpose of the study.

- What does literacy instruction look like in practice for a teacher who is implementing the reading workshop model of reading instruction?
- What is occurring in the classroom when a teacher who uses reading workshop incorporates assessment practices within the reading workshop structure?
- How does the teacher use (or not use) assessments of her students in her instructional decision making for reading workshop?

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six chapters including the introduction, literature review, methodology, study findings, analysis, and concluding thoughts. Chapter 2, the literature review, makes the case for the importance of constructivist practices in literacy (particularly reading) instruction for young children, while also defining reading workshop and formative assessment and reviewing the extant literature related to both. This chapter also discusses the limited literature on assessment practices in reading workshop and other constructivist models of literacy instruction, and lays out the gaps in the literature related both to reading workshop in action and assessment practices. Chapter 3 provides a description of the methodology used in the study and outlines how this case study was organized as well as the approaches taken to data collection,

analysis, and interpretation. Chapter 4 focuses on the findings of the research, presenting the story of the data. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the three major findings in this study. Finally, Chapter 6 describes the implications of the study for current and future educators and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I first provide my working definition of constructivism and then make the case for the importance of constructivist practices in literacy (particularly reading) instruction for young children. Next, I define reading workshop and review the extant literature related to its effectiveness and then demonstrate how reading workshop is a constructivist practice. I discuss why it is an important path forward in literacy instruction. I share the limited literature on assessment practices in reading workshop in order to highlight this gap in the literature. I also define formative assessment as a constructivist method of assessment that could support and enhance the effective implementation of reading workshop. I review the extant literature related to the formative assessment in literacy instruction and lay out the gaps in the literature related to both reading workshop and assessment practices. Finally, I make the case for why it is important to study these practices in an in-depth manner in actual classroom practice.

Constructivism

Definition

Constructivism is both the theoretical framework I adopted for the study and what I believe constitutes good practices in literacy teaching and learning. Constructivism, as it applies to literacy instruction, is an important approach because it helps to define qualities of effective literacy instruction and how it can look when put into practice. Following is the working definition of constructivism that I used to guide my work and my approaches to this study.

As noted in Chapter 1, constructivism is a philosophy and theory of learning that is rooted in the work of such scholars such as Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1952), Bruner (1960), and Dewey (1938). The main idea is that learning is culturally embedded and humans create knowledge via the interactions between their own cognitive processes and cues received from that social context. Overall, a constructivist view assumes that learning is an active, authentic, and social process. Learners are viewed as makers of meaning and knowledge. By reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world in which we live. We each make sense of our own experiences, and learning becomes a process of adjusting to accommodate these new experiences and new learning (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Constructivist teaching fosters critical thinking, student motivation for learning, and student independence (Von Glasersfield, 1989).

Constructivism in the Classroom

In the classroom, the constructivist view of learning can lead to a number of different teaching practices. Given the belief in the social nature of learning, these teaching practices usually mean encouraging and supporting students to be active in their learning, be involved in learning that provokes problem solving, and have regular opportunities to reflect upon and talk about what they are learning and how their understanding is changing (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

In order to provide a contrast, Kim (2005) suggests three fundamental differences between constructivist teaching and other frameworks. First, learning is an active constructivist process rather than a process of knowledge acquisition. Second, teaching is supporting the learner's constructivist processing of understanding rather than delivering the information to the

learner. Third, teaching is a learner-teacher concept rather than a teacher-learner concept. It means putting the learner at the center of all interactions with teaching in the supporting role.

Three critical tenets of the theory of constructivist teaching and learning guided my approach in this study. The first is that learning is an active process. The second important tenet is that learning can be scaffolded and tailored to meet students where they are in learning a particular skill or concept (Jonassen, 1999). This suggests that assessment practices are constructed such that the information is gathered during the learning process and used to directly improve the quality or match of the instruction. In other words, teachers can know where their learners are at any particular time in the learning process, and their instruction can closely match students' needs. The third tenet is that constructivist teaching is authentic; that is, teachers involve students in the actual practices of a discipline or field of study (Jonassen, 1999). This suggests that learning occurs when teachers and students are actively involved in a process of meaning and knowledge construction rather than passively receiving information (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Thirteen Ed Online, 2004). Following, I provide more detail related to each of these three tenets.

Learning Is an Active Process

Constructivist teaching supports students being active and involved in their learning (Bruner, 1960). Via this activity, learners can begin to understand that experiences, in conjunction with a trial-and-error search for solutions or a deeper understanding of a topic or skill, can further learning and make it more sustainable. Harada, Lum, and Souza (2002/2003) noted that the focus should be on learning as a process rather than as an ability to master isolated skills. Given this perspective, learning should be viewed as a social experience, an opportunity to

solve problems and to work cooperatively as part of the classroom routine. This social aspect of the constructivist approach to teaching and learning is rooted in the work of Vygotsky (1978), who believed that the social environment supports and influences a child's cognitive development. Vygotsky's social development theory promotes learning contexts in which students have an active role in their learning. Accordingly, the teacher is not the dispenser of knowledge, but rather a facilitator of meaning making through shared experiences and interactions.

Vygotsky's (1978) framework uses social interaction as its base for all learning and development. This social development theory offers three major themes that support social interaction as a base: (a) social interaction plays a critical role in cognitive development in relation to what is learned and when and how learning occurs; (b) social learning precedes development and learning happens when a student interacts with a "more knowledgeable other" or an individual with better understanding or higher ability level than the learner in a particular task, process, or concept; and (c) the only way to understand how humans come to learn is to study learning in an environment where the *process* of learning is the focus, rather than the product of learning (Lutz & Huitt, 2004). Vygotsky's theory also promotes learning contexts that support students playing active roles in their learning.

Learning Is Scaffolded

Bruner (1960) advocated for the scaffolding of instruction to meet students' needs as a way to individualize teaching and reach students where they are at in order to move them toward their learning goals. Piaget (1952) added that information should be presented in a way that assists children in problem solving. Vygotsky (1978), and his idea of the Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD), suggested that every child is at a specific developmental level that was established as a result of already completed developmental cycles. The ZPD involves the distance between the actual developmental level, as determined by the independent problem-solving capabilities of the child, and the level of potential development, as determined by problem solving with guidance. This relationship between learning and development suggests that learning should be matched in some way with the child's current developmental level for optimal learning experiences. Learning occurs between the point at which a student can perform a task under adult guidance and/or with peer collaboration and the point at which they can perform the task independently. This means that teachers must assume the role of facilitators who assist students in formulating their own levels of understanding and support learners in taking on more active roles in the learning that is matched specifically to their learning needs.

Also, according to Vygotsky (1978), the process of meaning making for the student is more important than just the acquisition of a large set of knowledge or skills. Teachers are responsible for matching learning experiences to a child's developmental level while also providing social interactions during the learning process (Lutz & Huitt, 2004). This can be accomplished by turning learning experiences into opportunities that make meaning through both independent and guided interactions that prepare students for the next stage in their learning. Children construct knowledge by trying new things and experiencing both success and challenges. Making mistakes and encountering challenges are part of the natural process of learning and problem solving. In Vygotsky's framework, children can find that their learning is personal and meaningful, and the discovery aspect of the problem-solving process in turn becomes a catalyst for student learning.

Learning Is Authentic

Dewey (1928) suggested that learning be grounded in real experiences and Bruner (1960) suggested that learning should be authentic and not centered around the teaching of isolated skills. In addition, teaching activities should allow students to discover and construct knowledge. Bruner viewed children as active problem solvers, ready to explore the world around them. He suggested that it is important that learning be structured in a way that enables the learner to grasp the information most readily, and it should be a central component of teaching. Learners construct knowledge for themselves, with each learner constructing his or her own personal meaning along the way. Similarly, Dewey (1928) argued that students must be engaged in meaningful and relevant activities that allow them to apply the concepts they are trying to learn; in addition, children's minds are active and naturally curious. Therefore, when information is simply disseminated and expected to be regurgitated, children lose interest and learning loses its authenticity. Dewey's philosophy of education embraced this curiosity of children's minds by encouraging questioning and testing to discover truth. However, Dewey also felt that children's interests were not to be freely explored without direction. Instead, the teacher's role was to control and foster that curious learning with a specific purpose and enduring goal in mind.

Summary

Teaching through a constructivist lens emphasizes the belief that students grow when they are actively, not passively, involved in authentic learning (Bruner, 1960) that is grounded in real life (Dewey, 1938), within the context of their lives as learners. Teaching should involve presenting information that invites problem solving (Piaget, 1952) and critical thinking, both of which lead to meaning construction. Such learning comes from teaching that focuses on the

learners' efforts to make sense of what they are learning as it fits their developmental level and reflects their context. Thus, effective instruction builds on what children already know and can do, and moves them to new levels of learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

Constructivism is an important way to approach literacy instruction because it offers students an authentic environment in which to learn, practice, and share literacy learning. In the literacy classroom, constructivism supports the inclusion of a variety of methods as a part of the teaching and learning that is happening. Constructivist teaching encourages learners to construct their own meaning by using their own experiences to construct understandings that make sense to them. In this setting, learning is also enhanced by social interactions. These social interactions encourage students to verbalize their thinking and refine their understandings by comparing them with those of others. Another important part of constructivism includes authentic learning tasks. These authentic learning tasks promote meaningful learning and require understanding similar to thinking encountered outside the classroom. Reading workshop is an approach that aligns with these constructivist teaching and learning practices. The constructivist literacy model includes building a community of learners in which they work independently, in pairs and as a whole group, to make meaning of books, apply reading skills and strategies in authentic reading situations, and share what they are learning within social settings.

The next section describes the framework of constructivist learning, the specific teaching strategies of reading workshop, and its use in the learning and literacy processes of young children. The constructivist framework suggests a connection to particular kinds of assessment practices that have the potential to enhance the reading workshop model.

Reading Workshop

The reading workshop is an instructional model that is grounded in the constructivist framework. Scholars in the field suggest that it provides students with effective literacy instruction (Calkins, 2001; Serafini, 2001) and is successful in meeting the literacy needs of a variety of learners. To enact a reading workshop, teachers need to make use of a wide range of strategies that support students initially, and then gradually remove these supports to foster independence. Because all students read and write at their own level during workshop teaching, its design makes this format especially amenable to differentiation, tailoring instruction to meet student needs, (Calkins, 2015) by putting children’s learning needs at the center of instructional decision making. This section first offers definitions of this instructional approach to teaching literacy, followed by a discussion of best practices in using the reading workshop. Finally, I examine empirical research on the reading workshop and how it supports the need to examine further how the reading workshop can be used as an instructional approach. In other words, I will describe the connection of the instructional approach of reading workshop to the constructivist approach to teaching and learning.

Defining Reading Workshop

Most scholars have defined reading workshop in terms of its space, although definitions may vary. This definition of space in the classroom environment is set up or organized to support students in doing specific work, using the structures and components of teaching that comprise the workshop. The following definitions come from leading scholars in the field and offer common threads that support the working definition of the reading workshop as it applies herein.

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) described reading workshop as “a laboratory in which individual students are busily engaged in reading that reflects real life; that is, they are reading in ways that match what readers do all their lives” (p. 41). In the reading workshop model, the

teacher presents a literacy concept or skill, provides time for students to practice that skill, and gives time for students to nurture the love of reading authentically. The workshop provides a time for students to learn about how texts work and how to interact with texts in various ways. Reading workshop builds a community of readers, with students receiving the teacher's solid foundational instruction, peer support, and an opportunity to interact with each other to develop strong literacy skills and savor books on a daily basis.

More specifically, Atwell (1998) asserted that the reading workshop puts books into students' hands instead of only teaching them isolated reading skills. She felt this not only changed attitudes about reading from negative to positive, but also helped to create lifelong readers. According to Atwell, the workshop includes the major components of a mini-lesson in which the teacher gives students a small important lesson about a reading skill or strategy, offers choices in reading materials and reading time, establishes a literate environment, and conducts individual conferencing and small group meetings. Thus, the workshop is a teaching model that allows students to enjoy and effectively improve their reading. "Reading workshop is a great place for kids to practice comprehension, build fluency, acquire vocabulary, and develop critical literary eyes and ears" (p. 138).

Similarly, Routman's (2003) definition includes an understanding of a balanced reading program that supports students as they develop their ability to read, write, speak, listen, think, and grow into literate people. This definition acknowledges that "all aspects of reading and writing, receiving appropriate emphasis and guided contexts are used to help readers become critical thinkers, independent problem solvers, self-monitors, self-evaluators, and goal setters" (p. 15). The reading workshop, then, serves as a framework for reading instruction that

provides students with a supportive, balanced environment involving them in authentic reading experiences that focus on their unique strengths and needs. The basic philosophy behind reading workshop centers on allowing students to spend extended time each day in reading authentic texts that interest them and presenting opportunities to discuss what they read. Reading workshop gives students time to choose books, read, think critically, and interact with others. They become responsible for their own learning and interactions with teacher and peers by setting goals, tracking progress, and assessing personal success. A classroom structure that accommodates the reading workshop creates a supportive community that fosters diversity, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Routman, 2003).

Adding to the multilayered aspects of reading workshop is Sibberson and Szymusiak's (2008) view that in an authentic reading workshop, students begin to live their lives as readers and thinkers. They learn together as a community and share in the joy of reading as they broaden their experiences with texts and newly developed skills for understanding them. According to Sibberson and Szymusiak, reading workshop transforms all students into passionate readers because there is a place in the workshop for every kind of learner. Teachers facilitate this transformation by the types of instructional decisions they make during reading workshop that support readers because they have come to know their readers so well. Sibberson and Szymusiak also emphasize the need to assess the reading workshop by gathering such evidence as changes in thinking, student artifacts presented on reading experiences, and insights students express about their reading process.

An important consideration in the definition of reading workshop is what Serafini (2001) pointed out, that a reading workshop is not a program or script to follow—meaning it is instead

dynamic instruction based on student need and matched to that need in content and delivery. It is an organizational framework for reading instruction and authentic reading time, and it involves a structure to provide reading instruction within myriad learning experiences and interactions. It involves the teaching of comprehension strategies within the context of reading. Serafini also echoed other definitions in calling the reading workshop an opportunity for students to read and explore texts independently and with others, but emphasized the teacher's roles in sharing and guiding reading instruction as well as instruction for decoding and understanding text. According to Serafini, several pedagogical principles within a reading workshop are important: (a) readers need time to read and discuss texts; (b) readers can access a wide variety of quality reading materials; (c) readers have choice in what they read; (d) readers experience informative responses to their efforts from both peers and a more knowledgeable other; and (e) quality demonstrations of literate behaviors emerge from the process.

Finally, Calkins (2010) stressed the structure of the reading workshop as part of its definition. The structure is deliberately kept simple and predictable, and students can approach any day's reading workshop "as artists approach a studio or researchers approach a laboratory, planning to continue with their important ongoing work" (p. 14)—in other words, in authentic ways. The workshop model aims to ensure that students receive targeted instruction and are given significant amounts of time to practice their learning during the independent reading portion of the reading workshop (Calkins, 2001; Serafini, 2001). The bulk of time in a reading workshop is spent reading in the fullest sense of the word: reading, imagining, thinking, recalling, questioning, talking, writing, reviewing, comparing, researching, and reading some more. Each day, students draw on a repertoire of skills, tools, strategies, and habits that continue

to grow and become refined through mini-lessons, conferences, and small group instruction. Instruction is varied to meet student need, embracing the constructivist nature of teaching and learning.

According to Calkins (2001), the “mini-lessons” are usually quick demonstrations of a powerful reading skill or strategy—a way for readers to handle a challenge or elevate the level of their reading work. The mini-lessons are intended to help students in their ongoing future work, not only in their daily activities. After completing a mini-lesson, the students turn to their ongoing reading work—their self-chosen, “just-right” books appropriate for their need and level—and settle down to read. During this reading time, each reader does specific work, which is determined in part by assessments and one-to-one and small group teaching, and in part by the cumulative impact of the mini-lessons. The simplicity and predictability of the reading workshop, according to Calkins (2010), are important “precisely so that teachers are freed from constant choreographing and are able to observe, to listen, to assess, and to teach into each students’ zone of proximal development” (p. 16).

In sum, the above definitions have highlighted common threads that served as my working definition of the reading workshop for this study. Scholars have suggested that the reading workshop requires teachers to have a specific sense of the environment in which students are situated and supported. The workshop has been termed a laboratory (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001); a framework for reading instruction (Routman, 2003; Serafini, 2001); a community of readers (Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2008); and an environment analogous to an artist’s studio (Calkins, 2010). There is as well agreement that the work done in the reading workshop needs to reflect reading done in the “real world.” The term *authentic* was also frequently used when

defining the reading workshop (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Serafini, 2001; Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2008). In addition, the major purpose of this environment is to provide a space to practice real-world reading so that students will become lifelong independent readers. Finally, Sibberson and Szymusiak (2008) introduced the important component of assessment to discuss how teachers' instruction during independent reading should be based on data and matched to student needs; this is consistent with constructivist teaching and learning practices in the individualization of the instruction. By using assessment to gauge where students are at, their learning instruction can be scaffolded to support their specific needs.

Thus, for the purpose of this study, my working definition of the reading workshop was that it provides an interactive structure allowing students to learn reading skills and strategies authentically, in short focused mini-lessons, with time to practice what they learn in books that are appropriate for their needs. Additionally, there is also a built-in assessment component that allows students to evaluate their own progress as well as teachers to evaluate students' progress into becoming independent, lifelong readers.

Effectiveness of Reading Workshop

In this section, I discuss reading workshop as a constructivist method of literacy instruction. I highlight what empirical research has said about this instructional approach, including components of its effectiveness in the classroom.

Although many teachers and districts utilize reading workshop as their instructional model, only a few large sample or longitudinal empirical recent studies have documented the effectiveness of the reading workshop approach. However, within the extant literature, we do find self-report studies where teacher/researchers have reported on reading workshop from their

own classroom experiences or through case studies. These studies do suggest that reading workshop is effective in providing many benefits to students participating in this environment, although the body of literature is limited. Given the limited number of studies, there are gaps (that I point out) suggesting that further study of this model is warranted.

A review of this empirical research reveals several important key points to consider about reading workshops, which also support the scholars who have defined reading workshop. First, the literature suggests that reading workshop is an effective method of increasing student comprehension (Blake, 2006; Lause, 2004; Mitev, 1994; Streeland & Eischens, 2014; Thomas, 2012; Towle, 2000; Williams, 2001). Second, it can be effective in increasing teachers' confidence in and ability to meet the needs of all students (Reutel & Cooter, 1991; Towle, 2000; Williams, 2001). Third, authors have indicated that reading workshop can be applied to a variety of populations, including students with learning disabilities and students of low SES, and produce positive results in reading for these populations (Blake, 2006; Shatzer, 1996; Williams, 2001). Fourth, the literature suggests that reading workshop has a direct effect on students' attitudes toward reading in addition to increasing their engagement in and motivation to read (Lause, 2004; Reutel & Cooter, 1991; Taylor & Nesheim, 2000; Thomas, 2012). Each of these key points is discussed in greater depth below.

Reading Comprehension

Research has suggested that the use of the reading workshop model can have a positive impact on reading comprehension, an important component of effective literacy instruction (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 2010; Routman, 2003; Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2008). For instance, Towle (2000) found that by using reading workshop as her primary approach to literacy

instruction (which included regularly conferring with students about their reading), students' reading comprehension, along with her knowledge of how they were progressing as readers, increased. Her workshop consisted of five key components: focus lessons, teacher sharing time, student self-selected reading and responding time, student sharing time, and teacher conferencing with students and setting goals with them. By implementing reading workshop, as described above, Towle found that this approach provided her with a framework that included time to meet with students in conferences and review their written responses to their reading. This then gave her more information to help her meet the unique needs of her students, including how they were comprehending what they were reading.

Some studies (Blake, 2006; Lause, 2001; Thomas, 2012; Williams, 2001) specifically examined the component of reading comprehension within reading workshop as one of their study indicators through pre- and posttest scores using standardized assessment tools. Students in the study classrooms were assessed on these measures, participated in reading workshop instruction, and then were reassessed afterwards. For example, Williams (2010) used the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, the Metacomprehension Strategy Index, the Names Test, and an interest inventory; Blake (2006) used the ELA Regents Exam and the Weschler Individual Achievement Test. In both of these case studies, Williams and Blake worked with struggling readers and utilized reading workshop as an intervention with small groups. Both studies showed an increase in students' reading comprehension as a result of their participation in reading workshop, thus illustrating reading workshop as an effective model of instruction when used with a small group of students.

In two other studies, researchers used classroom observations and student interviews to provide evidence of improvement in comprehension skills. Lause (2004) implemented reading workshop with her middle school students and reported that by using reading workshop, her students improved in many areas including reading rate, motivation, and comprehension. As she noted, at the beginning of the year, 14% of 19 ninth grade English students were reading fewer than 15 pages per session and struggling consistently through each session of reading workshop to stay motivated to read and understand what they were reading. By the end of the year, only 2% were still in this category. Thomas (2012) followed two teachers who implemented a reading workshop as their new methodology to teach reading to all six of their seventh and eighth grade classes. Both grades were given a choice in the books they read and received large amounts of time to read. The students responded to their texts in various ways while their teachers facilitated this process and conferred with them to address individual reading needs. Students still received important skills instruction, but were able to practice those skills in their self-selected reading material. The data, collected through interviews and classroom observations over 8 months, revealed that implementing the reading workshop increased students' motivation and comprehension and provided opportunities for authentic learning experiences. In both cases, we find that the implementation of reading workshop had a positive impact on the reading comprehension, among other skills, of their students.

Mitev's (1994) study showed improvement in the comprehension skills of middle school students in the reading workshop classrooms she studied. She compared Stanford Achievement Test scores across 2 years of instruction. In Year 1, both groups of students received whole language reading instruction, an approach to literacy instruction focusing on meaning and

strategy instruction. In Year 2, one class received whole language reading instruction and the other class participated in reading workshop. Pre- and posttests of comprehension skills were conducted using the Stanford Achievement Test, and both years of students, overall, showed an increase in student comprehension. However, what is important about this study is that Mitev further compared results across 13 quartiles of scores and found that the students in the quartiles below 25% showed greater improvement if they were in the reading workshop classroom. This suggests that the reading workshop method can improve comprehension skills, especially for struggling readers—an important element that will be discussed in a later section.

In sum, these studies showed that through conferring with readers and through pre- and posttest scores, utilizing reading workshop can have a positive effect on students' reading comprehension, including struggling readers. One visible limitation of this research was the multiple studies that looked at reading workshop implementation with a small group of students. In these cases, the teacher would have more individualized time with students because of the small group size, making it more likely scores would go up or reading growth would be present. Finally, assessment practices were not mentioned as a part of any of these studies, making it difficult to interpret how assessment was a part of their reading workshop implementation. In the next section, I discuss the literature as it pertains to student centeredness.

Teaching and Learning Are Centered on the Student

Some studies have indicated that the structure of reading workshop can allow for instruction that is individualized and matched to student learning needs. These studies showed learners being put into the center of instruction and then how they can construct meaning as they learn. As Bruner (1960) noted, when students are placed at the center of the learning process, it

allows instruction to be individualized to their needs and for students to be involved in the learning process and in personalized goal setting. As a result, we see that the teachers in these studies were also able to observe their own growth and confidence in understanding students' learning needs; thus, they were able to meet student learning needs more effectively.

Reutel and Cooper (1991), for example, set teachers up with four criteria to follow when implementing reading workshop in order to explore ways teachers could use the structure to help them individualize instruction and ensure it was student-centered. In the study, during the reading workshop, teachers had to make sure that (a) students had ownership over their time; (b) the classroom environment and daily routine encouraged reading as a primary activity; (c) the teacher explicitly communicated the importance of reading; and (d) there were regular opportunities to demonstrate reading strategies, share the reading process including responding to books, and evaluate individual reading progress. Reutel and Cooter examined reading conferences with students, through observations of them and discussions with teachers, student response logs, and literature response groups. The findings revealed that by following the four criteria, along with meeting with students on a regular basis and studying student logs and group work, the teachers could use all of this information to make sure instruction and daily reading opportunities were matched to student needs; moreover, they could make sure that students were put at the center of instructional decision making. Teachers reported an increase in students being involved in taking control of their own reading instruction and success—an example of the students putting themselves at the center of the learning taking place. Students taking responsibility for their own learning is an important part of constructivist teaching and learning.

Mitev (1994) conducted a series of teacher interviews at the end of a 2-year study of teachers who were all using the reading workshop model to deliver their reading instruction. Through these interviews, Mitev discovered that the teachers reported an increased awareness of students' needs, increased confidence in meeting the needs of all learners, and a perceived belief that providing students with more access to literature and allowing them to choose their own books increased academic success. By having an increased awareness of what students needed and through an increased confidence in being able to meet students' needs, teachers were then able to put students at the center of their instructional decision making. Teachers were confident knowing that students could follow through and that the instruction they were providing was matched to what the students needed. Student centeredness is an important tenet of constructivist teaching and learning.

Similarly, Towle (2000) and Williams (2001) concluded that giving students time to read where they had choice and ownership over what they were reading was key to their success in the classrooms they studied. Additionally, in these classrooms, the teachers were conferring with students on a regular basis and setting goals with them. These student-centered practices allowed the teachers to meet the unique needs of their students. Keep in mind that these two studies also showed improvements in reading comprehension, which supports the ideas that the organization of reading workshop was key in its effectiveness.

In sum, the structure and implementation of reading workshop play significant, successful roles for teachers and students. In a classroom built on constructivist practices, the environment is very important as a means to ensure scaffolding and the ways that the environment is structured; this, in turn, ensures that students and student needs are located at the

center of instructional decision making (Bruner, 1960). In all of the studies investigated, teachers found that by putting students at the center of instruction and having adequate time to read, positive results occurred.

One limitation of these studies was that although the studies reported studying response logs, conferring with students, and participating in student goal setting, there was little mention of how teachers used any data they collected to make instructional decisions. These studies focused more on the overall implementation of reading workshop as a model, not on the intricacies of implementing to include data-driven decision making in order for student-centered instruction to happen.

In the next section, I discuss studies that showed how reading workshop supports a variety of student populations. Classrooms are made up of students at differing levels needing differing amounts of scaffolding to help them learn new skills and strategies. Constructivist classrooms adapt instructional delivery and content in order to match the variety of student needs present in the classroom.

Variety of Student Populations

Some studies indicated the efficacy of reading workshop in meeting the needs of a variety of learners. When students are placed at the center of instruction, which is supported via the reading workshop model, the opportunity to meet the needs of a variety of learners should be greatly enhanced. This occurs when the teacher can better understand what each student needs and then instruction can operate more effectively to support the students' construction of meaning on their own. Connected to the feature of reading workshop to offer instruction that is student centered and individualized is the literature that highlights this model to be organized

such that it allows for a variety of student learning and targeted instructional needs to be met. In other words, differentiation in order to meet the needs of children who may be struggling (or who have traditionally struggled with literacy development) is made more possible via the model. Following are examples from the literature of studies indicating that targeted populations who may require extra support in reading development can be served well in a reading workshop because the model allows for extra opportunities for one-on-one and small group instruction.

Shatzer (1996) studied the effects of reading workshop on elementary students with learning disabilities. These students participated in an intervention that consisted of inclusion in a regular education classroom during reading workshop across an entire school year. Shatzer collected data from interviews, reflective journals, observations, videotapes, and student test scores in addition to feedback from regular education teachers, special education teachers, and the students' parents. Assessments were also given at the beginning and end of the study to determine the effects. The results indicated that the students increased their reading ability by at least one grade level, thus suggesting the effective support reading workshop can provide struggling readers, particularly because of the use of scaffolding that each student might need.

Similarly, Blake (2006) focused on understanding how the workshop model in both reading and writing was an effective approach with low-achieving and low-SES status students struggling in 11th grade. The effects of the model were measured based on the students' performance on the ELA Regents exam and the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test which measured reading comprehension and writing skills. Based on pre- and posttest scores, the performance of all students improved on both assessments, showing a connection between

improved student achievement because of the workshop model and positive teacher reactions to its use as an instructional approach to literacy instruction.

Williams (2001) also focused attention on struggling students through the use of reading workshop in her middle school classroom. She used pre- and posttest scores on standardized measures which showed growth in all eight of her most struggling readers in reading attitudes as well as reading skills and strategies.

In sum, these studies supported the idea that reading workshop can be applied to diverse populations to support their reading achievement, highlighting the positive effect this model can have for readers. As mentioned above, with the studies that focused on reading comprehension growth, one limitation was in the measures these researchers used to show growth. Standardized test scores do not assess readers in a way that reflects how they participate during a reading workshop. This leaves a disconnect in the understanding of what students are actually doing in the classroom and how the instruction is specifically supporting their achievement. Further, this type of assessment is not constructivist and is only being used as a model evaluation method for the study to show the overall efficacy of the reading workshop model. What we are missing from these studies is insight into how situations of constructivist assessment practices implement appropriate scaffolds and support to address the ability of the students to guide their own learning. Although there is one elementary school example, the others, as with most mentioned in this literature review, are middle school studies. This makes it hard to know if the same results would occur in an elementary setting and if there would be particular important nuances to understand, given the developmental levels of the students.

In the next section, I discuss studies that show an increase in student motivation as a result of reading workshop. With an increase in student motivation, students can be more invested in their learning and in the efforts they put forth. Student ownership over their learning, motivation towards improving on their learning goals, and making meaning in authentic learning situations can improve students' reading abilities and progress.

Student Motivation

The empirical literature on reading workshop reflects how the reading workshop can affect attitude change in students by helping them develop higher motivation for reading and a deeper love of reading. This important implication illustrates that the reading workshop offers the potential to engage students and help them become more invested in their reading, thus having a likely impact on student achievement.

One key classroom study by Lause (2004) provided evidence from her classroom practices over 4 years of reading workshop implementation. She reported on data gathered from student reading interviews in order to use evaluation methods to show the efficacy of the model for this particular component. Data indicated that before implementing reading workshop, 65% of her students did not see themselves as readers, and only 10% could articulate what made a book enjoyable for them. After implementing reading workshop, 95% of her readers saw themselves as readers, had a clear sense of their reading tastes, and had compiled a list of books they wanted to read. This suggests students had authentic choice and ownership in what they read—an important tenet of constructivist teaching and learning. By giving students time to read and choice in what they were reading, along with skill and strategy instruction and regular conferring with them, students wanted to read more. This increase in their volume of reading had

an impact on their reading test scores, but more importantly it helped them foster identities as lifelong readers, highlighting the student ownership and authenticity of constructivist teaching and learning practices.

In a similar fashion, Thomas (2012) and Streeland and Eischens (2014) conducted research that revealed, through pre- and posttest data, observations, and conversations with students, that by giving students choice in the books they read and large amounts of time to read, their motivation, attitudes about, and engagement in their reading increased.

These previously identified studies illustrated the idea that reading workshop can be connected to an increase in motivation to read and a love of reading via the reading workshop model of instruction. However, a limitation to these studies was that they examined results of student motivation through pre- and posttest data that were not necessarily reflective of the specific classroom activities that garnered the motivation in the first place. With an increased motivation to read and by reading more, teachers could potentially be afforded more opportunities to lift the level of students' reading work and have them practice their new learning in authentic reading situations.

Summary

Reading workshop is an instructional model that has been demonstrated by the available literature to be effective and important in ways supported by constructivist theory. This research is an important starting place to provide the support for reading workshop as an instructional model. However, the research also leaves us without a deeper understanding of the actual classroom practices that led to its effectiveness. As I have discussed, reading workshop can be challenging to implement, and an examination of how its constructivist practices actually operate

would be important. It is certainly the case that the available research is limited in depth and scope, especially at the elementary level. Additionally, most of the studies available on reading workshop have focused on the implementation of the workshop model, but contain limited information on the instructional elements of reading workshop and connections to within-model assessment practices. Studies are mostly focused on demonstrating the efficacy of the model, which then excludes any discussion about challenges or related cautions and how these were addressed in the classroom practices. Furthermore, this leaves out making connections to how assessment is used within the model, and potential related challenges, to support students' authentic meaning making and achievement.

The practical literature on reading workshop clearly supports particular assessment practices within the model. Moreover, an overall constructivist approach provides the case that within-instruction assessment practices are important in developing appropriate scaffolds, matching instruction to student need, and providing opportunities for students to set goals and build independence. In addition, it encourages learning growth to occur within social interactions with peers and adults.

Next, I will identify an approach to assessment that fits well with how assessment is approached in reading workshop and within constructivist classroom approaches. This approach is not specifically connected to reading workshop in most of the literature; however, I argue it can be a useful framework both to better study assessment within constructivist classroom practice and to support teachers in enacting this type of literacy instruction. I also propose that the literature on formative assessment can be useful in this endeavor.

In this next section, I transition to a discussion on assessment. Research on reading workshop supports assessment as a part of reading workshop. Reading workshop has the space (Atwell, 1998; Routman, 2003) for a built-in assessment component that allows teachers time to evaluate students' progress, promote independence, and provide instruction that is matched to student need (Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2008). Assessment, primarily formative assessment, will be the focus of the next section of this chapter.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is also an approach to assessing children that is grounded in the constructivist framework. Most scholars have defined it as a continuous cycle of observing and assessing students that is embedded within what is already happening in the classroom (Heritage, 2007; Popham, 2008). Scholars have also suggested that constructivist assessment practices can be used to close the gap between what students already know and what they are trying to achieve. Formative assessment embodies constructivism by taking place in authentic ways, during authentic learning times. It is also rooted in social interactions and active involvement, on the part of the teacher and student, within the process. This section first offers definitions of this assessment approach, followed by a discussion of best practices in using formative assessment in the classroom. I then connect this instructional approach to the constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Finally, I examine empirical research on formative assessment and how it supports the need to examine further how formative assessment might be connected to and used within reading workshop. I do this in order to show how formative assessment supports the constructivist nature of reading workshop and, if used together more intentionally, could enhance student learning.

Defining Formative Assessment

While definitions of formative assessment vary, most scholars have defined it in terms of its ongoing and cyclical nature—that is, how teachers engage in a feedback loop with students in order to more closely support teaching and learning that is more specifically connected to student need. The following definitions come from leading scholars in the field and offer common threads that support the working definition of formative assessment as it applied herein.

Heritage (2007) defined formative assessment as “a systematic approach to continuously gather evidence about learning. The data are used to identify a student’s current level of learning and to adapt lessons to help the student reach the desired learning goal” (p. 141). In the formative assessment process, both students and teachers are active participants in an effort to understand their learning goals, how they are currently achieving in relation to those goals, and what steps they need to reach those goals successfully.

Sadler’s (1989) foundational model of formative assessment characterized formative assessment as a type of feedback loop that could be used to close the gap between a learner’s current status and desired learning goals. He also identified the feedback that accompanies formative assessment as a decisive element in assisting learning. In Sadler’s model, the teacher is responsible for gathering data through formative assessment and then using that information to make changes in instruction and provide feedback to the student about improving learning. The teacher’s role, then, becomes one of not simply using feedback to promote content learning, but also helping students understand the educational goals, develop the skills they need to make judgments about their learning, and be supported in establishing a repertoire of strategies to monitor their own learning independently.

Pinchok and Brandt (2009) called formative assessment the “most instructionally sensitive types of assessments [that] are considered an ongoing activity or process. They are embedded within instructional activities and are linked to current teaching and learning activities in the classroom” (p. 4). Thus, formative assessment can be used by teachers and students as a natural part of ongoing, daily literacy instruction. It is a “planned process in which teachers or students use assessment based evidence to adjust what they’re currently doing” (Popham, 2008, p. 6). Popham similarly suggested that formative assessment is a process involving the use of evaluations that elicit evidence on the degree to which a student has mastered a particular skill, and then allows teachers and students to modify instructional plans and set goals accordingly. Formative assessment also allows teachers and students to reflect on growth and goals, whether related to skills, strategies, behaviors or attitudes.

Another key common element of the definitions is the focus on involving students in the process (Heritage, 2007; Popham, 2008). Both teachers and students are active participants in understanding next steps in teaching and learning, along with building students’ repertoire for monitoring their learning and making adjustments along the way (Sadler, 1989).

Finally, Heritage (2007) and Popham (2008) discussed the important components of data collection and what they can look like in a classroom setting. Observations, discussions, and anecdotal note taking are some of the ways for teachers to gather data within any regular classroom activity in which students might be participating—that is, the data are collected in the moment learning is taking place. Teachers can use the data collected to modify instruction to better match student needs. Students can also use the data to reflect on their progress and set goals to continue moving forward.

In sum, the above definitions highlight common threads that served as my working definition of formative assessment for this study. Scholars have suggested that formative assessment requires teachers to be engaged in a continuous cycle (Heritage, 2007; Popham, 2008) of collecting data, giving feedback (Sadler, 1989), and matching instruction to students' needs all within regular daily classroom routine instruction. As well, there is agreement on the main purpose for formative assessment to foster instruction that is student-centered through continuous interactions among teachers and students.

Effectiveness of Formative Assessment

In this section, I discuss formative assessment as a constructivist method of assessment. I highlight what the empirical research suggests about the instructional assessment approach, including its classroom enactment and implications for both teachers and students.

Although assessment has been deemed part of the workshop model (Calkins, 2010; Serafini, 2001; Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2008) and research has shown formative assessment to be an effective constructivist model, few empirical studies exist that expressly link reading workshop and formative assessment, particularly as a constructivist model. However, with the literature on formative assessment, we do find self-report studies where teachers/researchers have reported on the use of formative assessment from their own classroom experiences or through case studies. These studies suggest that formative assessment is effective in supporting student learning in constructivist ways.

A review of this empirical research reveals several important key points to consider about formative assessment, which are also supported by the scholars who defined formative assessment in the previous section. First, the literature suggests that formative assessment is an

ongoing process that allows teachers to gather continuous data on their students through practices like observations, conversations, quizzes, and anecdotal note taking (Dirksen, 2011; Gorlewski, 2008; Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, & William, 2005; Noskin, 2013; Reed, 2012). Research has also suggested that formative assessment can provide teachers with important information that can help them understand what their students specifically need so they can personalize their instructional practices (Gorlewski, 2008; Frey & Fischer, 2013; Leahy et al., 2005; Noskin, 2013). This personalized instructional approach is accomplished by providing students with clear learning objectives and frequent and meaningful feedback (Dirksen, 2011; Frey & Fischer, 2013; Gorlewski, 2008; Martinez & Martinez, 1992; Noskin, 2013; Turnstall & Gipps, 1996). Second, this feedback supports the involvement of students within the learning process to help them use assessment data to make improvements in their own work (Frey & Fischer, 2013; Reed, 2012). Research has suggested that formative assessment is a student-centered process allowing for more student ownership in their learning, accountability, and independence in their follow-through, and engagement in the learning process. Each of these key points is addressed in more detail in the next section.

Ongoing Process With Feedback

Much of the research suggests that formative assessment is an ongoing process that involves different kinds of continuous data collection. The data are used to provide teachers and students with feedback. This feedback can then be used by teachers to make instructional decisions matched to student need and can also allow students to make improvements in their own work. Within this section, I will detail feedback while also discussing empirical literature that highlights each important part of this process: ongoing data collection with feedback, kinds

of data collection, and instructional decision making. The important feature of student involvement will be outlined in more depth in another section.

Ongoing with feedback. Studies indicate that an important component of formative assessment is that it is ongoing and involves the use of feedback. By collecting continuous data, teachers are able to stay literally up to the minute with student learning and with the analysis of student progress. This allows teachers to be able to match their instruction on an ongoing basis to what students need. Also, coupling feedback with the ongoing data collection, teachers can begin to scaffold some of the responsibility of the learning onto the students building up their autonomy and independence.

In Frey and Fischer's (2013) study, they articulated a clear purpose for each lesson in order to present ongoing writing feedback to high school students. These researchers reported on a profound shift in their assessment practice from occurring only at the end of a piece of writing, to collecting data almost every day in order to give writers feedback as they were writing instead of just at the end. For Frey and Fischer, articulating a clear purpose for each lesson and providing ongoing feedback represented a "profound shift in our formative assessment practices, which were now happening almost every day, rather than just when they submitted a draft writing assignment" (p. 68). They also found that by conducting ongoing assessment, they were able to focus their feedback more on the writer themselves instead of just the piece of writing, an important pedagogical shift important to note here. They went from assessment of learning to assessment for learning, applying one of the major tenets of formative assessment directly to their practices.

Similarly, Noskin (2013) and Gorlewski (2008) focused on collecting continuous data and giving ongoing feedback in a middle and high school reading setting. By offering frequent, ongoing assessments, Noskin noticed that he did not need to rely on one final summative assessment and essay at the end of his literary unit on *The Scarlet Letter* to determine what the students had learned. Instead, he could grasp what they were learning along the way by having multiple check-ins with students instead of just one. As a result, he was able to create meaningful formative assessments to define and support student learning. His revelation led him to understand that the text itself was not the unit; rather, the purpose for reading was to heighten students' understanding of clearly identified skills and content knowledge. In this thinking, then, according to Noskin, the assessments must be formative (vs. fact-driven) and frequent with timely feedback. By providing formative and timely feedback, students were able to demonstrate their understanding over time and how that knowledge was growing.

Similarly, Gorlewski (2008), in her own high-school English classroom reflection, concluded that she needed a way to check in on students' understanding of what she was teaching. In response to this, she worked to apply formative assessment practices by identifying clear learning objectives for students along with quick assessments to check in on students' understanding and application of those objectives. She concluded that without these ongoing formative assessments, misunderstandings would have remained unclarified for too long. She also concluded that with them, she was able to provide timely, helpful, and meaningful feedback to correct those misconceptions. Both researchers concluded that ongoing assessment with continuous feedback allowed for teachers to understand student progress and that by using formative assessments, misconceptions could be more readily corrected.

Tunstall and Gipps (1996), in their study on types of feedback given to 6- and 7-year-olds and how students understood this feedback, stated that:

[f]eedback from teachers to children, in the process of formative assessment, is a prime requirement for progress for learning. Formative assessment is that process of appraising, judging, or evaluating students' work or performance and using this to shape and improve their competence. (p. 389)

Their study highlighted two important points about feedback: (a) it is a part of formative assessment, and (b) it can impact the learning environment in the classroom, including the social and academic climate.

Finally, Dirksen (2011), in her self-reported study, compared how formative assessment in education could play a similar role to the reset button in video games. When a student is playing a video game, he or she can make a mistake, hit the reset button, and start over. According to Dirksen, “[f]ailure is ok as long as it leads to learning. There is a reset button in education. It’s called formative assessment” (p. 31). According to this researcher, formative assessment is typically ongoing evaluations, of many kinds, that are used to inform teaching and learning. More specifically, formative assessments allow teachers to check for understanding and help students achieve mastery by providing feedback to learners about their progress. With formative assessments, teachers can look at data collected with an eye towards giving feedback that is designed for teachers to improve their instruction and students to improve their performance.

Kinds of data collection. Formative assessment ranges from simple to complex in its classroom implementation. Likewise, data collection can take on many formats. Teachers vary data collection methods that are responsive to student learning. Students have a variety of different kinds of opportunities to show their understanding and allow for assistance when

misunderstandings or misconceptions surface. This is important because students are given a variety of ways to learn as teachers align instruction with the diverse needs of each student.

Dirksen (2011), for example, discussed how teachers can use tools on a daily basis as formative assessment opportunities, making the learning process authentic and embedded within classroom practice. This researcher highlighted a variety of formative assessment data collection techniques that were already happening on a daily basis, affirming its authenticity and natural occurrences within regular classroom activities. Within the most simplistic parameters, this includes the tool of simple observation. Dirksen highlighted how looking for “confused expressions and watching closely as students work on guided practice allows [her] to identify students who don’t understand a concept” (pp. 27-28). Moreover, Dirksen identified questioning as a way to collect formative assessment data. This tool provided teachers with information they used to check on student understanding and then immediately redesign instruction to fix misconceptions or enhance that understanding. Assignments and learning activities can also be valuable tools for formative assessment, providing teachers with information they can use to modify instruction and offer students direct and specific feedback.

Some studies (Gorlewski, 2008; Reed, 2012) specifically examined providing clear learning objectives as an effective way for the teacher and learners to mutually concentrate on the results of the data collection, leading to increased feedback. These researchers found that when teachers collected data around these objectives and learning targets, and then provided feedback, it was possible to give an authentic structure to the assessment process. In her study, Reed documented her own journey as a coach for novice middle school teachers in understanding the relationship between clearly communicated objectives and students’ learning

and behavior in the classroom. In stating the learning objective upfront, she found that teachers became more aware of the goal they were teaching their students and were able to establish performance expectations for both themselves and their students in meaningful and clear ways. Doing this also gave teachers access to specific information on what and how to follow up on student learning. Similarly, Gorlewski (2008), with her planned formative assessment opportunities, was able to provide helpful and meaningful feedback to correct any misconceptions she observed for her middle school reading students. She also concluded that formative assessments provided an exceptional opportunity for teachers to collect, analyze, and use data in meaningful ways.

Noskin (2013), in his English classroom study, also mentioned data collection as a highly effective tool. He used journal writing and teacher read-alouds and modeled ways to think about and analyze texts meaningfully as data collection opportunities. Quizzes were also used as a way to check on whether students understood what they were reading along the way. Similarly, Leahy et al. (2005) reflected on their 2-year study where they introduced teachers, during a variety of professional development workshops, to key ideas about assessment for learning. The methods they introduced, similar to Noskin (2013), included a variety of data collection tools. These researchers introduced and tracked teachers as they used methods such as: sharing learning objectives in advance of learning; providing classroom discussions and questioning techniques to improve understanding; giving students with student-friendly rubrics; and using exit slips to assess student understanding quickly. According to these researchers, everything students did was a potential source of information about how much students were understanding, such as “conversing in groups, completing seatwork, answering and asking questions, working on

projects, handing in homework assignments, even sitting silently and looking confused” (Leahy et al., 2005, p. 19). All these researchers found that using a variety of data collection tools improved the use of student data to modify teaching, support student learning, and increase student involvement in the process.

Drives instruction. Studies have shown that formative assessment was an important tool in instructional decision making that was better matched to student need. By using formative assessment on a frequent basis during the learning process, teachers are able to make adjustments in their teaching to put students at the center of their instructional decision making. As a result, teaching is rooted in data and is used to make instructional decisions that ultimately match student need—an important tenet of constructivist teaching practices.

In her classroom reflection, Gorlewski (2008) concluded that using formative assessment allowed her to plan for an ongoing series of mini-lessons and quizzes that were more methodically scaffolded to move students’ learning forward. Similarly, Noskin’s (2013) classroom reflection included a realization that the formative assessment data he was collecting allowed him to plan for instruction targeted to what students directly needed by using data to plan for reteaching and small group instruction opportunities. Also, Frey and Fischer (2013) reflected on their prioritization of assessment practices to make themselves as teachers more actionable toward improving their students’ achievement in writing. They were committed to “making our assessments truly drive instruction by conducting them during writing development, rather than waiting for the final product” (p. 67). These researchers sought to improve their own analysis of student writing for errors and misconceptions in order to reteach the material more effectively and plan for small group instruction. For Frey and Fischer, articulating a clear

purpose for each lesson and providing ongoing feedback represented a “profound shift in our formative assessment practices, which were now happening almost every day, rather than just when [students] submitted a draft writing assignment” (p. 68), making them practices that truly drove their instruction.

Similarly, Leahy et al. (2005) highlighted that teachers who used formative assessment to support learning took in the data they collected, analyzed the data, and made instructional decisions in order to address the understandings and misunderstandings revealed by these assessments. Teachers who used questioning as a data collection tool, for example, listened in on student answers and decided on-the-fly whether or not to quickly review the material again or to just work with the students who did not understand the concept. By using the evidence they elicited through questioning, teachers were able to make instructional decisions that they otherwise could not have made. Moreover, these researchers reported how teachers used observations, questioning, or written responses to elicit evidence of student learning of a concept or skill. Teachers used the data to plan the next day’s lesson as well as determine who they needed to follow up with in relation to specific content. According to these researchers, “[t]eachers using assessment for learning continually look for ways in which they can generate evidence of student learning, and they can use this evidence to adapt their instruction to better meet their students’ learning needs” (p. 23).

Summary. In sum, these studies showed the importance of formative assessment, using a variety of tools, as an ongoing process that is closely accompanied by feedback. By making formative assessment ongoing, academic improvements can be made along the way, misconceptions can be clarified, and more emphasis can be put on student learning and learners

themselves. The research on formative assessment provides possible methods teachers can use to collect data in authentic ways in order to improve their instruction and feedback to match student need. One visible limitation was that although these studies identified ways teachers can collect meaningful data, what was not discussed was what specific changes teachers were able to make, along with how they decided upon that change. Also missing was a discussion of the type of follow-up instruction that was offered to students and what that follow-up instruction looked like in content and format. These limitations make the need for a study of assessment practices important to consider in action, what kinds of decisions teachers can make because of the data collected, and what to include in the type of instruction delivered to students.

In the next section, I discuss studies that illustrate student involvement as an important part of formative assessment. Recall that a constructivist approach suggests that teaching and learning are student-centered and students need to take an active role in their learning, highlighting the potential for a higher level of independence and success.

Student Involvement

Some studies have indicated that an important part of formative assessment is student involvement in the process. Student involvement can raise the level of student progress and independence in the learning that takes place, both important in a constructivist classroom. By offering students targeted feedback during the learning process, students are able to make adjustments in their learning and apply those changes immediately, thus having a direct impact on their progress along with student independence.

For example, one of the goals of Frey and Fischer's (2013) study was to have students themselves use assessment feedback to improve their own achievement based on ongoing

feedback. By giving targeted writing feedback to students along the way, they found that students were able to make changes to their work before submitting their final draft. Students were able to take on more responsibility for taking the feedback they were given and applying it to their work.

Other researchers highlighted the importance of identifying learning intentions up front for students to help them become more involved in the formative assessment process. In her study, Reed (2012) worked with novice middle school teachers in stating the learning objective upfront so that students—and teachers—could establish performance expectations for themselves. Student awareness of these objectives allowed them to guide their work and offered teachers targeted ways to support student learning. This afforded students the opportunity to self-assess, reflect on their progress, and set goals accordingly.

In sum, these studies showed how students can use information from formative assessments to self-reflect, make improvements, and set goals toward which to work. When given feedback, students were able to take on more responsibility by taking feedback and applying it to their work. Also, by being aware of learning objectives upfront, students were able to know where they were headed and use teacher feedback to self-assess and set goals towards these objectives. Student awareness helped to encourage independence in readers through goal setting and follow-through, making them active participants in their own learning. One visible limitation was a lack of description of how teachers actually delivered the feedback to students. Also missing was the frequency of the feedback and whether it was individualized in content and format to meet students' differing needs. This makes it difficult to replicate in actual classroom practice as well as to make the case for more detailed research on actual classroom application.

Summary

There is evidence in the literature to support formative assessment as an approach to assessment in the constructivist classroom. However, some key gaps in this literature need to be considered. First, the amount of research that is available for teachers, especially at the elementary level, is limited. Second, literature specifically related to formative assessments practices within a reading workshop is especially sparse. Both limitations make it especially hard for elementary teachers to visualize what this would look like in actual classroom application and, in turn, to implement some of the concepts. Third, most of the available literature found on formative assessment and its implementation does not go into great depth about the process of data collection, data analysis, and subsequent feedback and impact on instructional decisions. The limited study of assessment processes within reading workshop calls for more study surrounding them. Formative assessment gives us a framework for the kinds of practices that might be occurring and provides an approach to study within reading workshop that can add some theoretical foundation to the practices happening.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I defined the theoretical lens that guided this study and the approaches to literacy instruction that I consider to be most effective. Reading workshop is an instructional model that embodies the tenets of quality, constructivist practice in teaching literacy, and is a model worthy of examination. The empirical literature on reading workshop, while not extensive, highlights the ways that reading workshop is effective, particularly in its ability to offer student-centered instruction that is matched to student need, in order to provide an interactive structure that allows students to learn reading skills and strategies authentically within a socially situated environment, and to incorporate a built-in assessment component that allows students and

teachers an opportunity to evaluate progress and set goals accordingly. The reading workshop literature, however, has been mainly focused on the evaluation of the model in order to provide evidence for its efficacy and effectiveness. As I continue to discuss, implementation of this model can be challenging and a closer study of the model in a classroom to gain insight into how it works “in action” is warranted.

The constructivist approach does, in fact, make the case for particular kinds of assessment practices that support student learning in important ways. The empirical literature on formative assessment, while not extensive, highlights the ways that formative assessment is effective, particularly in its ability to offer continuous opportunities for data collection, reflection, and subsequent instructional decision making. This is based on the results creating instruction to better match to student need, to embed itself into authentic activities already taking place within classroom instruction, and to involve both the teacher and student in the process. Theoretically, quality and focused assessment practices have a strong potential to enhance student learning because they can offer teachers targeted information that can help them match their instruction to student need more specifically. They also offer teachers the ability to collect these data quickly and frequently to stay current and relevant. One of the limitations in the reading workshop literature was that while it alludes to some of these assessment practices, the focus has been to support reading workshop as a model, rather than to illuminate and examine in more detail how assessment practices function in the reading workshop classroom. This kind of study would help to better understand how assessment works within the reading workshop model, but it would also help us better understand the challenges and struggles in this kind of complex instructional enactment.

In order to bolster and frame such an examination, there is an area of study within assessment that derives from the constructivist theoretical base. This area is formative assessment. I have made the case that by looking to formative assessment, we might better understand some of the assessment practices that could occur in an effective reading workshop. While no literature has specifically studied formative assessment within reading workshop with these practices as the focus, the formative assessment literature provides a strong theoretical base for thinking about assessment within reading workshop. I have discussed some of the limitations of the formative assessment research, namely more specifics about what happens after the data are collected, including the kinds of decisions teachers make as a result of the data, the follow-up instruction that might occur, and details about the delivery and frequency of that follow-up. This kind of study would help us better understand not only how the follow-up to the data results can influence instruction and in what specific ways, but also how to better understand the challenges and struggles in this kind of complex instructional enactment.

Constructivism as a theory of teaching and learning can offer educators a theoretical lens through which to approach teaching and learning in a way that emphasizes the need for literacy learning that is: active, authentic, socially constructed, and student-centered. This theoretical lens also emphasizes the need for assessment that is ongoing and occurs within the context of children's learning. While research exists to support reading workshop and formative assessment as approaches to instruction that fit within the constructivist paradigm, a need still exists for empirical studies of actual classroom practice that specifically focus on reading workshop and include assessment as a part of its structure.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived classroom experiences of an elementary teacher implementing the reading workshop structure as her primary approach to literacy instruction and her potential assessment practices during this instructional time. To accomplish this goal, this study focused specifically on the journey of one classroom teacher as she worked to figure out what it means to use or not use assessment as a part of her reading workshop instruction. The methodology included a thorough evaluation of the teacher's actions, justifications for those actions, and her own assessment of her experience throughout implementation of the reading workshop.

Research Questions

My examination was guided by the following questions:

- What does literacy instruction look like in practice for a teacher who is implementing the reading workshop model of reading instruction?
- What is occurring in the classroom when a teacher who uses reading workshop, incorporates assessment practices within the reading workshop structure?
- How does the teacher use (or not use) assessments of her students in her instructional decision making for reading workshop?

Research Design

Research Methodology

Qualitative research, as defined by Patton (2002), involves the researcher attempting to understand the unique interactions in a particular situation. The purpose of qualitative research is

not necessarily to predict what might occur in other similar situations, but rather to develop an in-depth analysis of the characteristics and nuances of a particular condition. Several theoretical perspectives guided the design of this study, including naturalistic inquiry, a constructivist theoretical perspective, and a case study methodological approach.

Naturalistic inquiry. This study followed a constructivist theoretical perspective based on a naturalistic inquiry strategic framework. Naturalistic inquiry allows for a “discovery-oriented” approach that minimizes investigator manipulation of the study setting. It also places no prior constraints on what the outcomes of the research will be (Guba, 1978). Instead, the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally in that it does not have a predetermined course established by the researcher, such as what would occur in a laboratory or other controlled setting. Observations take place in real-world settings and people are interviewed using open-ended questions in places and under conditions that are comfortable for and familiar to them (Patton, 2002).

The ability of qualitative data to describe a phenomenon richly is another important consideration in study design. Because conversation-like interviews as a form of naturalistic inquiry were preferred over questionnaires with predetermined response categories, both the formal and informal interviews conducted with the participant utilized open-ended questions geared towards gathering objective data about the participant’s experiences. Patton (2002) nicely makes this point in the contrast between asking a participant, “Tell me about your experience in the program” *versus* “How satisfied were you? Very, somewhat, little, not at all.” (p. 40). Observation—along with document collection and analysis—also fit into the methodology of naturalistic inquiry because this study was conducted within the natural setting of a classroom

during the reading workshop block of instructional time. Any documents collected were ones that the teacher used with her students during the reading workshop. This approach allowed the formation of a more authentic picture of the actual implementation and practices of workshop teaching, as well as the assessment processes the teacher used to support her teaching.

Constructivist theoretical perspective. Constructivism can be defined as a theory that is based on observation and scientific study about how people learn. It asserts the thinking that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. Guba and Lincoln (1989) presented that constructivism supports the notion that phenomena can only be understood within the contexts in which they are studied. Data that are derived from constructivist inquiry do not have special status; instead, the data simply represent another outlook that can be considered in moving towards consensus and understanding of the phenomena being studied. Constructivist researchers have also maintained that truth is relative, that it is dependent on one's perspective and is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Participants are able to tell their stories and describe their views of reality through them, thus enabling the researcher to understand more fully the participants' actions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The constructivist paradigm also assumes reality, as we know it, is socially constructed through the meanings and understandings that are developed socially and experientially. The impact of the researcher's own background and experiences is accepted and recognized under this paradigm, and constructivist researchers are able to generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings throughout the research process (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) also reported that within this worldview, "[i]ndividuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work.

Meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views, rather than to narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas” (p. 20).

As the researcher, to hold true to this paradigm, it was necessary that I first generate a theory or pattern of meaning attached to the complex experience of the participant with reading workshop and assessment. I relied heavily on the participant’s views of the situation and keenly observed the inner workings of the organically implemented reading workshop. Within a constructivist paradigm, the researcher’s intent is to make sense of the individuals’ interpretations of their world, which are typically formed through their discussions and interactions with others (Patton, 2002). The constructivist lens provided the foundation for this research design, which then supported the three methods of data collection considered critical to this work: namely, semi-structured individual interviews, objective observations, and retrospective document collection and analysis.

Case study methodology. Yin (1984) defined the case study research method as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 23). Consistent with the constructivist paradigm is the research methodology of a case study approach to research design. Rigorous qualitative case studies allow the researcher the opportunity to deeply explore and then describe a phenomenon. Baxter and Jack (2008) suggested that case study methodology allows the researcher to “explore individuals or organizations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs and supports the deconstruction and the subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena” (p. 544). A case study can be defined as consisting of a “bounded system” in which a certain

phenomenon exists and can be studied for further insight or for a better and more complete understanding of that particular phenomenon (Stake, 1988, p. 256). Case studies are appropriate to use when the researcher is working to explain the *how* and *why* of a very specific phenomenon of interest.

The value of this approach is in the in-depth understanding of a given bounded case that can be achieved. Researchers can uncover details of a case's unique circumstances, and the subsequent analysis of results and the impact of the phenomenon of interest can be interpreted according to that set of unique circumstances. "Case studies can be used to define both the importance and impact of immediate interactions between different groups, roles, instructional designs, or other factors in specific situations, depending on study research questions" (Dawidowicz, 2011, p. 7). Case studies have the ability to produce rich descriptions of a phenomenon, and the factors that may contribute to the complexity of the study can often be elucidated (Yin, 2009).

Case study design. This study was a qualitative examination (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) using a single-case case study design. One elementary teacher was very closely observed during the reading workshop instructional block in order to examine the how and why of reading workshop and specifically what happens (or does not happen) with assessment during that instructional block. One teacher in one classroom was observed across an entire semester. The teacher and students were observed in action during the regularly scheduled reading workshop block, which took place on differing days of the week. A total of 12 observation days were spread across the 15-week semester, with exceptions made where deemed appropriate (e.g., to see a process finished, conferences, etc.). Since case studies are an appropriate design when the

research questions seek to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18), interpersonal interactions and teaching decisions were closely examined during this study. I was able to observe what was happening specifically during the reading workshop instructional block of time, which allowed me to describe what reading workshop and assessment looked like if and when they were brought together.

A single-case case study approach was the best approach for this particular study because I was able to focus on one setting and use my energies to observe, question, watch for patterns, and look to identify characteristics of when and if the teacher incorporated assessment as part of her reading workshop. I was also able to look across a prolonged period of time at the same instructor and the same learners as they worked together across a full semester. By focusing on one classroom of students, I was able to observe multiple meetings and decisions made with the same students over time in order to understand what was happening during this time and why. Employing a case study approach allowed me to explore this particular defined case “over time through detail, [with] in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61).

A single-case case study approach also allowed me to go into greater depth with the phenomenon being studied—reading workshop—to include when and if a teacher brought assessment into that instructional time. By having one teacher and one classroom of students on which to focus my observational time, I could, for example, watch and notice what the teacher did each week with her students and gain insight into the complexities of the assessment circumstances and observe the particular details, results, and possible impact of the “if and when” of assessment and the reading workshop. I was able to gain a comprehensive view and

understanding of one teacher and classroom as the reading workshop journey unfolded. Using a single-case case study approach for this research study offered the opportunity to, in the end, provide an understanding of the lived classroom experiences (Patton, 2002) of the participant and her students as related to reading workshop and assessment.

Research Setting

During the time of the study, I was employed as a literacy specialist in one of the elementary schools where I collected data. However, in order to minimize bias, I collected data at a school where I was not assigned to work. This meant that while I was familiar with the literacy practices in the district because of my position, I was not intimately familiar with the teachers or the day-to-day literacy teaching practices in the building where I completed data collection.

This district is home to three other elementary schools. In considering a site for my study, I contacted three of these principals, each of whom I was personally familiar with in some capacity. In each case, I inquired as to their willingness to allow me to observe one teacher on a weekly basis across a semester. I received a positive response and invitation to observe from all three principals. I made my final decision based on school size, under the assumption that a larger elementary school would have available a larger pool of potential participants who fit my selection criteria.

The setting of the research study was located in a suburban, Midwestern school district. The population of this particular elementary school consisted of, at the time of the study, 599 enrolled students in Kindergarten through Grade 6. This population is mostly made up of White middle-class families with a very small percentage of dual-language learners. Less than 10% of the population is identified as qualifying for free and reduced lunch. The class sizes in this district and in this particular elementary school range from 22 to 28 students.

Participant selection criteria. The participant ultimately chosen for this research was a teacher who had been implementing reading workshop in her classroom for at least 2 full school years when this research project started. The district had recently adopted this model of literacy instruction as their “mandated approach” to literacy instruction. Before this approach was adopted, the school district had a variety of balanced literacy approaches to reading instruction, but it did not have a mandatory base program for teachers to follow. Prior to the mandated changes, some upper elementary teachers utilized literature circles as a basis for their reading instruction; some primary classrooms used guided reading groups as the center of their reading instruction; and in other classrooms reading was taught using one trade book for the whole class, with instruction based off the selected text. Leveled books were available for teachers for use to support whatever method of literacy instruction they chose to utilize.

In deciding upon a study participant, the teacher’s vested interest in the adoption and implementation of this specific approach to teaching literacy was a critical factor. As with all mandated curriculum decisions, there are differing levels of openness to change, especially regarding the altering of instructional practices. For the purposes of this project, I considered it important that the teacher be one who supported the mandatory curriculum change. Evidence to support this was provided in the following ways: (a) the classroom library books had been sorted by reading level; (b) at least some portions of the reading workshop model were implemented in that teacher’s classroom the year it was optional in the district; (c) the teacher was identified by her literacy specialist as someone who had aimed for strong adherence to the intended structure of the reading workshop; and (d) the teacher was open to discussing her preferences regarding implementation of reading workshop within her classroom.

Participant recruitment process. The participant recruitment process was initiated by requesting the literacy specialist from the selected elementary school to provide a list of three to five teachers who could be identified as personally invested in the district-mandated curriculum change based on the criteria detailed above. These individuals were then contacted directly and informed of the opportunity to participate in the study. Meetings were then scheduled with those who showed interest, at which teachers were fully informed of the study details. Specifically, the study rationale, the participant's role, and the risks and potential rewards of participation were thoroughly described. Once the participant was chosen—the first teacher to respond after the initial meetings were held—a formal letter of invitation (see Appendix A) was presented. At this point, questions were reviewed, as were protocols and confidentiality documents. Finally, I was able to agree with the participating teacher on a study schedule (for observations and interviews) that was convenient for her.

Participant's professional history. I conducted an initial interview which gave me an opportunity to gather some background information, such as how many years the participant had been teaching and for how long in her particular grade level at the time of the study. More importantly, I was able to gather information about the participant's philosophy and thinking about workshop teaching. This first interview also gave me the opportunity to explore the story behind the participant's experiences with workshop teaching. Subsequent interviews and informal conversations gave me scheduled opportunities to debrief the classroom observations that had taken place, ask clarifying questions about what was observed, and have the teacher talk about highlights and challenges related to the observation time. These interviews and informal conversations gave me a chance to get to know the thinking and planning that went into workshop teaching that I could not observe while the teacher was in action.

At the time of study initiation, the participant ultimately chosen, Hope, had been a teacher for 16 years. After college, she was immediately hired in an urban district to fill in for someone who was not coming back. She was placed in a classroom setting where she would be supporting students with emotional and behavioral difficulties, though she did not have background training or experience with these types of students. After 18 months, she was transferred mid-year to serve as an emergency replacement for a teacher who left without notice. Hope now found herself in a regular education classroom full of first graders who she said were “looking at [her] like, ‘What are you doing here and when are you leaving?’” (Interview #1, 10/5/14, p. 1). At that time, there were no leveled books and no math program, but there was a basal reader¹ that she was told she must follow. By Christmas of the following year, Hope had decided that this placement was not what she was looking for, and she decided to leave at the winter holiday break. For a short time, she worked as a substitute teacher in a suburban district closer to her home, and finally interviewed for and was offered a second grade classroom position for the following year. At the time of the current study, 14 years later, Hope was still in this same second grade position.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection Methods

In qualitative research, the term *validity* refers to the trustworthiness of the study findings, meaning whether the findings accurately reflect the situation, are supported by the evidence obtained throughout the process, and whether the evidence was collected and analyzed in a valid way that minimized bias. Many qualitative researchers use the method of triangulation to establish and reconfirm the validity of their work. This is accomplished by analyzing a

¹ Basal Reader: grade-leveled series of textbooks used to teach reading and associated skills to students.

research question and the data from multiple perspectives (Patton, 2002). This approach was taken in the current study, via the collection of various types of qualitative data. Interestingly, Patton suggested that it is a common misconception that the goal of triangulation is for the researcher to come to a consistent conclusion across the data sources. Instead, he argued that these inconsistencies should be viewed instead as an opportunity to uncover deeper meaning in the data. The collection of multiple data sources—which for this study included semi-structured individual interviews, informal interviews, observations, and classroom artifacts—provided an opportunity to triangulate the data, thus enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of the study results and conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Semi-structured individual interviews. Formal interviews took place twice over the course of the study—in September before the study began and once in the middle of the study. I set a formal interview at the midpoint so I could have a checkpoint for the teacher and for myself to discuss any questions either of us had and to give us an opportunity to evaluate how the research was proceeding and whether any modifications needed to be made. After the second formal interview, I decided more informal conversations directly following the observation periods would be a more appropriate approach to data collection. This allowed me to ask questions about decisions that were just made and student-teacher interactions that had taken place only minutes before (see Appendix G for schedule). This allowed for more accurate answers to the interviews because the process and events were fresh in Hope’s mind and she could more vividly remember the details that she might have forgotten across days or weeks. This strategy provided a clearer picture of why Hope made particular decisions as she implemented the reading workshop model. Therefore, in addition to the two formal interviews, seven such informal interview “discussions” were captured throughout the semester and were

documented through field notes. I did not audiotape informal conversations in order to keep them informal and conversation-like, especially since we were discussing teaching decisions Hope had just made. I wanted her to feel comfortable in speaking as freely and openly as possible, and I felt that having those conversations without taping them would make the experience as low-pressure as possible.

The formal interviews were audiotaped. Each was approximately 1 hour in length and followed a protocol that consisted of several key questions, which helped to define the areas to be explored (see Appendix H for schedule). However, I designed the interviews to be flexible, which allows either the interviewer or interviewee to diverge along any (relevant) topic in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail. This approach facilitates the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been recognized as pertinent by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

As Patton (2002) suggested, the purpose of the research interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters. Choosing to interview, formally and informally, as a part of this research project was essential because the question guiding this study was primarily focused on gaining insight into and understanding of what was occurring in Hope's classroom within the reading workshop structure. The purpose of the interviews was to use conversation, discussion, and questioning to capture insights into this teacher's decision-making and teaching practices with her students. With qualitative research interviews, the researcher tries to understand something from the participant's point of view and uncover the meaning of the participant's experiences. By interviewing the participant and gathering rich interview data, I was able to do this specifically through the lens of the questions

guiding this study. I wanted to know what Hope was doing to determine what her students needed, why she met with certain students and not others, and what she based her instructional decisions on in guiding her reading workshop. These formal and informal interviews allowed Hope to convey to me teaching situations that I observed from her own perspective and in her own words. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, are believed to provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena (Patton, 2002), and that was why they were employed within this study design.

I began data collection with an in-depth initial interview in which I collected background information about the teacher, asked questions to gain insights into her experiences with literacy teaching over time, and discussed her general views on the reading workshop structure. This allowed me to understand her experiences in implementing this structure over the first 2 years of the district mandate. It also provided baseline information on how she perceived assessment and how she saw herself implementing assessment within the reading workshop structure. It clarified precisely what informed her instructional decision making and what challenges she experienced in implementing the program. We also discussed her goals and expectations for the implementation of reading workshop and associated assessment practices for the then-current school year.

Observations. Observation “entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study” (Olsen, 2012, p. 98). Classroom studies such as this one involve recording actions and interactions that occur within the setting. The researcher generally initiates qualitative inquiry with broad areas of interest. Unobtrusive observation is an important method in qualitative inquiry because it can reveal

complex interactions within a natural social setting (Olsen, 2012). Through observation, researchers can also uncover factors that are important for a thorough understanding of the research problem, but that were perhaps unknown when the study was designed. It is because of this that observation becomes critical because what we learn from participant observation can help us interpret results, in conjunction with other methods, like interviews, as well. It can also be critical in adapting methodology when necessary—such as modifying question design if one approach is unsuccessful—to improve understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Observations for the present study occurred on a near-weekly basis (on varying days of the week) during the regularly scheduled reading workshop time. A total of 12 observations (see Appendix F) occurred across the semester. These observations provided me with a sense of the everyday workings of the reading workshop and its assessment opportunities, uses and non-uses, and the teacher's and students' engagement in assessment (or lack thereof).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), field notes should be both descriptive and reflective. For this research, the descriptive portion consisted of detailed accounts of the subjects and settings, the actual verbatim dialogue of the participants when possible, and description of the events and activities taking place. The reflective nature of the notes was found in the ongoing analysis. For instance, reflective notes were used to speculate on patterns and themes or to evaluate the appropriateness or validity of interview questions as the research process progressed. For this work, field notes were collected during observations, and the notes included detailed, concrete descriptions of what was being observed. These notes were compiled into three columns to help categorize the note-taking. The columns consisted of: (a) the actual observation, (b) an analysis of the observation, and (c) my personal reaction to the observation. Field notes

were written up first on my three-column note-taking page and then typed up in full detail immediately following the observation visit. Field note write-ups were repeatedly revisited, in a thorough search for patterns and relationships. This protocol allowed for changes or modifications in the data collection procedures if necessary (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

Observations, and the field notes and informal conversations that stemmed from these observations, were an important part of this qualitative study. The observations allowed me to gain a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). The data I collected helped to support the later analysis of my research questions and offered authentic documentation to support any themes or patterns that emerged from the data.

Informal post-observation conversations. Following seven of the 12 observations, a secondary, informal conversation was held with the teacher. In these sessions, I asked follow-up questions and requested clarification of unclear points noted during the preceding observation period. This experience provided the chance to ask questions while the observation was still fresh, and gave Hope the opportunity to discuss and explain her interpretation of what just happened during the workshop time. This was also a time when Hope could ask me questions about the study or what I had observed. These conversations were held privately, and although I always gave Hope the opportunity to opt out of these, she always chose to partake in them. This told me that she felt comfortable talking to me about what was happening in her classroom and was confident in the confidentiality of our informal conversations.

Documents. The artifacts collected in this study included teacher's anecdotal conferring notes—which were akin to a class grid with boxes labeled with students' names—on which the teacher recorded notes while observing her readers. The assessments that the teacher conducted across the semester as well as the student goal pages (on which students and Hope recorded goals

for the reading unit), and resources students had in their literacy binder were also included in the documentation. One document included some conferring note-taking forms, which was the evidence that the teacher recorded down as a result of the meeting with a student or students during the reading workshop, usually written on a piece of paper or sticky note. Another document included records of instruction planning or decisions written down in conferring notes that were the result of observations of students by the teacher or conversations the teacher had with her students. These data were collected during the teachers' scheduled reading workshop time. However, it is important to note that before collecting any student data, I sent a consent form home (Appendix D) to parents and also asked participating students to fill out a student assent form (Appendix C). Data were collected only from students who personally agreed and whose parents/guardians consented. Twenty-one out of 22 students and parents/guardians consented. No pressure was given to parents or students to participate, and it was made clear that it was their choice throughout the entire research study. For the few student pieces collected, a copy of the artifact was made immediately and the student name was blacked out in order to de-identify the document and fully support the confidentiality of the student participants. This was particularly important as the focus of this study was not student achievement or student learning at the level of the individual. This procedure also facilitated the timely return of the original document back to the teacher or student.

An important part of the reading workshop model is to meet with readers during independent reading time. Teachers do this because they can then monitor what their readers are engaged in and figure out what instruction each student might need next to continue to grow as a reader. For instance, a student may need to work on word accuracy, reading speed, or

understanding/interpreting the text. Since the reading process is generally an internal undertaking, the majority of the processes are invisible to the observer. Therefore, written artifacts can sometimes be helpful in making the individual reader's process more visible. This can also help the teacher assess a student's strengths and weaknesses, allowing her to better help her young readers grow in their skill level. Student work was included in documents of interest for this study for three reasons: (a) the teacher potentially based her decisions on those artifacts; (b) she planned one-on-one or small group work surrounding the information the artifacts provided; and (c) student goal setting was based on such student artifacts. Moreover, if the teacher used student work as a way to assess her readers, it was critical to collect representative samples to aid in data analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 145). Descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical analysis were employed in this study.

Descriptive analysis. For this study, I began with a provisional start-list of codes derived from the conceptual framework of the project and informed by my experience as a literacy coach who supported teachers who were newly implementing reader's workshop. These start codes included: student-teacher conversations, teacher note taking, and assessment of readers. From this start-list, I analyzed my observational field notes and interview and informal conversation transcripts in order to inductively generate a full list of emergent codes that came from the collected data. Throughout the coding process, analytic memos (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were

generated and used to continually refine codes, improve the specificity of the content categories, and highlight the differences between coding categories.

Open coding is the initial provisional work done on an unrestricted basis to produce concepts that seem to fit the data (Strauss, 1987). After transcribing the data, I carefully read them line by line in order to divide the data into meaningful analytical units and generate the concepts that fit to the collected data. Meaningful segments were appropriately coded. During this initial coding, a master list of the developing codes was maintained and used throughout the study. The codes were then applied to new segments of data each time an appropriate segment was encountered. This was performed on an ongoing basis across the semester (see Appendix E). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) suggested that researcher's analysis happens concurrently with data collection because it "helps the field-worker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better, data" (p. 71). I started with this process of line-by-line open coding of the transcripts of data, followed by a complete identification of the codes within the written transcripts.

Interpretive analysis. After the initial open coding was completed, the concepts and categories defined in the initial coding were used in a thorough re-read of the transcripts. I did this to confirm that the concepts and categories generated did in fact accurately represent the data, as well as to explore how these concepts and categories may have been related to each other (Strauss, 1987). Lincoln and Guba's (1985) comparative technique was utilized to develop categories or themes while examining the coded transcripts, with a goal to identify and create overarching categories into which the data could be grouped. Guba and Lincoln (1981) recommended developing these next categories around three guidelines: the frequency with which a participant speaks to a topic or theme, the uniqueness of a particular category, and the

quality of the contribution of a category to the research question. This process was undertaken with observation and interview data several times across the semester, with an aim to avoid leaving all broad analyses until the end of the data collection process. Therefore, for this study, coding was an iterative process where themes and concepts were compared and contrasted in order to identify similarities and differences across the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) on an ongoing basis.

Theoretical analysis. After the study data were fully coded, my analysis revealed a framework of patterns and contrasts within the data set. How the data fit together and how (and whether) they answered and related back to my original research question were carefully considered. This involved exploring more fully the categories used in analyzing the data, uncovering patterns, identifying relationships between categories, and testing categories against the full set of data (Bradley, 1993). When presenting the content analysis results, I focused on balancing description with interpretation. Description, of course, gives readers important background and context in which to situate the study's results, and therefore description needs to be rich and thick (Denzin, 1989). Since qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, this part represented my personal and theoretical understanding of the phenomenon. My qualitative research report should provide a "sufficient description to allow the reader to understand the basis for an interpretation, and sufficient interpretation to allow the reader to understand the description" (Patton, 2002, pp. 503-504).

Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

One of the challenges of a single-case case study research project is the difficulty in keeping the participant, research setting, and data confidential. One confidentiality struggle arose because the nature of this type of research included transcribed interviews and examples from

documents from the specific classroom that could identify the teacher. Because of the in-depth nature of a case study, even when names were changed and identifying information altered, information can sometimes still be linked back to the participant. Participant demographic data as well as that of the participating school were collected; however, the participants' names and the name of the school and district where the research was conducted were all represented by pseudonyms on data forms and in the study report. The community, school district, and the state from which the data were reported were also not specifically identified. All of the recorded conversations, written transcripts, observational notes, and any documents collected remained in my custody throughout the study in a locked filing cabinet in my home. These data were made available to the teacher during the study and will be available to her for up to 5 years after the completion of the study.

As reported earlier, before the start of the study, the teacher was given an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B) which made clear that she could choose to withdraw at any time. I ensured and reiterated that the data collected for this project would never be made available for anyone else in the district and would not be used in an evaluative way. Before observations began, a parental consent form along with a student assent form (see Appendices C and D) were given to students in the class, in the event that documents from those students were included as part of the data set involved in this study. These forms made clear that a parent or student may choose at any time to withdraw from the study and choose whether to give their permission for the reading response work of the student to be used as a part of this study. Only one parent and student declined participation in the study; therefore, I informed Hope of this, and

she assisted in monitoring the data that were collected to ensure that student's work was not used as a part of the study.

The fact that this study was performed in the same district in which I worked may be viewed as a conflict, simply because of the connection I had to the district and the school. Therefore, discussions were held to schedule observation and interview times and if the participant wanted to have any other discussions about the study, an additional time was set up at the location of the participant's choosing so confidentiality could be maintained to the greatest extent possible. Even though Hope's co-workers and supervisors knew me, I was not in her building on a daily basis or responsible for providing close professional development for her building, her team, or her individually. Therefore, my being a part of the same district was low-risk for both of us. The benefits of this study in adding to the literature on reading workshop and assessment practices, as well as adding to future possible professional development opportunities for Hope and the district where we both happen to work, far outweigh the risk of the possible conflict that might be considered because of my connection.

Lastly, it is important here to cycle back to my decision to "live with" a teacher who has demonstrated an invested interest in this mandated change. By observing, talking to, and collecting data from a person who was demonstrating an interest in this instructional model that could be categorized as more than just following along with the mandate suggests a potential for openness and a willingness to learn. The process of data collection and talking about her practice was hopefully viewed as positive and non-threatening. It was also important to be conscious in any interviews and conversations with the teacher, as well as in my final report, to focus on the practices used and decisions made by the teacher, and to discuss their effects on instructional

decision making, instead of bringing in any evaluative language or judgment. My purpose was to examine and explore the lived experiences of a classroom teacher as she worked to navigate this curricular mandate. My purpose was not to evaluate her teaching and I worked to make this clear by continually assuring Hope, in each conversation we had and in her continued access to my field notes and interview transcripts, that I was only interested only in determining how reading workshop was implemented and assessment was incorporated. I was in no way evaluating her approach to workshop teaching and/or the instructional decisions she made.

Role of the Researcher

One characteristic of qualitative research and case study method in particular is that the primary instrument for data collection and analysis is the researcher herself. Because of this, it is critical for researchers to identify their own biases, limitations, and views throughout the entirety of the project. This requires consideration of these factors throughout the data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting phases of the research process. Qualitative research assumes that the researcher's biases and values impact the outcome of any study (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers are responsible for mitigating their biases by stating them explicitly and fully at the very onset of the study.

My role in this research project was unique. At the time of the study, I was working as a literacy specialist in the district where I conducted this research. I worked in one of the four elementary schools in that district, and my job responsibilities required working with teachers to provide professional development in the areas of reading and writing instruction using a workshop approach to teaching. I supported the teachers in my building as they implemented the workshop approach to literacy instruction, and I was directly involved in the teaching that took

place in those classrooms. I was frequently invited by the teachers to come to the classrooms in order to model mini-lessons, conference with students, and work with small groups. On occasion, I was also asked to observe the teachers teaching and provide them with non-evaluative feedback to help them grow as professionals.

Because I worked so closely with the teachers in the building in which I was the literacy specialist, I chose to observe a second grade classroom in one of the other three elementary buildings. I chose to do this because I was not aware of what professional development she had been exposed to in her building on a biweekly basis, nor did I know this classroom teacher's students, as I would have for teachers in the building where I worked as a literacy specialist. In this way, I was better able to "separate" myself from the rest of what was happening in the school and classroom, and could focus on just that particular portion of the classroom activities and teacher-student interactions. It is important to note that I did also work with the other literacy specialists to provide district-wide professional development, which included the participant. However, when we had district-wide inservice days, the audience included all Kindergarten through Grade 6 teachers. Therefore, the audience was always very large, so my interactions with small groups of teachers were very limited. Since I knew the grade level of the study teacher, I opted to meet and work with grade levels that did not include my participant's grade level if we had any professional development that was not a whole group presentation. This further helped me to keep lines separate between my researcher role and my job role.

It is also important to point out that literacy teaching using the workshop approach is an approach in which I have extensive training as well as first-hand experience. Before becoming a literacy specialist, I was a classroom teacher. In that capacity, I taught literacy using the reading

workshop approach, and therefore have an invested interest in it along with a strong belief system in its use and effectiveness with students. This is not to say that when I was a classroom teacher, or while I am currently working as a literacy specialist, I am perfect in its implementation or that I consider myself an expert in this approach to literacy instruction. However, it is important to identify this part of my background, since this knowledge and experience would necessarily impact observation, data analysis and interpretation, and the possible view of readers that I might be biased in this study and not able to be critical of the model. To mitigate this, I specifically chose to observe and examine the independent reading portion of this instructional time in part because this is the area in which I continue to push myself to improve. I am continually exploring the how and why of bringing reading workshop and formative assessment together. This aspect of the workshop can be difficult for teachers to navigate and is therefore utilized to varying levels of effectiveness. I wanted to know what is happening during this period of time and what happens when these two instructional models are potentially brought together, not only for my own growth and understanding as a workshop teacher, but also so I can help other educators grow and understand it as well.

According to Adler and Adler (1994), researcher membership roles can range from complete membership in the group being studied (an insider), to being a complete stranger (an outsider). Insider researchers choose to study a group to which they feel they belong, while outsider researchers do not belong to the group under study. For the purpose of this research, I feel I took on both the insider and the outsider roles. In the former role, I was very familiar with the teaching methodology which I investigated. I was also an insider in that I conducted research in the district where I worked and it involved observing a teacher who was part of the district-

wide professional development that I helped plan and deliver. On the other hand, I played an outsider role because I conducted the study in a school where I did not work on a daily basis. Additionally, I was an outsider to the members of the classroom; I was not an integral part of the classroom instruction either before or during the study. I was an observer and generally did not get involved in the day-to-day practices that I witnessed.

In this study, I ran the risk of being viewed by my participant as an “expert” because of the role I had in the district. This role might have caused the participant intimidation or anxiety about being “right” in her instructional decisions and delivery. All this made this research project complicated and unique, and placed a large emphasis on the importance of researcher and participant confidentiality while making observations, conducting and transcribing interviews and informal conversations, and collecting artifacts. I worked to mitigate this possible anxiety by making sure I reassured Hope of the study’s purpose. As well, I kept the study’s purpose at the forefront of my data collection work. I needed to be mindful of only writing down what I was observing or what Hope was saying during interviews or informal conversations and not allow my opinions to enter when I collected, analyzed, and reported on the data.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to being an insider researcher. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) identified three advantages, including: (a) having a greater understanding of the culture being studied, (b) not altering the flow of social interaction unnaturally, and (c) having an established intimacy that promotes both the telling and the judging of truth. They also maintained that insider researchers hold insight into how the place works, the politics and the hierarchy of power, and the inner workings of the institution in which the data are being collected. Being partly an insider in this research project meant that I already had some

knowledge about how the school worked and processes within the school and inside the classroom; this knowledge might have taken an outside researcher a long time to acquire. I was also well-informed on the research topic. Along with this knowledge could have come a bias for what I thought I might see while observing in the classroom. I was conscious of avoiding the trap of writing down only what might fit into predetermined themes and categories. Instead, I remained open to unexpected trends that could have emerged throughout the research process. By reminding myself of the study purpose before each visit, writing field notes that matched exactly what I was observing, and continually analyzing the data through the research questions that guided this study, I was able to check my biases in the research process.

Being an insider researcher has disadvantages as well. Greater familiarity with the research setting or research topic can lead to a loss of objectivity. It can also be difficult to manage the insider role and the researcher role. I needed to be very aware and deliberately conscious of when I was in the researcher role and when I was not. The choice of conducting the study in a building other than the one in which I worked greatly helped to achieve this goal. In geographically separating myself from the research site and my “other life” as a literacy specialist in the same district where I was collecting data, I was able to separate my work as a researcher and the work I did for my job.

Another risk that I considered prior to study initiation was the possibility of coming across sensitive information, such as if the participant was struggling with any part of the curricular mandate, how she felt about the administration on a building or district level (specifically how they handled the roll-out and teacher expectations for the curricular change), or opinions about the literacy leadership on her grade-level team, in her building, or even within the

district. In this regard, I needed to remain aware of the possible effects of any perceived bias I might have in my data collection and analysis. I needed to be mindful that I might hear sensitive information of which I was not in favor. I needed to be aware of any emotional reactions or biases that might arise. I also needed to make sure I was not allowing my opinions to enter my analysis or reporting of the data. Instead, I needed to be mindful and conscious of allowing the data to tell the story.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the study purpose and research questions, laid out the study design along with data collection and analysis methods, and provided a discussion about ethical considerations and confidentiality as they applied to this study. I employed a qualitative single-case case study approach in this research study. My purpose was to observe reading workshop along with potential assessment practices during this instructional time. Studying one classroom across time provided me with an opportunity to study in-depth reading workshop in action across an extended period of time. This provided me with rich, detailed data, collected from multiple meetings with the same teacher and group of students. Using a single-case case study approach for this research study offered the opportunity to provide a detailed understanding of the phenomena being studied: reading workshop and assessment. In the next chapter, I provide readers with a descriptive account of how the teacher chosen for this project and the study setting was already exhibiting many constructivist practices at the time of this study. I include detailed information that will help the reader visualize the study setting and the instructional practices happening in Hope's classroom.

Chapter 4

The Story of the Data

Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 2, constructivist teaching and learning suggest that learning is an active process; learning can be scaffolded and tailored to meet students where they are in learning a particular skill; assessment practices are constructed such that the information is gathered during the learning process and is used directly to improve the quality or match of the instruction; and learning is authentic. Therefore, the next two chapters have two important purposes: (a) to highlight and detail how the teacher chosen for this project and the study setting were already exhibiting many constructivist practices at the time of this study, and (b) to show in the findings how, by using formative assessment practices, the teacher was able to support and enhance these teaching and learning practices.

This chapter supports the first purpose. To do this, I first describe in depth some aspects of the study classroom. I include detailed information about the teacher, Hope, and the classroom environment. This information highlights why the teacher and study setting that were chosen for this research project were optimal in order to examine the nuances and details of reading workshop in action in the classroom. Next, I describe in depth the teacher's reading workshop schedule, a detailed schedule of one of the days I observed reading workshop in Hope's classroom, and the data collection methods I observed Hope using during my time in her classroom. Describing the teacher's data collection methods is important because it suggests two important qualities about Hope, her instruction, and her classroom environment: (a) she knew that she needed to collect data on her readers, and (b) she understood that collecting these data

during authentic reading situations might yield her more accurate and in-the-moment data. All sections of this chapter are meant to give the reader a close-up picture of the inner workings of an elementary reading workshop classroom in order to set the stage for the data analysis which is presented in Chapter 5.

In order to provide some background and context for readers who are less familiar with reading instruction, I begin this chapter with definitions of key terms related to reading workshop. This will situate the reader in the terms and concepts related to reading workshop so that the detailed description of the classroom and the teacher's practices and activities as well as those of the students will make more sense.

Unit of Study: A reading unit focused on a particular group of skills and strategies. Units span across 5 to 6 weeks of teaching. Each day of the unit of study incorporates a mini-lesson with a teaching point focused on the unit goals in order to build a repertoire of skills and strategies across the unit.

Mini-Lesson: The mini-lesson takes place in the first 7 to 10 minutes of the reading workshop time. It is commonly broken down into four parts: the connection, the teach, the active engagement, and the link (Calkins, 2015).

Connection: This part of the mini-lesson is meant to set the stage for the day's learning. In the connection, the teacher can choose to tell a little story about a time when she used this strategy, or can review past learning, or can offer a metaphor that the students can then connect to the learning after the lesson is over. This part of the mini-lesson is only meant to be 1 to 2 minutes long (Calkins, 2015).

Teaching Point: This part of the mini-lesson occurs when the teacher explicitly states what she will be teaching during that day’s lesson. The language commonly used for this part is: “Readers, today I want to teach you . . .” and the language that follows offers students the focus of a skill, a strategy for how to carry out that skill, and a purpose for the skill itself. The language is specific and consistent to cue readers to listen carefully to the next statement, because that is the main teaching focus for the lesson. This part usually lasts around 1 minute (Calkins, 2015).

Teach: This part of the mini-lesson occurs when the teacher demonstrates the teaching point for students. The teacher usually chooses to do this in a text, perhaps a picture book, a portion of a chapter book, a poem, a chart, or a song, and can choose a text with which students either familiar or unfamiliar. Her goal is to make visible and transparent how students can apply the teaching point to their own reading. During this time, the teacher focuses heavily on thinking aloud exactly what she is doing as a reader so that the students can conceptualize how it might look to put this strategy into practice. Language commonly used by the teacher during this time includes: “Watch me as I . . .” or “Did you see how I just . . .” and then she gives a detailed account of what she is about to do or what she just did as a reader. This part of the mini-lesson usually lasts around 3 minutes (Calkins, 2015).

Active Engagement: This is the part of the mini-lesson when students are given a chance to try out the strategy the teacher just modeled for them in the teach portion of the mini-lesson. Language commonly heard in this part includes: “Now it is your turn to give it a try . . .” or “Students, now it’s your turn . . .” and then the teacher details out the steps the readers should take as she reads aloud more of the text or asks students to try this out in the text they brought to the carpet. She might also have them turn to their partner to explain how they might try this

when off doing their own reading. Students can do this on their own, but are commonly asked to try the strategy out with their reading workshop partner who is assigned to them by the teacher. Usually this partner is of like reading ability so if they practice in one of the texts that the student has brought to the carpet, they are trying things out as if they would need to apply them on their own. This part of the mini-lesson usually lasts around 3 minutes (Calkins, 2015).

Link: This part of the mini-lesson occurs when the teacher offers one last reminder to students before they go off to read on their own and with partners. It is a time for the teacher to invite students to add whatever the teacher taught that day to their repertoire of reading strategies (Calkins, 2015).

Mid-Workshop Teaching: Half-way through the independent reading time, the teacher stops the students during their reading, has them look at her, and then teaches them for a few minutes; this teaching could include a reminder, highlight a student's work, and lift the level of the mini-lesson teaching point from the day by adding a part to it or by approaching it from a different angle or by giving an additional tip for students to try (Calkins, 2015)

End of Workshop Share: At the very end of reading workshop, the teacher calls students together. Sometimes they stay in their reading spots or they can even come back to the meeting area to reflect on the day in reading workshop. This part of the reading workshop, usually lasting around 5 minutes, can be spent in a variety of ways (Calkins, 2001). The teacher might choose to highlight a student's or partnership's work, especially if it reflects that day's mini-lesson teaching. The teacher might also choose to review the day's mini-lesson and give a preview of tomorrow's work, or ask the students to do something with the book they are reading, such as jot

a prediction on a post-it note or go back and find the problem in their story and mark it or think about it more (Calkins, 2015).

Anchor Charts: These charts are an important part of reading workshop. The idea is to document the thinking processes related to a particular learning experience. As students learn new strategies, these are added to the anchor chart. The anchor charts are created during mini-lessons and can be referenced as needed by teachers and students. The anchor charts can provide teachers with a tool to scaffold students' learning. They are designed to spotlight important concepts while also providing students with an immediate resource when they are reading and especially when the teacher is working with other students (Dorn & Saffros, 2005)

Mentor Texts: These texts, sometimes leveled readers, picture books or chapter books, are ones teachers can use to model and support the goals and strategies of the unit of study or what they are trying to teach their readers (Calkins, 2015).

Reading Partnerships: Students are partnered with another reader who is around their same reading level and ability. Under the workshop model that Hope's district follows, reading partners sit next to each other during the mini-lesson and work together during partner reading time which happens within the reading workshop block of time (Calkins, 2015).

Just-Right Books: Students need to read books that they can both decode (read the words) and comprehend (understand the meaning). According to Allington (2006), kids not only need to read a lot, but they also need lots of books they can read accurately, fluently, and with comprehension. Lots of high-success reading is critical to reading development.

Running Record Assessments: Running records are a tool that helps teachers identify patterns in students' reading behaviors. By identifying patterns, teachers can see the strategies a

student uses to figure out words and to make meaning of those words and of the text as a whole. Doing these running records helps teacher match students to books they can read with accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Reading Level: Students can be assessed to figure out what reading level they are reading at. There are three different kinds of reading levels that teachers can use to make instructional decisions. At the independent reading level, a student can read a text on his or her own with ease. The student hardly makes any errors when reading the text and has excellent comprehension of the story or nonfiction text. At the instructional reading level, a student needs some support to read the text. This is the level at which a student's accuracy rate when reading is usually between 90-94% with good comprehension. At the frustrational reading level, a student reads with 90% accuracy or below and has limited comprehension of what he or she read (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Guided Reading Groups: Guided reading is a teaching approach that is designed to help readers build an effective system for processing more challenging texts over a period of time. The teacher uses benchmark assessments to determine the approximate instructional reading level of students and then pulls together a group of students around the same level and with similar instructional needs as readers. The teacher then selects a text by considering the strengths, needs, and background knowledge of the group and analyzes the text for opportunities to support students with the meaning, language, and print of the text. The teacher uses the text to help students expand what they know how to do as readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

A Reading Workshop Classroom

A Teacher's Journey

At the time of this study, Hope Wilson had been a teacher for 16 years. She reported that when she started right out of college, she was hired in an urban district to fill in for someone who was not coming back. Most of her literacy teaching experience in that district was with a basal reader, which was mandated by the district as the method and curriculum to follow. After a few years in this district, Hope decided neither the place nor the literacy curriculum were right for her and she left. Next, she was a substitute teacher in a suburban district closer to her house; when she interviewed there, she was offered a second grade classroom position for the following year. In this new district, there was not much direction for literacy instruction; that is, there was no mandated approach to literacy instruction and teachers had the freedom to use a variety of approaches with no expectation for consistency, except for the use of guided reading groups (see definition above). However, when Hope made the switch to her particular school, she found herself on a team that had an approach in place that she seemed to resonate with—reading workshop (Interview #1, 10/5/14).

Without much training, but with the support of her new colleagues who had been trying it out for a few years, Hope started implementing parts of the reading workshop structure. When asked about this change, Hope reflected that:

I was able to work with some people who were very gung-ho with the workshop model and so right away I jumped in. We did mini-lessons and . . . then built on that piece . . . then started pulling strategy-based and guided reading type groups and thinking these kiddos have to work on this and these kiddos have to work on this and really sharing kids back and forth and taking all our notes and saying what needs are you seeing what needs are you seeing and then let's work on this together let's pull these kids you pull these kids it was great teamwork and a great way to start learning how to teach using a workshop model. We didn't always know exactly what we were doing but I knew it was better matched to my readers than what I was doing before. (Interview #1, 10/5/14, p. 3)

Hope's experiences with reading workshop and her knowledge base continued to grow. However, it was not until the time of this study that the entire district officially adopted reading and writing workshop as their primary approaches to literacy instruction. I asked Hope specifically about the adoption since the semester I was observing in her classroom was only the district's second year of full implementation. With this adoption, Hope reported that the approach the district took was one of "having teachers take some time, to try some things out, then make changes to be more responsive to their readers, using this exploration time to talk to literacy coaches and make some changes" (Interview #1, 10/5/14, p. 5). Teachers could begin to find ways to implement reading workshop. (The approach that the district chose was *Reading Workshop Units of Study Curriculum* from Teachers College: Reading and Writing Project led by Lucy Calkins.²) As with any new curricular adoption, the teachers could work to implement the components of the approach in ways that worked within their context. The district provided some training along with continuous support from building literacy coaches to transition from the prior approach to reading instruction. When asked about the adoption of reading workshop, Hope felt as if it was a "breath of fresh air" and she was "excited to learn more about this approach formally" (Interview #1, 10/5/14, p. 5).

Classroom Environment

The setting, like Hope, was equipped for a successful reading workshop. Because Hope was not new to workshop teaching, she already had experience with creating a space for her readers that invited ownership and independence. This space, as I describe below, had spaces and components important to the enactment of reading workshop, not only for Hope but for her students as well. In order to situate the reader into this setting, I describe each part of the

² Lucy Calkins: Founding director of Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.

classroom and discuss what each part has in it and what takes place there as it relates to literacy. I discuss what sorts of things happened in each space with the students and the teacher during my observations. I have identified two important parts to the classroom that I present and discuss: the book bin shelf and the carpet corner.

Book bin shelf.

Literacy-related artifacts. This shelf lined one side of the multicolored rectangular rug and contained 25 magazine-style plastic blue bins above and below the shelf. Each blue bin had a label on it with a child's name printed in black sharpie. Each of the bins, upon further inspection, was brimming with books, and each of those books, upon even further investigation, had lots of different colored sticky notes jutting out from all sides. Each bin also contained a literacy binder that belonged to the student whose bin it was. Each binder had many literacy-related artifacts for each student to have access to during reading workshop time. Included at the front of each binder was:

1. A typed piece of paper that listed student goals for the reading unit (Appendix I Scope and Sequence & Appendix J Student Goal Page) they were currently in as well as for units they have completed (ex. Readers can Study Characters By . . .).
2. A blank piece of paper where students kept post-it notes; some of the post-it notes had the teacher's writing on it as a reminder for the student (ex. stop and think while reading or check the picture when you get to a tricky word), and some of the post-its had the student's writing on it of reading goals the student wanted to work on (ex. retell the beginning, middle, and end of each chapter).
3. Reading strategy reminder page that had examples of strategies they could use to solve tricky words when they are reading (ex. look through the whole word, try the vowel two ways, think about what's happening then think what could the word be?).
4. Reading log pages some filled out and other blank ones waiting to be filled with book titles and the amount of time they read each day.

5. Quart-sized baggie that had a pencil and several packets of different-sized sticky notes for students to use during independent reading time to record their thinking while they are reading (Observation #1, 10/14, p. 6).

Happenings at the book bin shelf. Every day before reading workshop began, Hope asked her readers to set themselves up for reading workshop. Following those words was a series of actions by the students. They would head over to the book bin shelf and grab their book bin. They would then proceed to many different spots around the room. Some students sat on the floor, some at the table spots, and some at other empty tables around the room. Students would get out their binders, date their reading log, and record the time and title of the book they were going to begin with, then get out their sticky notes to set beside them while reading, and choose one book to bring with them to the carpet for the mini-lesson. After the mini-lesson, once Hope said “Off you go!” the students would head back to their spots and begin to read.

Carpet corner

Literacy-related artifacts. In one corner was a large multicolored rectangular rug that was bordered by bookshelves on two of its sides. Both long bookshelves were bursting with bins of books, telling me that having books readily available for students was important in this classroom. Each bin had a label that identified what books were in the bin. For example, one bin had a label that said *Elephant and Piggie Books* on it (a series written by Mo Willems), another had a label that said *Pinky and Rex* (a series written by Cynthia Rylant), and another had a label with the reading level letters *J & K* on it. Students had access to just-right books at their fingertips, a critical aspect of reading workshop.

On one end of the rug stood an easel on which was a large chart piece of paper that had the words “Readers Think About Story Elements” on the top. I would later come to find out that

this title matched the skill that Hope would teach into during the mini-lesson. I also later found out that these charts matched the unit Hope was teaching within. Above the easel, on the big bulletin board with the words Reading Workshop across the top, were other large pieces of chart paper with writing on them as well as lots of visual pictures next to the written words. These big charts, called anchor charts (see definition above), provided a place for Hope to document what she had been teaching to her students. The hanging anchor charts were completed ones and matched the unit of study on which the class was currently focused. The one on the easel was the one currently in progress and contained only a title at the top. The charts were developed across many days of teaching, had strategies added to them, and were meant to be a visual teaching and learning tool to remind students of what they had been learning as readers; they also supported their independence as readers. Readers could access them to support their problem-solving and critical thinking skills during reading workshop time.

Below the easel was a basket of books with the label *Our Favorite Read-Alouds* on it; next to that was a bin with various-sized post-it notes, markers, and tape. Next to the easel sat a kid-sized chair, where the teacher sat when teaching in that corner. On top of one of the bookshelves that lined the carpet were several hardcover books displayed with notecards next to them. In kid writing, the notecards said things like: “If you like books about fun characters, then you must read this Elephant and Piggie book!” and “This is a sad story about a dog and his owner. Don’t worry though it gets happier at the end!” This meeting area took up a big corner of the room, and during my observations there, the students and teacher would come and go to this corner often across the workshop time. They would populate this section of the classroom at the beginning of the reading workshop for the mini-lesson or during the middle of the workshop if

Hope was meeting with a small group there; also students might go there to have a quiet out-of-the-way place to read independently. Everyone would always gather there at the end of the reading workshop for the teaching share. The class had a place to gather across the reading workshop, encouraging the social aspect of this approach to teaching and learning along with allowing for opportunities to build a literacy community.

Happenings at the carpet corner. During my time in the classroom and within a few minutes of my arrival, the students would be called over to sit on the multicolored rug and be reminded to sit next to their reading workshop partner. They would usually bring a book with them to their spot and sometimes come with a pencil and a few sticky notes as well. The students were usually on the carpet for around 10 minutes, some of which time was spent listening to the teacher talk, teach, read part of a book to them—it was usually a combination of all three. For the rest of those 10 minutes, students talked to their reading workshop partner sometimes to include reading to each other out of the book they brought with them to the rug.

Often, after the teacher dismissed the students from the rug to start their independent reading time, she would keep three to four of the students at the multicolored carpet to teach them in a sort of small group. During some of my observations when I first walked in, a few kids at a time could be seen looking through the various bins located on the shelves lining the carpet. I would observe them looking through a number of the bins, choose a few books from them, and read the backs of those they chose. Some books ended up going back into the bin, or if the books were lucky, the students would then put them into a bin with their name on it, saving them to read when it was time. Each child had his or her own bin to keep books they wanted to read during independent reading time. I later found out that Hope had students shop from the library

once a week and they would choose enough books to last them for a week of reading time. Hope gave the students guidance on which bins to choose from in order to make sure the books that the kids were reading during their time to practice were “just-right for them”—not too hard and not too easy.

Summary

In short, this narrative describes part of the journey Hope took in becoming a reading workshop teacher. It also highlights her commitment to this instructional model and her desire to make sure that students are equipped with the right tools and spaces to engage in a successful reading workshop. Hope was able to provide spaces and teaching that fostered a structure and environment that allowed students opportunities to learn and practice reading skills and strategies authentically. Students had access to just-right books, time to read them, teaching to support their reading, time to talk to others about their reading, and a community to share their reading growth. As referenced in Chapter 2, all of these are important components of the reading workshop. These sustain the constructivist nature of this approach in the social interactions, authentic opportunities for practice, and supports put in place to foster student independence.

Also, given Hope’s experience with reading workshop, her classroom setting was crafted to support the implementation of reading workshop as constructivist teaching and learning. The classroom set-up, environment, and student ownership all supported the teaching and learning that was happening across all of the spaces within it. Since I was looking for the specific ways Hope used assessment and how she was able to navigate implementing it across the structure of reading workshop, as well as how it supported or enhanced constructivist teaching and learning practices, this setting and teacher were appropriately matched with this purpose.

Reading Workshop Schedule

During my time with Hope, her reading workshop followed two main schedules. In this section, I discuss how each type of day was structured in order to highlight a critical component that supported the effectiveness and constructivist nature of reading workshop—the environment of the reading workshop classroom. Constructivist approaches to learning require that students be able to draw from the social/cultural world around them in order to make meaning—in this case, learning to read or develop reading proficiency. This means that the teacher must very carefully design that environment so that the appropriate cuing and scaffolding are available to move students to the next stages of their learning. In the case of Hope’s classroom, I was able to observe her organize and deliver her instruction in a variety of ways and witness the constructivist environment in play.

During her “regular” reading workshop days, outlined and described in more detail below, Hope engaged her students in instruction that was matched to student need. She gave them a prolonged amount of independent reading time to offer them an opportunity for authentic real-world reading practice. She provided readers with time to talk about, learn from, and react to books in socially constructed settings. She assessed her readers in an ongoing process that happened within their authentic learning times.

During her “assessment” days, also outlined and described more in depth below, the format of reading workshop would flow slightly differently. Hope and her colleagues had chosen to always do a pre-assessment and a post-assessment for each unit of study they taught (Appendix K). Hope and her team did this in order to lay out the big goals for the unit and assess where their students were with those goals before the unit. I observed that these assessment days

provided Hope with information she could use to inform the ways she delivered instruction, given a particular task or student learning need. This demonstrated that Hope understood the importance of gathering data on an ongoing basis in order to ensure that her teaching was student-centered and tailored to meet student needs before the unit even started, as the unit was being taught, and after the unit ended. This ensured follow-up on the necessary skills that still needed support and instruction.

All of this suggests that Hope provided an environment for her readers that was steeped in constructivist teaching and learning practices, including assessment as a major part of it. Below, I outline the two schedules Hope followed and provide a narrative description about each day and how they were connected, necessary, and important in making the case for constructivist teaching, learning, and assessment practices that supported and enhanced one another.

Typical Day

On a “regular” reading workshop day, which happened most of the time in Hope’s classroom, Hope and the students engaged in a 45-60-minute literacy “block”—an uninterrupted time period where they focused solely on the reading workshop. I observed that this followed a consistent structure that Hope had carefully designed to allow for opportunities for whole-class instruction, time to practice independently, small group and individual instruction, and time to gather in reading partnerships.

Below, I outline a “regular” reading workshop day and give an example of how it played out in the classroom. I include what I observed (see definitions above for more detail), the timeframe, and how many students she was meeting with during the interaction. I chose a typical workshop day and reported on each part from the same observation (Observation #11, 12/22/14).

Table 1. *Reading Workshop Day*

| Time | What Hope was Doing | Where It Took Place | How Many Students |
|------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 10 minutes | <p>Mini-lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Connect: Hope connected to when she had trouble figuring out a tricky word and what she tried *Teaching Point: Hope stated: “Readers, today I want to teach you that when readers use all the strategies they know for solving tricky words and they still can’t figure it out . . . they can also try using the photos, labels, and other text features to help them understand tricky words.” *Teach: Hope modeled this in the <u>Bats</u> mentor text *Active Engagement: Hope had students practiced on another page in the <u>Bats</u> mentor text *Link: Hope sent students off to independently read reminding them that when they “get to tricky words they can use all they know, including text features, to help them solve it!” (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p.1) | Carpet Corner (described above) | Whole Class (22 students) |
| 3 minutes | <p>Observation of whole class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Hope took notes on a sticky note *Hope voiced-over reminders like: “I love the way some of you already have out all of your supplies and are ready to dig into your books” and “I love how some of you are reviewing your goal page so you know what you might give extra focus to today” (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p. 1) | | Whole Class (22 students) |

| | | | |
|------------|--|---|---------------|
| 10 minutes | <p>Small Group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Readers, I thought maybe we practice what we just learned how to do with another section of our Bats book. The teacher read another short section of the Bats book and stopped at a tricky word and had students try to figure out what it meant . . . (however today each student in the group had a copy of the same Bat book so they could follow along and then use different strategies to figure out what words meant) 2. Then partnerships turned-and-talked about what they thought the word meant and also shared with their partner how they figured out what the word meant 3. So readers . . . when I want to figure out what a word means I need to use all that I know about being a word-solver to help me do this work! 4. Readers, can you think about this as you are reading in your nonfiction text today? Off you go! (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p. 2) | Carpet Corner: by the anchor charts and the easel | Four Students |
| 6 minutes | <p>One-On-One Conference:</p> <p>Teaching Point: Non-fiction readers stop to retell what they are learning so they can hold onto it as they continue to read. (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p. 2)</p> | Where the student was reading (at their table spot) | Four Students |

Table 1 (continued)

| | | | |
|------------|--|---|----------------------------------|
| 3 minutes | <p>Mid-Workshop Teach</p> <p>Readers, I am noticing that many of you are solving the tricky words in your books by using lots of strategies. Can you prepare to talk to your partner about some of the work you are doing? Mark a few pages and name the strategy you used on that page to figure out a tricky word. (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p. 3)</p> | <p>Teacher stood in the middle of the room and students stopped their reading and looked to the teacher</p> | <p>Whole Class (22 students)</p> |
| 10 minutes | <p>Small Group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Readers, I wanted to watch you practice the learning we did today during our mini-lesson with your own just-right nonfiction texts so can you turn to the section you were working on and read part of it. When you get to a tricky word can you stop and then try out some different strategies to figure out what the words mean? 2. Readers read a portion of their text and stopped at different times to figure out the meanings of tricky words. The teacher coached into each student as they were stopping to retell. 3. After she had coached into each person individually she had them turn to talk to their partner to teach them about the tricky words they solved and how they solved them 4. So readers . . . when I want to figure out what a word means I need to use all that I know about being a word-solver to help me do this work! 5. Readers, can you think about this as you are reading in your nonfiction text today? Off you go! (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p. 3) | <p>Carpet Corner: by the anchor charts and the easel</p> | <p>One Student</p> |
| 6 minutes | <p>One-On-One Conference</p> <p>Teaching Point: Nonfiction readers put all they are learning, from the words of the pictures, together to name what they are learning. (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p. 4)</p> | <p>Where the student was reading (on the floor near the teacher's desk)</p> | <p>One Student</p> |

Table 1 (continued)

| | | | |
|-----------|--|---------------|------------------------------|
| 5 minutes | Partnership Share Hope had students share where they did some work on solving tricky words while she mingled among them offering suggestions, tips, and teaching points to support their work (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p. 4) | Carpet Corner | Whole Class (22 students) |
| 5 minutes | Teaching Share Hope named what they worked on today and talked about a few examples of where she noticing this work happening during the workshop time (Observation #11, 12/22/14, p. 5) | Carpet Corner | Whole Class (22 students) |

This schedule shows that Hope had the structure of reading workshop up and running in her classroom. She was providing a structure that gave students an opportunity to learn a new skill and scaffold instruction with a teacher modeling, with immediate and authentic practice all situated in a social setting. Also included was time to practice what students learned in books appropriate for their needs. Moreover, Hope met with students in different ways across the workshop time in order to support their needs specifically. Also important to point out was that the teaching point or amount of support given for each student interaction, conferences, and small groups was varied to meet student needs. Hope also did some quick assessment and offered some targeted feedback based on what she was noticing. She ended the workshop time with an opportunity to share learning in a socially constructed setting and then culminated the workshop time with reminders for the community of readers. The scaffolded instruction, authentic practice, ongoing assessment with feedback all highlight the constructivist nature of the reading workshop happening in Hope’s classroom.

Assessment Day

On an “assessment” day, which happened pre- and post-unit and sometimes in the middle of a unit of study in Hope’s classroom, the format would flow differently than on a “regular” day. On this kind of day, Hope and the students engaged in a 45-60-minute block of time that included an assessment, independent reading time, and a share. I observed that this kind of day also followed a consistent structure that Hope had carefully designed in order to continue allowing for data collection, time to practice independently, and time to gather as a whole class to provide closure to the workshop day.

Below, I outline an “assessment” day I observed and include how it played out in the classroom. I detail what I observed, the timeframe, and how many students were involved in the interactions. I chose one of the two assessment days I observed and reported on each part from that observation (Observation #2, 10/21/14).

Table 2. *Assessment Day*

| Time | What Hope was Doing | Where It Took Place | How Many Students |
|------------|--|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 25 minutes | Hope read-aloud <i>Thundercake</i> by Patricia Polacco and had the student’s stop-and-jot their thoughts and answers to some predetermined questions at predetermined spots in the book: 1. What are you noticing about the character? What makes you think that? 2. What are you noticing NOW? What makes you think that? 3. What have you learned from this character? (Observation #2, 10/21/14, p. 1) | Carpet Corner | Whole Class (22 students) |

| | | | |
|------------|--|--|------------------------------|
| 7 minutes | Hope reviewed an anchor chart students were familiar with and gave some reminders to students about work they could be thinking about as they were reading: 1. What am I noticing or thinking about my character and what makes me think that? 2. What am I learning from my character? 3. What are the characters doing and why? (Observation #2, 10/21/14, p. 1) | Carpet Corner | Whole Class (22 students) |
| 20 minutes | Students then transitioned into independent reading time at their table spots or at another spot in the room and the teacher then went around to check-in quickly with students (she just conferenced with students today) (Observation #2, 10/21/14, p. 1) | Independent Reading Spots (chosen by the students) | 1 student at a time |
| 5 minutes | Teaching share Hope brought out the mentor text <i>Wemberly Worried</i> and had students turn and name the story elements (characters, setting, problem, solution) from it and talk about why they are important to think about (Observation #2, 10/21/14, p. 2) | Carpet Corner | Whole Class (22 students) |

This schedule shows that Hope structured her classroom so she could collect data about her readers. Also important to point out is the content and way Hope collected the data. They were connected to the unit of study and the skills and strategies that Hope would be teaching across the unit, making it authentic in relevant information that could truly inform her upcoming instruction. Also, Hope collected these data by engaging students in an authentic reading situation by reading aloud a book to them and asking them to jot down their thinking. This shows that Hope's assessment practices were constructivist and could be used to inform instruction in

key ways. These activities, and the meanings I found they conveyed in the classroom, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Assessment Practices in Hope's Classroom

Data collection as an assessment tool was discussed in Chapter 2 as a means to gather information on students to help with instructional decision making that could be better matched to student need. Across my observations in Hope's classroom, I was able to observe her collect data on her students in many ways. In this next section, I briefly name and describe each. They include: observations, anecdotal note-taking, discussions, and pre- and post-assessments (described above). All these methods yielded some kind of student data for Hope. I provide an analysis of what these data meant and how Hope used them in the next chapter.

Observations

I observed Hope using observations in several ways in order to better understand her readers and their progress. Here I describe some of the activities I witnessed her doing.

Sometimes, as the students were settling into their independent reading spots, she would just watch students get themselves ready. Then based on what she saw, she might check in with a few students who seemed to need a "little extra reminding or encouragement to get started" (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 1). Hope also used observation especially during the mini-lesson. She stated that the data she collected during that time sometimes altered what she ended up doing during the rest of the workshop time. "After the mini-lesson or during the mini-lesson [my plan] could change. It is a constant piece of where I think scratch the plan I had, I was going to meet with these kids but now I need to meet with different kids because I am noticing a greater need" (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 3).

Observation also was a helpful data collection tool for Hope during individual conferences as she would write down what she was observing. Then when she was holding those conferences, she could start to see trends or patterns in the data. Hope stated: “I like to look across who I am meeting with and what they are doing as readers, and when I notice trends and patterns I can then pull them all together because they need the same thing” (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 1). Hope also stated that observations were a helpful assessment tool in that they offered data to support pulling small groups. As she stated:

I guess two different reasons why I might pull some small groups. One . . . based on what I am observing and all the data I have collected and . . . maybe they are showing a misconception or their attending is not strong or if I see patterns of going to confer with them after the mini-lesson and I see that they a lot of times don’t know what t is I just taught or what they are working on I might pull them right away to reteach. I could decide that before the mini-lesson depending on what the mini-lesson is like if I know it is complex or a difficult skill I might decide to pull them right after the mini-lesson to give extra support or reteach right away. (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 2)

Observations were an important data collection tool for Hope and were prevalent across all parts of her reading workshop. This suggests that the data collection tool of observation yielded information that helped drive instruction in a variety of ways.

Anecdotal Note-taking

I observed Hope using anecdotal note-taking during conferences and observations and in small groups in order to collect documented information her readers and their progress. Here, I describe some of what I witnessed her doing.

The notes Hope took during her interactions with students had purpose. She explained “[e]ach student has individual conferring pages that I write down all my notes from my conferences and small-groups with them on” (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 1). Hope used these notes, along with her pre-assessment data, to form small groups and inform conferences and

mini-lesson teaching points. In our second formal interview, I asked Hope a little more about this process and she responded as follows:

Sometimes I will look across my individual conferring notes pages, or the compliment conference pages or sometimes I will look across and take notes on the goals that we set up and out on a grid [Unit Goal Page, See Appendix J]. Like what we do for each unit for the pre-assessment and then the post-assessment. We pull out the big goals for the unit . . . I can check off some of the skills and then make groups or decide who to confer with based on the information from the grid. They are like the key things like I am always looking for in the unit I am in” (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 1).

Note-taking afforded Hope the opportunity to make decisions in the moment, but also allowed her the opportunity to study those notes carefully and thoughtfully after reading workshop to make additional instructional decisions that will support her readers and their growth. This suggests that Hope’s collection of notes on her students allowed her make teaching decisions that were rooted in data. She was also able to use her notes to check in on her goals related to the unit of study and students’ progress towards those goals. The notes also gave her records she could return to in order to inform later instruction.

Discussions

I observed Hope using student-teacher discussions as another way to collect information on her readers and their progress. The specific discussions I observed Hope taking advantage of included: during the mini-lesson active engagement time (when partners would turn and talk to each other based on what they were learning in the mini-lesson), Hope was able to listen in on their conversations as well as during one-on-one conferences with students.

For example, during one-on-one conferences, she would start by asking students what they were working on as a reader, and during this back-and-forth Hope would jot down notes on her conference pages (see Appendix M). She wrote down such items as questions she asked the

students and their answers [Working on: Envisioning], any compliments she gave them during their time together [Compliment: envision character's face, imp. b/c helps understand character better], and always what she taught them [Teaching Point: what does it make you think?]

(Observation #5, 10/28/216, p.4). Hope further commented that:

Just being responsive in the moment to all the things that are happening is not easy and it's not always the perfect way to meet with students. It is not going to meet everybody's needs all the time. So then what will happen is that I sort of look at my readers and based on this is where we started and this is where we are based on our entry point with the data from the pre-assessment that we do to start each unit I can keep building on the conferences and what I am seeing and so some of my kids I know I will need to confer with more often . . . I use all these discussions and my notes to really digest where my readers are at, at any given point in the unit and then I can gauge what they need and then I can plan my instruction accordingly" (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 3).

Hope used her discussions and the data she collected from them to help guide her instruction in all parts of her reading workshop. This suggests that Hope's use of discussions offered her the opportunity to make in-the-moment teaching decisions that were matched to student need.

In sum, all of these activities offered Hope an opportunity to gather data on her readers in a variety of ways. Her assessment was ongoing and collected in the moment that learning was taking place. As discussed in the next chapter, Hope used all of these data to make informed decisions about her teaching, particularly related to altering mini-lessons, planning for small groups, figuring out who to confer with and on what, and choosing what to do with partnerships and in her share session in order to match the needs of her readers, as evidenced in the data. Observing Hope engage in continual assessment that was closely tied to the activities and learning of her students confirms that her teaching was constructivist because it was ongoing, happened in an authentic setting while students engaged in real reading situations, and offered

information the teacher could use to alter her future instruction and match it more accurately to student need. Being able to study a teacher so closely as she implemented this model and being able to name the ways she collected data on her readers proved invaluable in highlighting the details and complexities of the work. Close assessment is a natural part of the work, and the next chapter will highlight the ways Hope used these assessment practices to support her students' reading development.

Conclusion

These data highlighted a constructivist model of literacy instruction where the students were consistently engaged in authentic literacy-related tasks that supported their reading development. The data also laid out the specific details of constructivist teaching and learning practices in particular that were occurring in this classroom on a consistent and ongoing basis. Assessment in this classroom really became a process of collecting data and evidence on what the students were learning. In the next chapter, I analyze the data and highlight ways in which Hope used assessment practices across her workshop time in order to enhance the teaching and learning.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

Introduction

Chapter 4 provided a descriptive account of Hope's classroom and highlighted several important aspects of her practice in reading workshop, including how she was already enacting many constructivist practices at the time of the study. I highlighted the assessment practices, data collection methods, and offered examples of where these practices were occurring. I also included a description of Hope's classroom and her instruction to demonstrate how the structure of her classroom environment supported reading workshop.

In this chapter, I explain in more detail the ways Hope enhanced teaching and learning in her classroom through the use of formative assessment practices within the reading workshop model. To do this, I highlight three particular ways these practices had the potential to enhance how students were able to construct meaning as readers. These include: (a) creating opportunities for student engagement, motivation, and independence; (b) using data to more specifically individualize learning; and (c) providing scaffolds in the delivery of instruction to meet student need.

Hope enhanced her literacy instruction by using assessment practices and data that she collected. Her assessment practices, which were enacted throughout all parts of her reading workshop, included different methods such as observing, having discussions with students, collecting anecdotal notes, and collecting pre-assessment data. This data collection allowed her to tailor instruction to meet individual student learning needs. Using assessment practices embedded into the reading workshop structure provided Hope with many opportunities to collect

relevant and timely data that could, in turn, inform her timely instructional decisions and provide scaffolds to bring students to greater independent learning. Then, depending on what support was needed and how many students needed it, Hope could match different parts of the reading workshop structure, and the instruction, to support student learning. All of this allowed Hope and her students the opportunity to create chances for student engagement, motivation, and independence, to more specifically individualize learning and provide scaffolds in the delivery of instruction to meet student need. Each of these points will be discussed in more depth in the sections below.

Creating Opportunities for Student Engagement, Independence, and Goal Setting

The consistent use of assessment and data collection that I observed in Hope's classroom became a conduit for creating opportunities for student engagement, independence, and goal setting. Hope's practices with assessment and data collection provided essential information to guide instructional decisions. In order to maximize student engagement and independence, Hope used reading workshop teaching opportunities such as the mini-lesson, partnership conversations, and the mid-workshop teach, as well as strategies such as student choice in book selection and conceptual tools like anchor charts, to monitor individual student engagement. The use of observation and other formative assessments informed Hope of necessary instructional practices and/or modifications to ensure students were engaged and independent in conducting a wide variety of reading activities. The ability of students to sustain independence in the reading workshop structure allowed Hope time for individualized instruction, opportunities for student goal setting, and personalized feedback.

The reading workshop literature has suggested that one of the main benefits of the model is that the classroom activity is structured for students to be engaged in reading activities so that they become more independent learners (Calkins, 2001; Routman, 2003; Serafini, 2001). Additionally, in the literature on constructivist teaching and learning, a learning environment that is structured to promote meaningful engagement and independence is indicated as a key means to support student learning (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Von Glasersfield, 1989).

The structure of reading workshop, with a focus on independent application of reading skills, allows readers an opportunity to apply what they are learning independently. This often occurs by giving students time to choose books, read, think critically, and interact with others about their reading. Students become responsible for their own learning and interactions with their teacher and peers by setting goals, tracking progress, and assessing personal success. Research on reading workshop suggests that this model of instruction has the potential to affect students' attitudes toward reading in addition to increasing their engagement in and motivation to read (Lause, 2004; Reutal & Cooter, 1991; Taylor & Nessheim, 2000; Thomas, 2012). I provide the following examples of each of these from Hope's teaching.

Student Engagement

Hope utilized assessment and data collection methods across many parts of reading workshop to create opportunities for student engagement. One place was within the mini-lesson during the active engagement. In each mini-lesson, during this time, students were asked to demonstrate with a partner or individually what they observed from the modeling of the teacher. Hope employed a variety of data collection practices, mostly observation, during this part of the lesson as she mingled in the students' spaces, listening in order to quickly assess and respond to

what students were doing. For example, during observation #4, 10/22/14, Hope asked her students to practice telling their partners what they learned about the character in the pictures of their mentor text:

Partner A when I say go I want you to tell Partner B what you learned about the character by reading the pictures in the next part of our text Thundercake, then Partner B after you listen to Partner A you can share your thinking” . . . during this time Hope listened in on partnerships and gave some prompts like . . . ” by reading the pictures what did you learn about the character? can you say more about the character now? what else can you add?” (p. 2).

Hope used the data she was collecting to provide opportunities for student engagement. She did this by offering suggestions and supportive prompts based on what she was observing. Readers were responsible for completing the work and for keeping themselves and their partners accountable for remaining on task. Hope’s quick assessment and subsequent teaching supported the goal of student engagement through her individual partnership suggestions and prompts. It also gave her instructional information about how partnerships were practicing the skill, interacting with each other, and whether or not the group as a whole needed more teaching related to the skill.

Another way Hope used data to support student engagement during reading workshop was in the feedback she was able to provide students. For example during observation #6, 11/18/14, Hope stopped the students and provided them with an additional teaching point during a mid-workshop teach. She stated that “not only can you think about the lesson the character is learning in the book [teaching point from that day’s mini-lesson] but you can also think about what you are learning from the story” (p. 3). As evidenced in our informal conversation following this observation (12/09/14), Hope stated that oftentimes she waited until she noticed students losing focus to do her mid-workshop teach. This allowed her to use this part of the

reading workshop structure as a time to teach something new, a way to get students re-engaged in their work in a new way, and/or refocus students who might have lost interest in their work. In this example, she was offering a new teaching point as another way to approach the work, providing students with a purpose to keep engaging in their reading work. In essence, offering this feedback gave students possible next steps, reminders about what they should be practicing as readers, and new ways to approach their reading work. Hope's focused teaching provided students with supports to stay engaged in the independent practice and the opportunity to grow potentially as readers.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter 4, Hope provided students with an environment and access to materials that kept students engaged in reading workshop. The classroom was organized so that students could be offered choice in reading materials, including a book bin shelf labeled for easy book selection and weekly book "shopping" opportunities. Hope also ensured that the tools the students needed were readily at hand. These tools included both physical "things" (reading binders, sticky notes, writing utensils, etc.) and conceptual supports like anchor charts. Students were equipped with everything necessary to potentially stay engaged in their reading tasks across a prolonged period of time. Research suggests that this time spent engaged in high-success reading can have a direct impact on a student's progress in learning to read and developing a multitude of reading proficiencies (Allington, 2009).

Student Independence

Hope established opportunities to use assessment practices and data collection to support student independence across several parts of reading workshop. Structuring the learning so that students can move towards independence is an important part of constructivist teaching

practices. When combined, constructivist teaching and learning practices and the foundational beliefs of reading workshop (Calkins, 2015) can provide instruction to better meet students' needs. A teacher's flexibility within the structure of reading workshop, along with the orchestration of all the components of the workshop model to meet all student's learning needs, becomes paramount to its success as a model. Building independence, as Collins noted (2004), gives students the opportunities to "solve problems, develop resiliency, and become resourceful at helping themselves. This is not just learning: it's learning for a lifetime" (p. 8).

Additionally, I was able to observe in Hope's classroom that by having students supported in their independent work, Hope also acquired the time and flexibility to meet with students individually or in smaller groups. This gave her more opportunities to collect data, individualize learning, and scaffold instruction. Meanwhile, the other students were continually engaged in authentic learning tasks related to their work as readers.

An example of Hope setting her students up for independence occurred during the first part of the mini-lesson I observed in observation #10, 12/16, 2014. From the beginning, the learning objective was made visible for students. I observed specific use of language in this part of the lesson by Hope starting with the words: "Readers, today I want to teach you . . ." and then continuing with the specific learning target for the lesson. Using these words acted as a cue to students that this was the learning objective. Students were given a clear focus for the learning that would happen during the mini-lesson and could connect what they did during that time to the learning goal. When objectives are made transparent, students have the potential to better follow the goals they are working towards developing independence. Hope could observe students' specific practice of the mini-lesson goal within their active engagement as they tried the skill

independently or with their reading partner. She could take note of their level of independence and determine if more practice was needed or not. The intention of this part of the mini-lesson was to provide students with the learning target, and then in the rest of the lesson give students a strategy as a way to access the skill. This connection gave students the potential to transfer the skill independently into their own reading.

Another part of the mini-lesson where Hope's practices set students up for independence was with the part of the reading workshop called "the link." This is when the teacher reviews for students what she taught them in the lesson and helps them conceptualize how to transfer that work into their independent practice. In Observation #4, 10/22/2014, I witnessed Hope provide the following link:

Readers hold onto that great thinking you and your partner just did. As you read the pictures it can help you learn some things about your characters. I heard kids using language like: I noticed. . . The character changes. . . The characters learns. . . I'm thinking the trouble is that. . . Readers, today and everyday readers you can keep these pieces, these questions, in your mind, you can read those pictures to dig deeper about the characters in your book! That's some of the work you might do today as you are reading. But don't forget about all the other great reading work you know how to do especially when thinking about the characters in your books. Ok readers, off you go! (p. 2)

This link provided students with a vision of what their independent work could look like, an opportunity to think through what they were working on as readers and then potentially connect what they learned in that day's mini-lesson to their own independent work. This was an example of constructivist teaching because it set up the environment so that students had the opportunity to be a part of their own learning. This supported students in taking charge of assessing where they were at as a reader and, subsequently, choosing what would be best for them to work on during their independent practice time. Hope's teaching during this time helped

students work towards this independence by giving them the learning objectives and offering students a chance to take responsibility for their actions during independent reading time.

After providing students with the link, Hope used observation as a means of formative assessment to collect data. Research has suggested that formative assessment practices are ongoing and include feedback based on the data. This feedback can be used by teachers and students to make improvements and work towards independence (Heritage, 2007; Popham, 2008) by focusing their next steps in their learning and a plan for how to get there. I was able to see Hope observe her students after the link, collect data, and then act upon that data on many occasions. For example, in observation #9, 12/09/2016, as students were getting situated after the mini-lesson, I witnessed Hope as she watched her readers and jotted some notes on a post-it. I then observed her walk over to three separate students and sit down next to each student, spending 3-5 minutes with each. I observed the following as Hope interacted with each student:

To Student #1: I noticed you didn't get any sticky notes out and I know your goal is to stop and jot what the character is feeling across your book so make sure you get that ready to go. I'll check back in a few minutes to see how that's going. (p. 2)

To Student #2: Hi there, I wanted to make sure you were set for the goal we set yesterday . . . I noticed you just jumped right into your book and that got me worried that you didn't have a plan . . . so can tell me how you are going to spend your reading time today to help you with that goal. (p. 2)

To Student #3: I see you are starting a new chapter book today. Could you quick do a warm-up with me so I know you are ready to read this book with power? (p. 2)

Hope used her observations as an assessment opportunity to immediately support her interactions and instruction with these students. She gave each student purposeful feedback to assist them towards greater independence and follow-through on their actions as readers. After she left each reader, they had a focus for the next steps in their independent work. Had Hope not

provided that quick and targeted feedback, the students could have proceeded with less purpose and motivation to the objectives of the lesson. Her targeted feedback acted as a catalyst for each student to work with greater independence and success.

Student Goal Setting

Hope also used assessment and data collection practices to get students involved in personal goal setting. According to the literature, individualized goal setting can be a way to foster independence. Students can use established goals to guide their work, reflect on their progress, and make adjustments to their learning. This is an important part of constructivist practices because it actively involves students in their learning, encourages self-reflection on their progress towards their goals, and provides the connection of meaning making through previous and present learning.

In Hope's classroom, goal setting was fostered in several ways. One way was through the predetermined curriculum unit goals. Hope used these unit goals to guide student goal setting. During a formal interview (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 2), Hope discussed two ways students had used pre-identified goals for the unit. At the very beginning of each unit, students chose one or two unit goals to focus on as readers. Hope recorded goals on a post-it note, and put it on the back of the student's reading goal page in their binder. Then, at the end of each unit, students completed a self-reflection page (see Appendix L), where each student was supported to reflect upon the goals they had worked on as readers. Hope then had each student identify a goal they thought they should continue working on into the next unit.

Hope reported that after the pre-assessment, but before the unit started, she would talk about the goals for the unit, referencing the pre-assessment as a way to illustrate some of the

skills students would work on. Hope was setting students up for the upcoming work of the unit, making learning goals visible. After the unit, students self-assessed again to reflect on how they did.

Hope conducted these post-unit reflections to help students—and herself—identify skills to target and skills accomplished as a result of the unit work completed. She asked students to reflect on these data to support their growth and encourage them to think about next goals in what they might need to continue to practice. Hope shared that she would collect these pages, read through them, and make written comments as feedback on each student's page and ensured that each student read and understood the feedback through individual conferences.

Hope also made careful note of what each student chose as a goal so that when conferring with students, she could whenever possible weave this reflection into the discussion and/or teaching with the student (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 3). Hope collected information that was designed to guide the students and then provided her with further information from which to work as the unit carried forth, as I discuss below. Moreover, though these goals began as concepts that were predetermined by the curriculum, Hope's practices created ways for the students to construct their own meaning within the contexts of their own work in relationship to these goals.

Hope worked with students to consider what they felt they had accomplished towards reaching their reading goals during their independent reading time, as one example demonstrated during observation #5, 10/28/14. Hope kept track of the goal pages during the unit and had students refer to them regularly. She provided written feedback on how the students were

progressing, offering feedback students could use to modify what they were doing independently as readers to improve in these areas. Each goal was on a sticky note as shown below.

Table 3. *Feedback Note*

| Teacher Written | Student Written | Student Written |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| At the end of the chapter I can retell the: Beginning Middle End Then I ask myself . . . do I understand? | Try to stop and jot to say how my character is feeling and what is happening. | Envision and make a movie in my mind. |

After rereading, students picked one to think more deeply about and then shared with their reading workshop partner what they did during reading workshop to reach that goal. Hope gave tips to support this work: “Show your partner where you did some work towards your goal” and “Explain how you worked on your goal” (p. 5). Hope was able to use the information she gathered from the pre-assessments and the students’ subsequent reflection to support students’ thinking and track their goals. Through goal setting, students were clear about where they were headed and could focus their independent practice on making progress towards these learning goals.

Summary

What I witnessed in Hope’s classroom suggests that formative assessment practices and data collection can be used within reading workshop to support student engagement, independence, and goal setting. This finding gives us new understandings about the ability of formative assessment practices to be enacted across the reading workshop and ways data collected can enhance teaching and learning within the reading workshop structure. As observed

in Hope's classroom, assessment and data informed her instruction and student support in these three key areas. She was able to enact formative assessment practices and collect data while students were effectively engaged in reading tasks that supported their independent learning as readers. Moreover, the environment of reading workshop afforded Hope the opportunity to promote engagement, goal setting, and independence in order to foster learning.

In the next section, I highlight ways that Hope used assessment and data collection to individualize instruction to better match student need. She continued to support these three key areas of engagement, independence and goal setting; however, it was because of the environment and the engagement and independence her students demonstrated during the reading workshop that Hope was able to use her data in more specific and individualized ways. Below, I offer examples of where I saw this in her teaching.

Increasing Opportunities for Individualized Learning

One of the hallmark features of reading workshop is that all students are supported to read and write at their own academic level throughout the process. Constructivist teachers are responsible for matching learning experiences to a child's developmental level in order for optimal learning to take place (Vygotsky, 1978). Through knowing a student's reading level and what skills and strategies they have in place, teachers can better individualize instruction to match everyone's diverse needs. As Bruner (1960) suggested, it is important for learning to be structured in a way that learners are able to readily grasp the information since they construct knowledge for themselves. Each learner constructs his or her own meaning along the way, making it critical to take advantage of opportunities to individualize instruction.

The reading workshop literature has suggested that the structure of reading workshop can afford teachers increased opportunities to individualize instruction to meet student needs (Calkins, 2015). Teachers are able to support students to work with materials and on skills that are best suited to each student's current level of functioning. Evidence in the research on reading workshop suggests that this model has the potential to increase teachers' confidence in their ability to do this work with the goal of meeting the needs of all students (Reutel & Cooter, 1991; Towle, 2000; Williams, 2001). With this confidence also comes evidence that reading workshop is a model that can be applied to a variety of populations (Blake, 2006; Shatzer, 1996; Williams, 2001) because of the potential to individualize instruction.

What I saw in Hope's classroom was specifically the use of formative assessment and data collected that provided her with assistance in delivering instruction that closely matched student's individual needs. As already noted, the assessment Hope enacted was through both

planned and informal opportunities. I realized that Hope's practices offer evidence and more specific detail in relation to the ways that the reading workshop model, with intentional formative assessment used as a tool within the model, has the potential to support all students in providing individualized instruction. The study of Hope's practices provides insight into the ways that this occurred. In the following sections, I provide examples of this assessment work and discuss the assessments, the data collected, and the subsequent teaching that transpired.

Planned Assessments

Planned assessments were used for the purpose of measuring where students were at with a set of unit skills that were predetermined by the curriculum that Hope's district followed (Interview #2, 10/28/2014, p. 1). Hope used assessment information in order to plan for instruction. She used assessments that were appropriate for the structures already in place in her classroom. Below, I highlight spaces in which Hope used data collected from planned pre-assessments to purposefully ensure student interactions and individualize learning, thus tailoring the predetermined data to the needs of her students. I observed this specifically within the mini-lesson and during small group and individual teaching situations. I provide examples of each of these below.

Mini-lesson. Hope took advantage of information collected through planned formative assessments to maximize and enhance her mini-lesson instruction. For example, during Observation #4 (10/22/14), Hope's focus, and more specifically the connection of the mini-lesson, was based on data she collected during the pre-assessment for the unit. Hope stated:

I was reading last night through your thinking that you did yesterday about the characters in our book Thundercake. It made me think about what we have been working on and another strategy I could teach you to help us dig deeper about the characters we are meeting in our books. (p. 1)

Here we see that Hope mentioned how she had noticed something the students had done or that she had reviewed their work. She took this pre-assessment information and tailored it to match the work in her classroom. It gave her information that she could use in context in order to know what to teach next. Instruction was individualized to meet a whole group need and supported the unit of study as well. Formative assessment, by definition, is an approach that encourages gathering evidence about students' current level of learning and then adapting instruction to get to those goals (Sadler, 1989). Through the use of formative evidence gathered, Hope could tailor the whole group instruction accordingly. In this case, since she had noticed many students struggling with getting to know the characters in books (Informal Conversation, 10/21/14) on the pre-assessment (see Appendix K), she crafted her mini-lesson to match that need.

Hope shared with me that her pre-assessment data also indicated that most of the students were having a hard time identifying the story elements (character, setting, problem, solution). Given this information, she felt she needed to plan and teach some extra strategies and add in some mini-lessons focusing on story elements. She would focus on what these concepts were and why they were important to pay attention to as readers in order to support the gap in knowledge she was noticing in the data. Hope also used her pre-assessment data to inform her instruction during the share. During observation #4 (10/22/14), Hope read a little bit more of their mentor text and asked the students to turn-and-talk about what they were noticing about the characters, in order to give them some extra practice with this skill. As evidenced in the examples above, Hope used data she collected to provide mini-lessons that better met the needs of her students.

Small group and individual teaching. Hope also used data she collected through the pre-assessments to plan for small group and individual teaching opportunities with students. She

was able to collect other individual information that she could then use to provide specific scaffolds for students to individualize instruction even further. I will address the use of scaffolding later in Chapter 5.

Following the pre-assessment for the character unit, for example, I observed that Hope had identified four students who were not able to identify facts about the main character in the book she read. Hope was able to place these four students into a small group early in the unit to reinforce this identified skill. Hope made instructional modifications with the students by reading aloud a different book to them, and also had the students practice the skill of identifying facts about the main character in their own independent books. She did this so she could provide another opportunity for practice along with some supportive teacher coaching by reminding them to “read a little bit, stop to think what am I learning about the character?, then list those facts across your fingers, then do it again” (Observation #4, 10/22/14, p. 3). Hope gave students time to practice in an authentic reading situation, and was able to support a skill where students were struggling. Hope planned instruction for this group based on pre-assessment data she had collected to provide extra guided practice while encouraging students to try it independently as well. Through the use of data to modify instruction, Hope could ensure that the students received targeted instruction and were provided the time to practice their learning (Calkins, 2001; Serafini, 2001).

Finally, Hope was able to use her pre-assessment data to plan for one-on-one instruction opportunities. For example, during Observation #5 (10/28/14), in an informal conversation Hope stated that on a particular student’s pre-assessment, he could identify who the characters were and what they were doing in the book; however, he found it difficult to identify how the

character was feeling and provide evidence for why. I watched as Hope conducted a conference with him where she provided him with ways to improve his understanding of the concept of characters and their feelings. Hope told the student:

It is so important to read books in a way where we stop and think about what is happening in our books and why . . . especially when it comes to how our characters are feeling. This helps us understand the story in a stronger and more meaningful way. (Observation #5, 10/28/14, p. 4)

Hope then also provided a support strategy for the student. She had him jot new details on a post-it and then place post-its across his book to help remind him to stop and do this kind of thinking as he was reading. Here we see that the student was able to access the support Hope provided within his natural reading activity. This provided him the opportunity to apply this concept to support his independent reading. The learning opportunities created via Hope's use of assessment allowed the student to have the opportunity to construct knowledge for himself (Dewey, 1928).

In sum, planned assessments provided Hope with a set of data—connected to unit outcomes—to use in many different ways across her reading workshop. Based on the data, Hope was able to provide modifications to her instruction in order to meet the needs of her students. She worked to individualize mini-lessons, conferences, and small group instruction to more closely meet the needs of her students. The reading workshop structure gave her the opportunities to provide this individualized instruction and gave students a chance to practice independently as readers. In the next part, I discuss ways Hope enacted formative assessment practices and data collection on a more informal basis and discuss ways she was able to use the information she gathered to further individualize her instruction.

Assessing Informally

Hope conducted assessments and collected data on an ongoing informal basis, embedded within the structure of reading workshop as well. Sometimes these data collection opportunities were planned, for instance, during the active engagement of the mini-lesson. Yet other times were unplanned, such as when students were getting ready for independent reading or as she walked from one student she just finished conferring with to another. Sometimes she observed a student in need and went to that student first (Interview #2, 10/27/14, p. 3). Either way, Hope conducted formative assessments and data collection in order to identify student needs, thus allowing her the ability to modify instruction. These data were collected during the learning process and used to directly improve the quality of instruction while students were engaged in the actual practices (Jonassen, 1999) of reading. However, importantly, the data collected in these situations also aided Hope in making her instruction, across other parts of her reading workshop, address student need.

Below I highlight spaces where Hope collected this kind of data, give examples of how she collected it, and describe how she used that data to individualize her instruction. The three main times I observed Hope engage in informal data collection was during the following: the active engagement of the mini-lesson; independent practice (as children were getting started for reading time, mid-workshop teach, and the share); and during small group and individual teaching situations.

Informal Assessment in the Mini-lesson

The mini-lesson is structured in a way that it offers the opportunity for quick, informal data collection and feedback. I observed Hope capitalizing on data collection by intentionally engaging in assessment practices during the active engagement portion of the mini-lesson. She

mingled in the students' spaces, listening in, quickly assessing through observation and questioning, and responding on the spot to what students were doing. Given the informal nature of this assessment, her responses varied. Sometimes she offered verbal suggestions to students. For example, "You could say more about why that was important . . . ask your partner what they think" (Observation #6, 11/18/2014, p. 2). Other times she restated steps of the particular strategy taught in the mini-lesson so students could try again. For example, after listening in on one partnership talking, she stopped students and stated: "Remember, say what you notice about the characters, say what you notice about the setting, then say how they fit together . . . say what's important." (Observation #5, 10/28/2014, p. 2).

During the active engagement, partners were expected to work together to apply the new skill and strategy they were learning in the mini-lesson in order to potentially bridge this to their later independent practice. This provided a social context in order for the students to construct meaning with another's support, and Hope was able to both insert supports (determined by her assessments) and continue to gather more data about students' thinking.

Informal Assessment During Independent Practice

The large block of independent practice time is a key component of the reading workshop structure. Recall that this time also includes the reading workshop elements of "getting started," the mid-workshop teach, and the share. What I was able to observe in Hope's classroom was that the independent practice also offered many opportunities for ongoing assessment and informal data collection. Hope was able to capitalize on this time and collected data as students were engaged. Below I offer an example during each of these times to illustrate how Hope utilized quick, informal data collection to give some additional support, teaching points, and/or

clarifications to students. This individualized support was based on the results of her formative assessment practices.

As students started each day for independent reading time, Hope was able to quickly observe and assess which students might need some support. For example, after observation #5, I asked Hope about why she met with the first student she did during the independent reading time. Hope stated that:

As students are getting themselves going I like to glance around and take note of how students are settling in. When I did this today I noticed that this particular student did not have any sticky notes out and I had also overheard his conversation with his partner today during the active engagement of the mini lesson today and it wasn't particularly strong in the area of text evidence. He wasn't giving that text evidence to support his ideas, something we had talked about in a conference together, so I thought reminding him why we sticky notes parts in our book with evidence to support our thinking can not only lift the level of our partner talk but help our understanding of what we are reading as well it would help him make the most of his independent reading time. (Informal Conversation, 10/28/14, p. 1)

Hope used multiple data points, what she observed during the mini-lesson, active engagement, and prior information, to individualize her instruction to match what she perceived his needs to be. She was able to utilize the structure and environment of the reading workshop to assess and meet the individual needs of a student right away before he got started on his independent work.

Hope was also able to utilize the mid-workshop teach to individualize her instruction. For example, after completing small group instruction with some students, she walked around and watched her readers, looking for the learning behaviors reflective of the small group instructional skills she was just teaching (Informal Conversation, 11/18/14, p. 5). She then stopped all her students for the mid-workshop teach and adjusted her instruction based on what she was observing. As she observed, she stopped the group and instructed:

Readers can you look at me for a second. I was just meeting with a small group and it got me thinking about how many of you might need some of the same teaching that I just practiced with them. I am noticing that so many of you are turning the page and letting your eyes linger on the picture in order to learn more about your characters. That is such smart reading work. Can I give you another tip that I just gave these other readers. Not only can your eyes linger on the picture to learn more about the characters in your books but you can also reread pages to learn more. Why don't you try that right now? Go back to a page you have already read and reread it asking yourself what else am I learning about this character here? You can not only do that on one page but on many pages. Ok readers back to work! (Observation #6, 11/18/14, p. 3)

Hope took the instructional skills from the small group of students and then expanded it to provide the necessary support for other students who may have needed it. Her observations, and the data it yielded, led to modified teaching. Research on formative assessment has suggested that using data collected to modify instruction to better match student need (Popham, 2008) helps students make progress in their learning of a concept. This effective instruction builds on what children already know and can do, and moves them to new levels of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) by giving them another way to potentially approach and engage in their reading work.

Assessment and data collection similarly occurred during the share, the time at the very end of workshop time used to provide closure to that day's workshop time. For example, during Observation #4 (10/22/14), when Hope brought her students back to the carpet for the share, she first started off by praising them for their excellent work during the independent reading time. She shared with them that something she was noticing in a few of the conversations she had with students that day was that they could use some extra practice in "*retelling the stories they were reading in chunks instead of part by part*" (p. 5). Hope got out her mentor text and modeled retelling the beginning, middle, and end. She then asked the students to try it out with the book they brought to the carpet. While students were practicing, Hope was moving among

students, assessing and collecting data through observation of their practice, responding with advice to all of them in the form of voice-overs (not stopping students but just offering reminders as they practiced) like “In the beginning . . .” and “In the middle . . .” and “At the end . . .” and “Remember to tell just the BIG events and not all the little ones!” Hope used the observational assessment data she collected to inform her instruction. She gave extra practice in an area where students were experiencing difficulty in learning.

In another share, I witnessed Hope using observational assessment and data collection to inform her instruction and set students up for future independence was during Observation #9, 12/09/14. During this share, Hope reflected on what she observed readers doing during that day’s reading workshop. She listed off some specific behaviors readers were engaged in while pointing to their current anchor chart that listed these behaviors. These included that readers were: “taking a picture walk and not a run, stopping at the text features and thinking . . . what is this text feature teaching me? how is it adding to my understanding about this topic?, and discovering information in the text and in the text features and then stopping to think . . . how does this all fit together?” (p. 3). Hope’s observation data supported her feedback to students, reinforcing reading behaviors they were exhibiting.

Hope used this part of the reading workshop structure to encourage and offer support for building independence in her readers. Instruction was individualized based on what she was noticing her readers doing. She also provided reminders of tools they could access to help increase their problem-solving skills and, in turn, their independence. Students were able to become more proficient in their literacy skills when Hope was able to transfer learning

experiences into opportunities where students could make meaning through social interactions and independent engagement.

Informal Assessments in Small Group and Individual Teaching

Independent reading time can offer many opportunities for quick informal data collection and informed instructional decision making. What I observed was that Hope could act upon formative data collected immediately or analyze them later to plan for future teaching and learning opportunities. For example, during Observation #4 (10/22/14), Hope sat down next to a student for a conference. She began this conference by asking the student what she was working on as a reader, and after listening to the student read a page aloud, Hope asked the student questions. Hope then paused the conference and complimented the student:

I was noticing how you were reading the picture and doing some noticing about what was in the picture and you were stopping to do some important thinking about what was happening in your book . . . that's so important to do as a reader because it allows you to dig deeper into getting to know the characters in your books and in figuring out what is happening in the story. Hope then went into teaching her that "another thing you can do to dig deeper into the books you are reading is to do some stopping and jotting about what you are thinking. Like when I am reading a book like Thundercake for example when I get to a part of the book where I am doing lots of thinking I like to stop and jot that thinking so I can share it later with a partner or look back at it to connect to something I notice later in the book. I like to jot what the character is doing or thinking or feeling and then my thinking to go along with it. Like look here where I jotted that the character was feeling scared because she is under the bed. Let's put some post-its across your book so you can try this out! (p. 3).

Because of the assessment practices (observations, questioning, anecdotal note-taking) and the data from those practices, Hope was able to adjust her teaching within the conference as it was happening. She was able to individualize instruction to specifically meet this student's needs in real time.

Similarly, during Observation #6, 11/18/2016, Hope used the formative assessment practice of anecdotal notes to plan for a conference with a particular student. On this day, I observed Hope sit down next to a student with this student's conference page ready. When she sat down by the student, Hope said:

Last time we met we talked about how we can read through a chapter and then before going to the next chapter you can stop, think, and jot about what that chapter was about to help you remember across your book. Can you tell me how that's been going?"

Hope was using the anecdotal notes from their last conference as a way to start the conference to reinforce the previous skill she had taught. She then used what transpired during the conference to help her decide whether to reteach or choose another skill to work on. Since the student had a hard time pointing to a spot where he had done this work in his book, Hope decided to provide some reteaching. They practiced reading a little bit of the text together, stopping to jot about what they read. Hope provided him with blank sticky notes in his book and commented that she would check in with him tomorrow to follow up (Observation #6, 11/18/2016, p. 3). Hope's assessment practices allowed for reteaching to match student need.

Both examples draw on constructivist teaching and learning practices in Hope's ability to vary instruction, even in-the-moment, to meet student need. I saw Hope using formative assessment practices such as observations, questioning, and anecdotal note-taking (Heritage, 2007; Popham, 2008) in order to gather this continuous data. The information Hope was able to gather using these practices gave her information she could use to individualize learning within the reading workshop structure.

Summary

The findings from the reading workshop observed in this case study illustrate the dynamics of a constructivist classroom in action and the effective use of formative assessments and data to support literacy teaching and learning practices. The amount and types of data that Hope was able to collect were a direct result of the structure of the reading workshop. As we saw, these data allowed Hope to be able to provide student-centered instruction throughout many spaces across her reading workshop. By collecting pre-assessment data and using them in formative ways, Hope was able to tailor instruction to individual students. She demonstrated constructivist teaching and learning practices through the use of formative assessments, data collection, and modified instruction to individualize literacy instruction in her classroom.

Providing Scaffolded Instruction to Meet Student Need

Individualizing instruction to meet students' needs is an important part of constructivist teaching practices. When teachers do this, they are providing instruction that will support a student, or group of students, in meeting their individual needs. Scaffolding instruction is a method whereby the teacher uses a variety of instructional techniques to move students towards stronger understanding. When scaffolding is progressive and successful, it develops greater independence for students as learners. Scaffolding is structured in a way to break apart bigger skills and introduce them in smaller components to help students work towards learning a specific skill. Scaffolded instruction is designed to provide supports for students that are eventually taken away in order to move from one skill to the next. This kind of instruction, like individualized instruction, can also be used to support individual or whole group needs.

Scaffolding instruction involves the use of purposeful and sequential instructional techniques used to move students towards greater learning and independence in the learning

process. When teachers scaffold instruction, they reinforce the skill or strategy the student is learning while supporting growth towards student independence. The amount of support a student needs to accomplish a particular goal or skill varies. Teachers provide support to help students reach higher levels of learning that they would not be able to reach on their own (Bruner, 1960; Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding can also be used to bridge learning gaps between what students know and have learned and what they are expected to know and be able to do at various learning points.

During this study, I observed Hope scaffold her instruction, based on data, in order to provide all her students with differing levels of support to meet their learning needs. I not only observed Hope varying the amount of support she gave students, but I also observed her vary how she delivered this support. Below I offer several examples in order to illustrate how this looked in action across Hope's reading workshop. I include examples from Hope's whole group instruction, small group instruction, and one-on-one teaching situations. However, within each of these formats, I also observed Hope delivering instruction that had varying levels of support in order to best match the needs of her students, and I include examples of that as well.

Whole Group Scaffolded Instruction

The structure of reading workshop offers several opportunities to provide whole group instruction. Often this time can mean that the needs of some students are being met, while others are hearing instruction that might not be relevant to their learning needs. Hope took advantage of this time and used it to provide scaffolded instruction to the whole group. She utilized data she had collected in order to identify instructional modifications to address the needs of students. Rather than just being a time of teacher-directed instruction, these whole group times became a

place that had the potential to be better tailored to specific needs and where additional formative assessment could occur. For example, within the mini-lesson, there is a specified time for the teacher to show students directly what she is trying to teach them do as readers. The “teach” portion of the mini-lesson gives the teacher the opportunity to provide a high amount of scaffolding by modeling reading behaviors, skills, and strategies for readers.

During one example, Observation #4, 10/22/14, Hope was teaching her readers how use the words and pictures to learn about the characters and the story. She knew this was what she wanted to focus on based on her pre-assessment data and on the anecdotal notes she had taken during small groups and conferences the week before (Informal Conversation, 10/22/14, p. 4). Hope modeled her instruction using the mentor text Thundercake. Her teaching went like this:

Readers watch me as I hold onto these questions as I “read” the pictures in our book Thundercake by Patricia Polacco.” The teacher then modeled reading the pictures and thinking out loud what she was thinking because of the pictures and what she remembers in the story. She looked at the pictures, made her face and body look like she was thinking hard about the pictures and the story, she said out loud what she was thinking about it all. She went through part of the story using words like: I’m noticing . . . , I’m thinking . . . , By reading the pictures I can see the characters doing specific things like . . . , I’m noticing the character’s face changing in this picture here. . . . (Observation #4, 10/22/2014, p. 2)

As evidenced in the example above, Hope was very specific in naming for students exactly what she was doing as a reader and when she was doing it. Hope’s teaching provided a modeling of the strategy in practice for students in order for them to see a progression of skill and, further, have the potential to make a transference of the skill into their independent practice.

Similarly, Hope was also able to scaffold her instruction during partner time. During one particular partner time (Observation #10, 12/16/14, p. 5), students were observed pointing to the pictures in their nonfiction texts, and were heard reading aloud paragraphs or whole pages to

prove the information they were sharing with their partners. I heard students asking questions like “What did you learn?” and observed them comparing and contrasting their books for information. Students were actively interacting with their text within the social context of this part of the reading workshop structure. They were helping each other make meaning.

During this time, Hope was able to go around the room and enact formative assessment practices like observing and listening, in order to provide appropriate scaffolds to support partnership work. These scaffolds included verbal prompts to elevate the level of the students’ understanding the happening in the partnership or reminders of partnerships of behaviors in which they should be engaging. I heard Hope prompting students to “show the proof” about what they were learning, “ask your partner questions about where they learned that information or what else did they learn that goes along with that,” “remember your partner talk should sound like: another thing I’m thinking about that is . . . ” or “another thing I learned in this part is . . . ” or “I can add onto your thinking with . . . ” (Observation #9, 12/9/14, p. 4). These scaffolds reinforced partnership behavior (staying on topic when talking, one book in-between them, active listening, etc.), gave students access to language to use when talking to each other, and offered reminders about ways they could successfully interact with their non-fiction texts. Hope provided different levels of scaffolded prompts and reminders to partnerships based on formative data she collected on-the-spot. The environment Hope created allowed her the opportunity to support social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978) between students in what they were learning to do as readers.

Small Group Scaffolded Instruction

Similar to during whole group instruction, Hope was able to provide scaffolded instruction to small groups of students. She could use data she had previously collected through pre- or post-assessments, anecdotal conference notes, observations or conversations, or other data collected in order to meet student needs. This small group instruction, usually including three to five students and lasting around 10 minutes, followed a predictable pattern with a few variables that changed based on the amount of scaffolding Hope determined the group needed. Her groups tended to follow steps: (a) Hope would state the purpose for the small group; (b) she would teach the skill by either modeling what she wanted readers to do, practicing the skill together, or just providing a reminder of what to do (or a combination of all three); (c) the student would try to figure out what a particular word meant in the nonfiction book she was reading. When this student was unsuccessful, Hope started out by prompting her with “What could you try? Could you check the chart?” (p. 3). The student looked at the anchor chart titled *Responsible Readers Use All They Know to Figure Out What a Word Means* (see Appendix O) that was hanging on their reading workshop wall and tried one of the strategies on the chart. It did not work. Hope then prompted with “What else could you try?” (p. 3). The student tried another alternative from the chart and figured out the meaning of the word. Hope had her continue reading while she continued to prompt reminders when the student got stuck. Hope did not model the skill nor did she offer any other support except to suggest the student continue to try the earlier options. The amount of scaffolding she provided was supportive, yet most of the ownership was on the student to do the work and to make meaning. The scaffolding Hope was providing was reinforcing student behaviors, working to potentially make these strategies permanent and independent for this student.

During Observation #11, 12/22/14, I observed Hope during two one-on-one conferences with students. In the first conference, Hope used the data she collected at the onset of a conference to effectively scaffold instruction to meet this student's needs. In this conference, Hope's teaching point was to stop to retell information learned after reading a page. She asked the student to try this out and noticed she was having trouble retelling what she read. Hope responded by modeling summarizing (retelling) what she learned on a page from the Bats text. She did this by rereading a page, stopping to think, then listing important facts across her fingers. Hope then had the student do the same thing in her text and coached into her practice, giving her tips like: "stop and think was that an important fact?" and "make sure as you read you are thinking about what's important here" and "stop, think, what is this section about and what have you learned that matches" (p. 4). Hope was able to provide several scaffolds for this student to help increase her level of proficiency with the skill and potentially transfer this skill to independent practice.

During the second conference, Hope's teaching point was to stop at bold words to determine meaning and how they fit with the topic. She started with having the student demonstrate the skill. After having the student try it, she noticed the student stopping at the two bold words on the page, saying what they meant and how they fit with the topic. Since the student demonstrated proficiency, Hope taught something new (informal conversation, 12/22/14) to add to the complexity of the skill. Hope was able to use the formative assessment data she collected, observe proficiency, and modify her instruction to move this student forward in their learning. She stated:

I love the way you stop at the bold words, say what they mean and also say how they fit with the topic you are learning about. That is so important because it helps you learn all

you can about a topic. Can I give you a tip? Another way nonfiction readers learn as much as they can about a topic is to also stop at other words that feel important or that you notice the author using again and again. You can stop, say what these words mean, and also say how they fit with the topic you are learning about. Watch me as I model it then you will get a chance to try. (p. 5)

Hope's scaffolds included modeling and coaching during the student's practice, using prompts like: "stop when you feel there is an important word" and "if it seems the author is repeating an important word again and again stop and say how it fits the topic" (p. 5). In all these conferences, Hope enacted formative assessment data collection, made a decision about what to teach, and then provided an informed decision about what was an appropriate amount of scaffolding to support student learning.

Summary

The structure of reading workshop is critical in supporting constructivist teaching because it allows the teacher the time and space to scaffold instruction for students in many different ways. The amount of scaffolds Hope provided was based on her analysis of the data and what the data were telling her students needed. This structure also provided Hope an opportunity to enact formative assessment practices, embedded within reading workshop time, in order to truly provide instruction that was current and specifically matched to student need. Hope could then deliver this instruction in a variety of ways with varying amounts of support in order to potentially maximize student learning and gradually remove teacher support to encourage more student independence.

Conclusion

This study highlighted how Hope used the structure of reading workshop, with embedded formative assessment practices, to enhance literacy instruction. The utilization of reading

workshop with embedded formative assessment practices enhanced the instructional role of the teacher as well as the impact it had on student learning. In addition, the constructivist and formative assessment practices observed throughout this study of reading workshop frequently resulted in data that informed teacher instructional practices. Some of the data collected initiated immediate instructional modifications during a particular lesson, while other data from formative assessments were utilized to design future lessons focused on individual student needs.

Significant among the findings in this case study were the teacher's methods to plan, measure, and individualize instruction using the framework of reading workshop. Through multiple observations, the evidence identified the in-depth specifics of how formative assessment practices complemented reading workshop. Assessment practices in Hope's classroom became a bridge to diversify student groupings to teach in whole group, small group, and one-on-one interactions. Hope was able to demonstrate continuous assessment practices to improve individual and group instruction.

The findings in this chapter showcased the inter-connectedness between reading workshop, formative assessment, and data to modify teaching and scaffolding practices to potentially improve student learning. Enacting formative assessment practices and data collection throughout the reading workshop structure allowed Hope and her students to have opportunities for student engagement, motivation and independence, individualized learning, and scaffolded instruction in order to meet and understand individual student need. In Chapter 6, I will highlight conclusions drawn from this study, discuss limitations, and provide possibilities for how this particular study can drive future research.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusions

The first major purpose of this study was to observe a teacher using a constructivist model of reading instruction, namely reading workshop, as her primary approach to literacy instruction, including examining ways she potentially used assessment. The next major purpose of this study was to look closely at the intersections between instruction and assessment in reading workshop, if there were any, and analyze the possible impacts for teachers and students. Underlying each of these major purposes was the goal of working towards a more complete understanding of how reading workshop and formative assessment could possibly work together to provide teachers and students with processes they might use to strengthen instruction and learning. As stated earlier, the literature related to constructivist reading instruction practices and formative assessment within the model is limited. The analysis in this study provides evidence that the reading workshop model is enhanced and supported by the inclusion of intentional formative assessment practices in ways that have the potential to support students' progress as readers in constructivist ways.

The three main questions that guided this research were:

1. What does literacy instruction look like in practice for a teacher who is implementing the reading workshop model of reading instruction?
2. What is occurring in the classroom when a teacher who uses reading workshop, incorporates assessment practices within the reading workshop structure?
3. How does the teacher use (or not use) assessments of her students in her instructional decision making for reading workshop?

The next sections of this chapter will highlight study conclusions, study implications, study limitations, possible future research, and a final summary.

Study Conclusions

Based on what was observed in Hope's classroom, and the literature on constructivist teaching and learning practices, reading workshop, and formative assessment, we can draw some important conclusions from this study. The first study conclusion is focused on constructivist reading instruction. In Hope's classroom, I observed that using formative assessment, embedded into reading workshop, was a useful and productive way to support constructivist reading instruction. The second conclusion from this study is that the structure of reading workshop with embedded formative assessment practices maximized teacher time in key ways that then further supported meaning making for the students. In Hope's classroom, I saw how the flexibility of the reading workshop structure provided Hope with the time to both collect important data, and to be able to use this to inform instruction. The third conclusion of this study is that the combination of reading workshop with embedded formative assessment increased opportunities for differentiated instruction in important ways. In Hope's classroom, I saw that the use of formative assessment provided the necessary information and the opportunity for authentic and productive differentiation that supported the opportunities the children had to construct meaning. I will present each of these three factors individually and then conclude with the combination of all three.

Maximizing Constructivist Reading Instruction

Constructivism is an important theoretical approach to reading instruction because it helps to define qualities of effective literacy instruction. Constructivist theory suggests that

reading instruction and learning is a social process that is active and authentic. The learners themselves are viewed as makers of meaning and knowledge, based on their own experiences and understanding of the world in which they live. Constructivist literacy instruction fosters critical thinking through peer interactions, student motivation for learning, student choice in reading materials, and student independence (Von Glasersfield, 1989). In addition, constructivism provides the foundations for scaffolded and tailored instruction that provides learning opportunities that have the potential meet the needs of students in a variety of ways.

As applied to the reading instruction occurring in Hope's classroom, it was the intentionality of embedding formative assessment practices within the reading workshop that proved to support constructivist reading instruction. This is important to point out because the theoretical foundation of constructivism that framed the practices of Hope's classroom was made most evident through the unique combination of formative assessment practices fully embedded within the reading workshop structure. Hope and her students were able to take advantage of teaching and learning opportunities that promoted the tenets of constructivist reading instruction. Her quick observations as students got settled for independent reading time—observing during the active engagement of the mini-lesson; listening in on partnership conversations; and individualizing and scaffolding her whole group, small group, and one-on-one instruction-- suggested that this model, with embedded formative assessment practices and data collection, promotes constructivist practices from start to end.

This model is different from others in that the data collection itself and the teaching that resulted from it were purposeful in its delivery and follow-through. Hope was able to use her data consistently to encourage readers to construct meaning of her teaching and then have them

apply and practice these skills within texts matched to their abilities. She did this through the implementation of a variety of teaching and learning methods (not always seen in other literacy models), such as whole group, small group, and one-on-one teaching interactions with students. Hope was also able to use the purposeful data she collected to deliver instruction that was individualized. By varying the method of instruction and being able to individualize the content of the teaching, students were able to receive individualized instruction with varying levels of scaffolding to support their learning.

Hope's reading workshop offered students an authentic environment to learn, practice, and share their learning within the social interactions intentionally embedded within a constructivist structure. This structure involved students in authentic learning tasks, not busy-work as sometimes seen in other models, that provided opportunities for meaningful learning on a daily basis. Using a constructivist approach to reading instruction enhanced the teaching and learning happening in Hope's classroom. The constructivist environment of reading workshop gave Hope the time needed to orchestrate all of these structures in a way that was purposeful, beneficial, and meaningful for her students. This approach, which gave Hope time and space to meet with students, is discussed more in depth in the next section.

Maximizing Teacher Time

One of the most important things I observed in Hope's classroom was the way in which the structure of reading workshop allowed her the time and the space to conduct formative assessment. This further meant she had the time and flexibility to use data she collected through formative assessment practices in constructive and productive ways. One way this time factor was important lies in the increased opportunities for social interactions to occur (student-teacher,

student-student). Hope took full advantage of this time and used it to continually collect data and then carefully modify the instruction to support students' individual needs, as outlined in the next conclusion.

Reading workshop is a unique literacy model that values and provides students with a prolonged period of time to independently read and improve literacy skills. In this model, time is structured in a way where there is a little bit of whole group instruction at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the workshop block; then the rest of the time is dedicated to student practice of reading skills and strategies, independently and with partners, in texts that are matched to their level. Because of this, teachers have more opportunities to be purposeful in their data collection during authentic reading situations, and then purposefully analyze that data, respond, and deliver individualized instruction to students.

As evidenced in Hope's classroom, the reading workshop structure allowed her the time and flexibility to meet with students in a variety of ways and specifically match instruction to student need in content and design. Although parts of the reading workshop structure were consistent and happened on a daily basis, Hope could re-organize content for these components in response to her students' needs. She could also determine how she could best support her readers during that extended block of independent reading time. In her classroom, Hope was deliberate in her data collection and analysis practices in order to provide instruction during the time the reading workshop structure allowed. Hope had the time and flexibility to conduct formative assessments and collect relevant and timely data, whenever she wanted to, in order to support her students' reading needs. Through maximizing her time within the reading workshop structure, Hope could use formative assessment to collect data on a continuous basis. The

importance of this lies in the use of this data as it can effectively lead into authentic differentiated instruction, something I witnessed in Hope's classroom.

Maximizing Differentiated Instruction

Another important conclusion to draw from this study is how the combination of reading workshop with embedded formative assessment increased opportunities for authentic differentiated instruction. Through very focused data analysis, Hope was able to make instructional decisions, address misconceptions, and create individual learning interactions in order to encourage and support reading independence. More immediate emphasis could be put on the learners themselves and what they needed in the “now” to help them move forward.

What I witnessed in Hope's classroom was how she used the data she collected to be intentional in her instructional design. Not only was Hope able to plan for whole group, small group, and one-on-one instructional modifications, but she was able to plan for differentiated instruction to meet student need. Because of the increase in flexible teacher time and continuous data collection, Hope could explicitly plan for instruction and individually monitor growth of her readers. She could decide how much scaffolding students needed to continuously support their movement towards independence. As stated above, it was the time and flexibility this structure provided that allowed Hope the opportunity to engage in this scaffolded instruction that was deeply rooted in current data. It was the purposeful practices of reading workshop, embedded formative assessment, and intentional differentiated instruction that were highlighted throughout this study, making this a unique but replicable model.

Summary of Conclusions

This study identified that effective reading practices need to be purposeful in design and intentional in practice. The intentional design in combining a structure, formative assessments, and individualized instruction is not quality literacy by chance, but rather by purpose in preparing teachers how to deliver quality reading instruction. Although the individual components are not new to literacy instruction, the deliberate teacher combination of all three in unison was the result of what I observed in Hope's classroom. This model can be replicated and possibly improved upon, but only with a commitment among literacy educators to engage in purposeful change.

Implications of the Study

The data collected in this study bring forward some important considerations for districts and teachers who choose to implement constructivist literacy practices through reading workshop embedded with formative assessment practices. The following are significant implications stemming from this study's data. There is a need to: (a) provide professional development in the areas of: reading workshop instruction, assessment practices, and authentic instructional differentiation; and (b) support and encourage collecting and using formative assessment data to drive instruction. In the next section, I will go into greater depth for each of these key implications.

Professional Development

The use of reading workshop with embedded and continuous assessment, while effective as shown by this study, is a highly complex model. The ability to plan and create space, time, and independent learning can be a challenging structure to implement. Teacher success in this model would be dependent on quality support and professional development. What would this

professional development for teachers look like? For even experienced teachers to implement reading workshop effectively, embed formative assessment practices, and then provide instructional differentiation, continuous professional development in instructional planning, classroom management, and competent literacy instruction and assessment would be required.

Instructional planning is the foundation of any successful teaching and learning classroom. The components of reading workshop require planning for high levels of engagement and independent learning. A teacher must be familiar with each student and establish goals for all of the students to move from one place of learning to the next. The teacher must also prepare students to be able to engage independently in the various components of reading workshop. For example, while Hope was conducting groups or conferences in a literacy skill designed for one to four students, other students in the classroom needed to remain focused and on task with their independent reading in ways that were productive and meaningful. The skill that Hope evidenced in carrying out the instruction in her classroom was evident.

The set-up of the classroom environment and classroom management are systems within a classroom that enhance student learning. This system is even more critical in the structure of reading workshop. Teacher flexibility in time, movement, and assessment throughout the workshop is contingent on teaching students to be task-centered and responsive as individual learners. Oftentimes classroom management is based on a teacher's personal style and desire for order. While in the case of reading workshop, teachers would need to be prepared to customize a system whereby student engagement and independence are paramount to the structures they put into place. The need for improved teacher training in literacy and assessment is important in general; however, it becomes especially paramount when teachers are being asked to carry out

such a complex model of teaching using the reading workshop model, embedding formative assessment and data collection practices, and then using that data to inform instruction—the second implication of this study.

Collecting Data to Inform Instruction

Another implication of this study is that methods of data collection, the data itself, and the use of the data may need to be re-conceptualized by teachers and administrators. This may be necessary in order for the partnership of formative assessment and reading workshop to be effective in enhancing teaching and learning. Schools rely heavily on standardized tests, both state- and district-mandated, to fund programming, show growth, and even “prove” that a school or teacher is effective (Popham, 1999). Because of this, an over-reliance on these tests and the data they provide teachers and administrators are often required and therefore used to make instructional decisions.

This study provided a look into other kinds of data that teachers can collect to inform their instruction. Some mentioned in this paper, and proven to be useful for Hope, were: (a) observations, (b) anecdotal note-taking, (c) discussions, and (d) planned formative assessment check-ins. These assessments are most useful because they offer teachers on-the-spot data that are connected to the actual learning happening in the classroom in real-time, allowing for individualized instruction that can have an impact on student learning. One implication of this is that districts may need to shift their thinking in terms of what kinds of data are acceptable as evidence or proof of student growth and achievement.

Traditionally, teachers and administrators have placed a great emphasis on standardized state- and district-wide test results. This disproportionate focus can result in an over-reliance on

state-mandated assessment results as a way to collect student performance data. However, when a school or district chooses to include formative assessment data collection methods in the classroom, particularly in the reading workshop structure, data can be collected frequently and used to improve differentiated teaching and learning. In summary, the structure of reading workshop combined with continuous formative assessment practices can provide valid and valuable results to measure student learning. Significant in the future application of this study, however, will be a substantial shift in thinking among educators of the sources and kinds of data best suited as evidence of student growth and achievement.

Study Limitations and Future Research

As with all research, this study has limitations, which are important as we consider how to move forward with implementing quality, constructivist literacy instruction. These limitations provide a springboard to think about future research in this area, which is important as we continue to grow our knowledge in the areas of constructivist teaching and learning practices, reading workshop, and formative assessment.

Limitation: Classroom and School Homogeneity

This study was conducted in a classroom that was less diverse in terms of race and socioeconomic status. While a variety of abilities were evident across the classroom, there was less diversity in the cultural backgrounds of the students in Hope's class, and in the school as a whole. In coming to understand what students need to progress in their reading abilities, teachers may need to adjust their instruction in ways they cannot anticipate. Hope did make many kinds of adjustments, but she was able to operate on a presumption that the adjustments she was making would make sense to the students' ways of thinking and knowing. With a more diverse

population, teachers may not be able to make similar adjustments to what Hope exhibited nor may they be able to presume that the adjustments they do make would make sense to their population of students. The structure of reading workshop allows a teacher to accommodate individual student needs, scaffold instruction, and utilize the flexibility of the structure to address a multitude of learning needs. However, it is critical for the teacher to take into consideration the cultural backgrounds of the students in order to make the kinds of adjustments appropriate to meeting their needs.

The high socioeconomic status of the school should be taken into consideration as well. This means there were necessary materials, an abundance of books, and teacher support and training readily available. The importance of the environment of the classroom which included having enough appropriate materials was highlighted here. This supported Hope in being able to move the students toward independence (an important part of constructivist teaching). Moreover, the materials they needed to function in that independent mode were readily available. The socioeconomic status of the school community as well meant that class sizes were reasonable, and Hope was able to connect with students and the reading workshop structure was a feasible way to run a classroom. If we believe that the constructivist practices highlighted in this study are more effective means of literacy instruction, then we also need to consider what this might need to look like in a situation where not all of the materials and supports would be available. We need to consider what are the “must haves” and how can classrooms adjust with fewer resources but still engage in these important constructivist practices.

Future Research: Expansion of Socioeconomic and Cultural Diversity

In the study setting, Hope was able to get to know students well individually. Because of the structure of reading workshop and the flexibility within it, she was also able to collect data and then use them in informative ways directly connected to what students needed. The flexibility that this model offered to Hope and her students meant that many learning styles and cultural ways of engaging in literacy could be included in the instruction and in what children were doing on a daily basis. The teacher could use the flexibility offered in the reading workshop model to build from the variety of literacy traditions that a more diverse group of learners would bring.

Future studies would have the potential to draw from students' background knowledge and/or cultural ways of being able to provide better insights into the instructional methods best suited for each student. Also, future studies using a diverse socioeconomic and cultural student background would be a benefit to understanding the nuanced ways that differentiated instructional practices would unfold. Even though one limitation of this study includes that it was conducted in a more homogeneous classroom in a less diverse district, the indication remains that the reading workshop model's inherent flexibility will allow for further differentiation and accommodation that might be based on cultural meaning making and different literacy traditions. Cultural diversity could be accommodated in the reading workshop model and is worth exploring further.

Limitation: Experienced and Dedicated Reading Workshop Teacher

This study was conducted in a classroom taught by a teacher who had experience with reading workshop. She felt it was an effective model for literacy instruction and at the time of the study had been engaging in reading workshop teaching practices for several years. Although

these were criteria I purposefully set up for participant selection, they also might not tell the whole story. Hope was invested in the model and its delivery. I did have the sense ahead of time that I would be able to see some sort of assessment happening, possibly biasing data gathered in the study and the analysis of that data

As stated above, if we believe that the constructivist practices highlighted in this study are more effective means of literacy instruction, then we also need to consider what this might look like in a situation where the teacher is not invested or is a novice teacher and does not have the background knowledge or experiences to create what was observed in Hope's classroom. It was the orchestration of the components of the reading workshop model embedded with assessment practices that allowed Hope to collect data on her students continuously so her instruction could match their needs. Because Hope knew the structure of reading workshop well, she was able to take advantage of every opportunity to engage in formative assessments practices that yielded important student data. We need to consider what background knowledge is necessary for a teacher to be able to engage in these important constructivist teaching and assessment practices.

Future Research: Study Teachers With Varying Levels of Experience

There would be great potential in the study of teacher education to examine a comparison in skill sets between a novice and experienced teacher in the reading workshop structure. What type of background knowledge as well as applied instructional practices are necessary for teachers at varied career stages to successfully implement the components of reading workshop and embedded formative assessment? This type of study could bring to the forefront skills and background knowledge necessary to implement and improve upon these practices effectively.

This research could also provide a future coaching model for improved literacy instruction, including reading workshop. In addition, teachers in their own classrooms conducting participant action research and documenting their own experiences and perceptions as they go about their work while trying to combine reading workshop and formative assessment would offer rich new possibilities for understanding in this field as well. This connection to the actual enactment of formative assessment and reading workshop could offer teachers a viable “how-to” on how they could take up similar work in their own classrooms. This could give teachers a sense of how they could implement such practices to better meet the needs of a wide range of learners.

Summary

I began this study hoping to explore the ways that a teacher implementing reading workshop as her primary approach to literacy instruction might also incorporate formative assessment practices into her workshop instruction. I conclude this study seeing many possible intersections that were not only meaningful for the teacher but for the students as well. My study strongly suggests that further empirical study of actual classroom practices related to reading workshop and formative assessment and the combination of these would be useful in fully understanding the benefits and effectiveness of constructivist literacy instruction. In sum, the results of this study on reading workshop and the embedding of formative assessment serve as a precursor for future research in the field.

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Appendix A

Invitation Letter

Dear Educator _____,

As part of my doctoral program at UW-Milwaukee, I am conducting a qualitative, case study research project that will give insight into the experiences of elementary classroom teachers who are currently using reading workshop as their primary instructional approach to literacy instruction. I am specifically looking to understand more about the assessment practices used in conjunction with reading workshop and how teachers may or may not use assessment in their instructional-decision making. Very little research has been conducted regarding the intersection of reading workshop and the assessment practices therein. One of the goals of my research is to provide information that will fill that gap in knowledge and expand the research base.

This study will be conducted with you and in your classroom during the Fall 2014 semester (Aug. - Jan.). I would like to ask that you participate in five individual interviews with me and allow me to observe in your room during reading workshop twelve to fourteen times during the semester. In addition, I would ask that you be willing to share particular documents with me to include: anecdotal conferring notes, one-on-one and/or small group lesson plans or notes, or student response work. For student work, we will need to attain consent from the parents and assent from the children themselves.

Fieldnotes will be kept on the classroom observations. If you agree, interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Every effort will be made to protect confidentiality in relationship to data that I collect. Toward this end, in the write-up of the project, and in any subsequent publications, pseudonyms will be used and identifying information will be altered. The same will be true as fieldnotes are written and in the interview transcripts. The information from this study will not be used for evaluative purposes and will not be provided to anyone else in your school or district.

The information gained from this study will become part of my dissertation. It will be shared with a committee of university professors and then placed in the UW-Milwaukee library. The final dissertation will also be available online however, no raw data will ever be made available to the public or for anyone else to access and use.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact me at: lindnerk@uwm.edu at your earliest convenience. I will acknowledge your contact and then speak directly to you by phone to answer any questions you may have and to arrange an initial meeting.

Thank you,

Katherine Lindner

Appendix B

Consent Form

Informed Consent

IRB Protocol

Number: 14.355

UW-Milwaukee

IRB

Approval Date: October 22nd, 2014

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Assessment in the Reading Workshop

Person Responsible for Research:

Katherine Lindner - Doctoral Student & Researcher
Dr. Jennifer Mueller - UWM Faculty & Advisor

Study Description: The purpose of this research study is to describe the possible uses of assessment practices observed within the reading workshop in one elementary classroom. If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to answer questions posed by the researcher during five interview sessions and have your answers audio-taped. You will also be agreeing to be observed at least twelve and up to fourteen times during your regularly scheduled reading workshop instructional block of time. You may also be asked for copies of artifacts that you may already be using in your reading workshop, including some student work. Examples of the artifacts may be: sticky notes or any reading responses students write out.

Risks/Benefits: Risks that you may experience from participating are considered minimal. However, it is important to note that since I am employee of the same district in which you also work, any information you share with me or that I obtain throughout the research process will not be shared with other district teachers or administrators and will not under any circumstances be used for any evaluative purposes. There are no costs for participating. There are no benefits to you other than to further research.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to keep your identity protected within the information collected and reports written from the data. In interview transcriptions, fieldnotes from observations and in write-ups from the data, you will be assigned a pseudonym. If you agree to our conversations being recorded, these conversations will not be played for anyone however, quotes from the interviews may ultimately become part of the final dissertation. Also all identifying information will be altered so as to maximize protection of your identity. None of

the data will be shared with any other employees of your school district. Data from this study, including recorded conversations, written transcripts, observational notes, and any documents that are collected will remain in the custody of the researcher throughout the study in a locked filing cabinet in the home of the researcher. This data will be made available to the participant at any point in time during the study and for a period up to five years after the completion of the study. Only you and the researcher will have access to the information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. If you do choose at any time to withdraw from the study I will ask your permission to use the data I have collected up to that point.

Who do I contact for questions about the study: For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Dr. Jennifer Mueller at jennjm@uwm.edu.

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject? Contact the UWM IRB at 414-229-3173 or irbinfo@uwm.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By signing the consent form, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Date

_____ I consent for the formal interviews to be audio-recorded.

Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative Date

Appendix C

Parental Consent Form



Research Project: Formative Assessment and the Reading Workshop University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee Parent Consent Form

Hello! My name is Katherine Lindner and I am a doctoral student from UW-M. During this first semester, I will be observing your child's teacher during reader's workshop once a week in order to collect data for my doctoral dissertation titled: Formative Assessment and the Reading Workshop. The observations I will be doing will include watching your child's teacher as she is instructing the whole class, in small group instruction, and working one-on-one with students. Part of this process may include looking at your student's responses to reading work and then recording any possible teaching decisions that may be made because of their response work. The information I gather will be used to help me to understand the interactions and how your child's teacher uses children's work to make decisions about next steps in teaching. I will not be using the data to examine your child's achievement or learning in any way particular to your child nor will your child be participating in any reading work that isn't part of what they do on a regular basis as part of the reading workshop. Your child, should their reading response work be used or analyzed within this study, will not be identified by name or by any other identifying characteristics.

I would like to respectfully ask your permission to possibly use or analyze your child's work within this study. If you decide yes, and at a later point decide you want to change your mind, you can simply contact your child's teacher. I will also be asking your child for their permission but only if you as their parent give consent as well. I want to thank you in advance for your consideration in this!

Please sign and return this form to your child's teacher as soon as possible. Thank You.

Please indicate your choice below.

Student Name _____

Please Check One:

I give permission for my child’s reading response work to be used and/or analyzed for the purpose of this study. S/he will not be identified by name or by any other identifying characteristics.

I do NOT want my child reading response work to be used or analyzed within the study.

Parent/Guardian Name (Please print) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

If you would like any additional information, you may contact the Instructional Review Board (IRB). The IRB may ask your name, but all complaints are kept in confidence.

Institutional Review Board
Human Research Protection Program
Department of University Safety and Assurances
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201
(414) 229-3173

October 10th, 2014

Dear Families:

Your child's teacher is participating in a research study with the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. I am the lead researcher for this study. Your child's teacher has agreed to allow me to observe her teaching on a weekly basis during the first semester of the 2014-2015 school year. I will be using the information gathered, which may include your child's reading response work, to complete my dissertation which will hopefully then add to existing research about assessment and the reading workshop.

For the days that I will be observing, it is *possible* that your child's work may be part of what is observed. It is my intention that the observations would be mostly focused on your child's teacher, but it would be impossible to not observe your child if this is part of her focus when she is meeting with them and teaching them during reading workshop. If your child's work is part of the observation and is used or analyzed to make teaching decisions, I would like to make a copy of the artifact and black out the student name so as to de-identify the document and support the confidentiality of your child. This study has been reviewed and approved both by New Berlin Public Schools, by the principal at your child's school, and by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I would also like to respectfully ask your permission should your student's reading response work become part of the observation.

I have attached a consent form for this project for you to indicate your choice. Please sign the form and return it to your child's teacher as soon as possible. If you have any questions about the research project, please feel free to contact me at the phone number or email below.

Thank you!

Katherine Lindner
Doctoral Student-University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
(262) 442-8586
lindnerk@uwm.edu

Appendix D

Student Assent Form

**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – MILWAUKEE
ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Study title: Assessment and the Reading Workshop

Person in Charge of Study:

Katherine Lindner (doctoral student)

Dr. Jennifer Mueller (major advisor)

Dear Students,

Right now I am doing a study of reader’s workshop in your classroom. This is a way for me to learn more about what teachers do during workshop to help children learn. I will be spending lots of time in your classroom during my study. I may also want to study your reading response work. If you agree to be part of this study, I will make a copy of your response work. Before I would make a copy I would remove your name from the response. This will make it more private. Even if I do recognize your work without your name, I will never use your name as I write about what I learned in my study.

I don’t know if this study will help you at school. But I hope I can learn something that may help teachers learn about reader’s workshop. You don’t have to be in this study - that means I wouldn’t look at your work if you don’t want me to. It is up to you and no one will be mad at you if you say no, even your teacher and me. If you say yes now, but change your mind later, that’s okay too. Just let me know.

When I am finished with this study I will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study. Your parent has agreed for your work to be a part of this study but the decision is also up to you. If you decide you want to be in this study, please print your name below.

I, _____, want to be in this research study. _____
(Print your name here) (Date)

Principal Investigator

I have given this participant information on the study that is accurate and sufficient for the participant to fully understand the nature, risks and benefits of the study. This assent is only valid if in combination with parental consent.

Printed Name of Person Giving Assent

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent Date

Appendix E

Code Definitions

| BIGGER CODE With Definition | SUB-CODE With Definition | SUB-SUB-CODE With Definition | LABEL W/ IN DATA |
|--|---|---|---------------------|
| <p><u>Formative Assessment:</u> a tool or way or process used with the goal of monitoring student learning to provide feedback that can then be used by teachers to guide/improve their teaching and by students to guide/improve their learning</p> | <p><u>On-The-Go Assessment:</u> assessment that involves observations made while students are reading or working on reading, that are not planned in advance of the reading workshop</p> | | FA-GO |
| | <p><u>Planned Assessment:</u> assessments that are planned in advance for students to participate in and then the results are analyzed to inform future whole-class, small-group or teaching done one-on-one with students; these assessments can be done before the unit starts, as the unit is going, or after the unit is finished</p> | | FA-P |
| <p><u>Feedback:</u> responses from the teacher to the students, in a group or individually, about their reading in order for them to continue the reading behavior or make a change</p> | <p><u>Content of Feedback:</u> what the teacher is providing feedback to the student about</p> | <p><u>Current Behavior:</u> feedback about what they are currently doing as readers</p> | FB-Behavior |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|----------|
| | | <u>Misconceptions/Errors:</u> feedback about what misconceptions or errors they might be experiencing as readers and how to correct that | FB-Error |
| | | <u>Next Steps:</u> feedback about what they need to do next to get even stronger as readers | FB-Next |
| | <u>Places:</u> where the feedback might happen across the reading workshop block | <u>Mini-lesson Connection:</u> right at the start of the mini-lesson when the teacher is setting the context for today's teaching they could include feedback about what was observed about them as readers that spurred the need/want for this particular lesson | FB-ML-C |
| | | <u>Mini-lesson Active Engagement:</u> as the students are practicing what it is the teacher taught them during the teach portion of the mini-lesson the teacher could be giving feedback to students about their attempt at the skill & strategy offering suggestions as they continue to practice | FB-ML-AE |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|-----------|
| | | <p><u>Mini-lesson Link</u>: at the very end of the mini-lesson as the teachers links the work taught during the mini-lesson to the students' work during independent reading time, feedback could be included here as a way to connect what the teacher taught to what readers are working on</p> | FB-ML-L |
| | | <p><u>Independent Reading Time</u>: while students are reading the teacher could meet with them to give them feedback</p> | FB-ML-IDR |
| | | <p><u>Mid-Workshop Teaching Share</u>: based on what the teacher is observing students do during the independent reading time, the teacher could offer feedback in the middle of this part of the workshop block</p> | FB-RW-TS |
| | | <p><u>End of Workshop Share</u>: at the very end of workshop when the teacher brings the students back together the teacher may give them feedback on what she noticed , on what next steps the class will be taking, or</p> | FB-RW-END |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---------|
| | Structures: how the teacher might deliver feedback to the student | Individually: during the independent reading portion time of the reading workshop the teacher might give feedback to students on a one-on-one basis | FB-Ind. |
| | | Small Group: during the independent reading portion time of the reading workshop the teacher might give feedback to students in a small-group setting (2-5 students) | FB-SG |
| | | Whole Class: during the independent reading portion time of the reading workshop the teacher might give feedback to students to the whole class at once | FB-WC |

Appendix F

Data Collection and Analysis Matrix (Creswell, 2007)

Observations

| Timeline | Data Source | Transcribe/Write-Up | Code |
|---------------|--|---------------------|-------------------------|
| September | Participant Consent Form Parent Consent Form Student Assent Form | | |
| October 9th | Observation #1 | same day | before next observation |
| October 14th | Observation #2 | same day | before next observation |
| October 21st | Observation #3 | same day | before next observation |
| October 22nd | Observation #4 | same day | before next observation |
| October 28th | Observation #5 | same day | before next observation |
| November 18th | Observation #6 | same day | before next observation |
| December 4th | Observation #7 | same day | before next observation |
| December 5th | Observation #8 | same day | before next observation |
| December 9th | Observation #9 | same day | before next observation |
| December 16th | Observation #10 | same day | before next observation |
| December 22nd | Observation #11 | same day | before next observation |
| January 6th | Observation #12 | same day | before next observation |

Appendix G

Data Collection and Analysis Matrix (Creswell, 2007)

Interviews and Informal Conversations

| Timeline | Data Source | Transcribe/Write-Up | Code |
|---------------|--|---------------------|-------------------------|
| September | Participant Consent Form Parent Consent Form Student Assent Form | | |
| October 5th | Initial Interview | within 48 hours | before observation #1 |
| October 27th | Interview #2 | within 48 hours | before next observation |
| October 28th | Informal Conversation | same day | before next observation |
| November 18th | Informal Conversation | same day | before next observation |
| December 4th | Informal Conversation | same day | before next observation |
| December 5th | Informal Conversation | same day | before next observation |
| December 9th | Informal Conversation | same day | before next observation |
| December 22nd | Informal Conversation | same day | before next observation |
| January 6th | Informal Conversation | same day | before next observation |
| January 10th | Interview #3 | within 48 hours | before next observation |
| October 14th | Memo Writing | | |
| November 24th | Memo Writing | | |
| December 4th | Memo Writing | | |
| January 15th | Memo Writing | | |
| February 25th | Memo Writing | | |
| March 4th | Memo Writing | | |

Appendix H

Interview Protocol

Interview #1

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

As you know, my study will be looking at your experiences as you implement reader's workshop in your classroom. I am looking to gather some information from you today that will help to inform my research project as well as give you a chance to talk about your experiences with reading workshop in your classroom. I want to thank you in advance for agreeing to meet with me today, if at any time during the interview you have questions feel free to ask them. Also if at any time you wish to stop the interview or choose not to answer a question please feel free to let me know. If you would like to stop the recording at any time, please let me know that as well.

1. Tell me a little about yourself?
2. Tell me about your journey into teaching?
3. Tell me what was your literacy training like? (preservice and inservice)
4. Tell me a little bit about how you ended up here?
5. Can you tell me about your experiences with reading workshop?
6. How did you feel about the district adopting this model? why?
7. Can you tell me about some of your successes and/or struggles or concerns you might have had or might be having with the implementation of reading workshop?
8. Is there anything I didn't ask today that I should have?

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today.

Interview #2 will include any questions that may come out of the observations and from previous interviews. Although, question #8 will be asked every interview. These questions could include clarifying questions about decisions made while working with students during reading workshop, about small group instruction that was planned because of what the teacher observed students doing or not doing, or about any note-taking teachers may be doing during reading workshop.

Interview Protocol

Interview #2

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

Interview Questions

1. I have observed that sometimes right after the mini-lesson you will pull a group over right away to the anchor chart area, then I have observed you go to certain students for individual conferences, and other times I have observed that you just start going to individual students right away and you don't pull a group over to the anchor chart. Can you talk a little bit about this process and maybe some of the decisions that guide what happens after you finish teaching the mini-lesson?
2. Can you talk a little bit about how you form small groups to meet with?
3. I have noticed you doing several different kinds of groups, small groups of two kids or three or four, individual conferences...do you try to get to a certain amount of kids a day or during the week or how do you decide on who you will meet with and when?
4. How do you decide one-on-one conferences who to meet with and is there a method to that? Also, when you look into a week, is there a schedule of who you want to meet with in your head or do you write it down or do you just see how it goes?
5. Can you talk a little about the assessment data you collected before the start of this unit? What did you ask? What information did you gather as a result? How does collecting that data help you in your teaching?
6. Is there anything I didn't ask today that you want to add in or talk about?

Appendix I

Reading Units of Study

Scope and Sequence Grade 2 - 2014

| When | Unit of Study |
|--------------------------|---|
| September/October | Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt |
| November/December | Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction |
| January | Studying Characters and Their Stories |
| February/March | Bigger Books Mean Amping Up Reading Power |
| March/April | Reading Nonfiction Cover to Cover: Nonfiction Book Clubs |
| May/June | Series Book Clubs |

Appendix J

Student Unit Goal Page

Unit 2

“Characters Face Bigger Challenges - and So Do Readers”

Our Reading Life Goals:



1. I can develop/use many strategies to better understand the character in my book.
2. I can identify a character’s traits and feelings and support my thinking with specific evidence (proof) from the text.
3. I can ask and answer questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how to show my understanding of key details in a text.
4. I can use all that I know about a character to form a belief (my own idea) about that character.
5. I can determine what lessons my character learns and what I learn from my character (themes and big ideas.

Appendix K

Pre/Post (and Sometimes During) Unit Assessment Example

Unit 2 - Studying Characters and Their Stories

Pre-Assessment Book: Thundercake by Patricia Polacco

Post-Assessment Book: Babushka's Doll by Patricia Polacco

1. What are you thinking/noticing about the character so far in the story? Give evidence from the book to support your answer if you can!

2. What are you noticing now? What makes you think that?

3. Predict what might happen next and tell me why you think that?

4. What have you learned from this character. Make sure you give evidence from the text to support your answer!

Pre/Post (and sometimes during) Unit Assessment Recording Page Example

| Unit: Character Books: Pre-Thundercake Post-Babushka's Doll | Demonstrate the use of strategies that help them understand a character in their book. Uses evidence to support thinking. | Able to use their own language to identify a character's traits and feelings and support own thinking with evidence from the text. | Will describe the character using their own words based on character's behaviors and their actions. | Will identify lesson learned by the character and what they can learn using evidence from the text. | Will use what they are noticing in the book to predict what might happen next in the story or what the character might do next (how they might react or act) |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| Student | | | | | |
| Student | | | | | |
| Student | | | | | |
| Student | | | | | |
| Student | | | | | |
| Student | | | | | |
| Student | | | | | |
| Student | | | | | |
| Student | | | | | |

Appendix L

End of Unit One Reflection Page

Unit 2

“Characters Face Bigger Challenges - and So Do Readers”

What are some goals you have worked on as a reader?

Pick a goal you feel very proud of. What have you done with it to “Build Your Reading Life”?

What goal will you work on as we move on to Unit 3 to keep “Taking Charge of Your Reading Life”?

Appendix M

Student Individual Conference Page

Student Name

| | |
|-------|---|
| Date: | Unit of Study: |
| | Working on: Compliment: Teaching Point: |
| | Working on: Compliment: Teaching Point: |
| | Working on: Compliment: Teaching Point: |

Appendix N

Partner Prompt Chart

Non-Fiction Partner Talk

***Can you teach me more about that?**

***Why is what you are learning important?**

***How does that fit with what you are learning about the topic?**

***Can you show me an example?**

***Can you give me more examples of what you are teaching me about?**

Appendix O

Nonfiction Anchor Chart

**Responsible Readers Use All They Know to Figure Out What a
Word Means...**

- *We can use the glossary**
- *We can use other words around it (context clues)**
- *We can use the index and find it in other places in the book**
- *We can use the photos, labels, and other text features to help us understand**
- *We can use another book, our background knowledge, or another reader to help us figure it out**

Katherine Lindner, Ph.D.

Education

| | |
|--|-------------|
| University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI | 2016 |
| Urban Education Doctoral Degree with an Emphasis in Curriculum and Instruction Focused in Literacy with a Minor in Early Childhood, Dissertation: Formative Assessment and Reading Workshop: A Workable Partnership? | |
| University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI | 2004 |
| Masters of Science, Curriculum and Instruction Received a Reading 316 License | |
| University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse | 1999 |
| Bachelor of Science, Elementary/Middle Level Education Teaching Degree, Grades 1-8 | |
| University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse | 1999 |
| Bachelor of Science, Spanish Received certification to teach in this second language K-12 | |

Professional Experience

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Columbia University - New York, NY | 2015-Present |
| Staff Developer | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided building level and district wide staff development in the areas of reader's and writer's workshop along with best practices in literacy instruction across schools in New York City as well as around the country.• Presented workshops at Teacher's College on topics related to reading and writing workshop.• Spent time specifically in grades kindergarten, first, and second, modeling and coaching teachers in effective practices in workshop teaching.• Facilitated K-2 teacher sections during TCRWP Institutes. Institutes are designed to introduce teachers to balanced literacy and workshop teaching philosophy and implementation.• Initiated meetings with administrators and teachers to analyze school-wide and classroom data in order to devise next steps and action plans.• Designed and implemented professional development cycles for whole staff groups, grade level teams, and individual teachers based on student needs and professional goals.• Demonstrated effective workshop teaching in classrooms for school staff, as well as enacted in observations of teachers in order to give feedback to improve specific content knowledge, strengthen teaching methods, and set professional goals. | |

Poplar Creek - New Berlin, WI

2012-2015

Literacy Coach

- Provided building level and district wide staff development in the areas of reader's and writer's workshop along with best practices in literacy instruction.
- Met with grade-level teams on a bi-monthly basis to present and then support the use of the Units of Study in Reading and Writing from the work of Lucy Calkins.
- Spent time in all grade levels and all classrooms modeling and coaching teachers in effective practices in workshop teaching in both reading and writing.
- Worked together with teachers to support struggling students in the area of literacy, and also strengthen tier one instruction.

Greenland Elementary - Oconomowoc, WI

2010-2012

Reading Specialist

- Supported struggling students in the area of literacy in and out of the classroom setting.
- Collaborated with teachers to meet the literacy needs of students including literacy coaching and team-teaching opportunities.
- Planned and implemented staff development in the areas of reader's and writer's workshop and best practices in literacy instruction.

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee - Milwaukee, WI

2006-2010

Ad Hoc Instructor

- Instructed a wide-range of undergraduate and graduate level students in the area of reading and writing instruction.
- Created unique real-life application activities to strengthen student learning.
- Created a course to teach content area teachers how to incorporate reading instruction into their specific areas.

Dixon Elementary - Brookfield, WI

2009-2010

Teacher

- Piloted several reading and writing instruction initiatives to further my growth as an effective literacy instructor.
- Implemented student engaged learning activities in all academic areas.
- Ran an effective readers' and writers' workshop.

Burleigh Elementary - Brookfield, WI

2000-2007

Teacher

- Successfully implemented a balanced literacy program approach.
- Ran an effective readers' and writers' workshop.
- Created unique learning opportunities with hands-on, guided discovery instruction in science, social studies, and math.
- Taught across many grade levels, experiencing lower and upper elementary teaching and learning demands.

Brookfield Elementary - Brookfield, WI

1999-2000

Teacher

- Created unique learning opportunities with hands-on, guided, discovery-based instruction in math, science, and social studies.
- Ran an effective readers' and writers' workshop.
- Incorporated balanced literacy instruction.

Presentations

- Led professional development at summer institutes through Teacher's College in reading and writing workshop, at Columbia University and across the country, during the Summer of 2015.
- Consultant for two separate school districts, during the Summer of 2014 and during the 2014-2015 school year, in the areas of reading and writing workshop.
- CESA 6 Literacy Summer Institute Lead Presenter, Summer 2013 and Summer 2014. Professionally developed teachers across three days in the areas of reading and writing workshop.
- Wisconsin State Reading Association Presenter, Spring, 2010. Presented a session titled "Empowering Writers Through the Analysis of Craft in Mentor Text". This presentation was based on my research conducted during the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee's Summer Writing Project, 2009.
- Wisconsin State Reading Association Presenter, Spring, 2012. Presented a session titled "Children Crossing Boundaries: Teaching for Social Justice Within the Language Arts Curriculum". This presentation was based on IRB approved research conducted during the 2010-2011 school year.

Publications

- Assisted with research used in the Wisconsin State Reading Association's DVD publication titled: *The Power of Reading to your Child*

Specialized Training

- Trained in the Early Reading Empowerment model of instruction to help reach my lowest readers' needs and strengthen my overall approach to reading instruction.
- Attended multiple reader's and writer's workshop trainings, including two literacy coaching institutes, at the Teacher's College at Columbia University. Coaching institutes included experience in New York City Schools.
- Staff developer training for my position at Teacher's College and the Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University under the direction of Lucy Calkins.