An Examination of a Teacher’s Use of Authentic Assessment in an Urban Middle School Setting

A dissertation presented to

the faculty of

The Patton College of Education

of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

Patricia Stevens

May 2013

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This dissertation titled
An Examination of a Teacher’s Use of Authentic Assessment in an Urban Middle School Setting

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Abstract

STEVENS, PATRICIA, Ed. D., May 2013, Educational Administration

An Examination of a Teacher’s Use of Authentic Assessment in an Urban Middle School Setting

Today in urban education, schools are forced to keep up and compete with students nationally with high-stake testing. Standardized tests are often bias in nature and often do not measure the true ability of a student. Casas (2003) believes that all children can learn but they may learn differently. Therefore, using authentic assessments is an alternative way to measure what students know. Conventional testing also distorts educational goals. On the other hand, authentic assessment can foster good education practices and enhance the learning process (DePascale, 2011; Kohn, 2000). The question remains, how can urban middle school teachers combine authentic and standardized assessment to improve student learning? Rule (2006) states that authentic assessment should be used simultaneously with required curriculum. It enhances development for students while redefining the curriculum. Kohn (2000) agrees that there are alternative ways of testing and assessing students. Authentic assessment brings change to curriculum and instruction. It provides stakeholders which may include parents, students, administrators, and community members with evidence of learning. Students’ performance can be demonstrated using an observable product (Conklin, 2010; Conklin & Frei, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Consequently, the purpose of this research is to assess how one teacher in an urban middle school located in a mid-western city combined authentic and standardized measures of assessment to support student achievement. It is hoped that
this study will shed light on how to promote student learning using alternative assessments. Qualitative methodology will be employed to address the research question. Data will be collected through documents, observations, and interviews.
Acknowledgments

I first give all glory and honor to my Savior, Jesus Christ for giving me the strength and ability to complete this process. Truly his faithfulness brought me through! I also would like to thank my wonderful dissertation committee for their support. Their professional suggestions and recommendations were priceless. I truly appreciate their assistance and input along this journey. Also, I would like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues for all their encouragement along the way. You are remarkable people! I am privilege to know each one of you.

Dr. Godwyll, my chair, thank you for your willingness and commitment to work with me. There are no words to truly convey my appreciation for everything you have done. Hopefully, we may work again as colleagues in the future. Your patience is amazing!

Without my parents, Rudy and Shirley Stevens this process would not have been possible. Your love, support, and encouragement throughout the years equipped me for this journey. Thank you for instilling in me the importance of diligence and hard work. Those attributes made the completion of this journey possible. My spiritual parents, James and Delores Moody I appreciate all your prayers throughout this process. You are truly God sent people.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

American education is at a crossroad regarding assessment options (DePascale, 2011). Traditional testing has for too long misrepresented the purpose for assessing students in the classroom (Kohn, 2000). He believes the educational system has taught both students and teachers that the right answers are more important than thinking. Learning has been associated with study and cram for a test rather than developing life-long thinking skills. Despite the demands and accountability placed on higher-order thinking skills, there is a move towards a more authentic approach concerning learning in the field of education today (DePascale, 2011). In order for educators to keep up with a generation where there is an influx with technology, learning activities should offer students opportunities to use their gifts and talents to learn and a leader that supports this curriculum change (Conklin, 2010). “Future mandates that we all move forward together in a way that builds on both our mutual strengths and respects our unique differences” (Teele, 1994, p. 17). Stakeholders which include teachers and policy makers are realizing that besides high-stakes testing, students’ growth should be measured using multiple assessment tools (DePascale, 2011). Therefore, the focus of this study is to show that good instruction leads to authentic assessment; it is a great way to bring change to teaching and learning. Creativity is cultivated when students take part by participating in the learning process. Students are able to design, investigate, or show what they know oppose to memorizing facts for a test. They can easily express what they know through demonstration. It also allows the teachers to assess and monitor their students’ growth and performance authentically using a variety of methods. Teachers are not just limited to
paper and pencil tests to measure what their students know but can be easily observe their students’ performance through multiple tasks, criteria, and standards. In order to improve instruction, the focus must be on students’ performance rather than on test scores; assessment then becomes meaningful and purposeful (Conklin, 2010; Kohn, 2000).

Dewey (1916) is persuaded that knowledge includes linking ideas and events together through one’s experience. Learning should not be an isolated event. It should involve having actual experiences; “Trying to do something and having the thing perceptibly do something to one in return” (p. 153). Therefore, authentic learning and assessment must happen in the midst of a purposeful activity, so that knowledge enters through engagement of one’s goal or objective (Dewey, 1916). His philosophy about educational practices centers around students thinking about real problems to solve. This means seeking out obstacles in the environment in order to cultivate authentic learning opportunities. Real learning takes place when students integrate their experiences with others to reach a common goal. To foster this mode of inquiry, learning should “ensure continuity between activities students are engaged in, structure tasks that can be carried over to the next, a habit of initiative, and increasing skills using experimental method” (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936, p. 20).

Jean Piaget supports John Dewey’s philosophy about learning. He theorizes the concept of “schemata;” combine new information with previous information and experiences (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001; Zahorik, 1995). “Intelligent activity has no other function than that of assimilating the universe to the Schemata” (Piaget, 1952, p. 230). Schemata refer to the way the mind organizes or categories information. Therefore,
information is not randomly stored; students take new information and logically connect it to previous knowledge. So Piaget believes when students have opportunities to explore or examine information it leads to understanding. New information is then combined with stored information or known concepts to construct learning. For that reason, learning should be a cyclical process where students edit, revise, craft, or reformulate information (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). Authentic forms of assessment support this concept.

Lev Vygotsky builds on Piaget’s theory about learning; new knowledge must connect to what is already known (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). It consists of past constructions, assimilations, and accommodations. Knowledge is not static but continuously changing. Learning is an ongoing process where students should be hypothesizing, predicting, manipulating objects, asking questions, researching answers, imaging, investigating, and inventing. Learning also occurs through reflection when students instigate thinking. Reflection allows students to think and develop deep understanding while they problem-solve and construct meaning in authentic learning situations. According to Vygotsky (1997):

In education it is far more important to teach the child how to think than to communicate various bits of knowledge to him…Thinking, you see, denotes nothing less than the participation of all of our previous experience in the resolution of a current problem, and the distinctive feature of this form of behavior is simply that it introduces a creative element into our behavior through the construction of every possible connection between elements in a preliminary experience, which is what thinking is essentially. By this very fact, it multiplies
the limitless possibilities of all those connections that may be produced out of human reactions, and makes a man’s behavior inexhaustibly multifaceted and exceptionally complicated (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 175).

Therefore, knowledge becomes functional; it extends and refines understanding. Students should be in a learning environment where they partake in activities that consist of examining and building their own knowledge. Such activities should be authentic, interesting, holistic, long-term, and social (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001; Windschitl, 1999).

Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence Model allows students to express their creativity through the products they produce in real-life settings. “We are not all the same; we do not all have the same kinds of minds; education works most effectively for most individuals if these differences…are taken into account rather than denied or ignored” (Gardner, 1995, p. 208). Gardner’s philosophy is that all students can learn and achieve success when they are allowed to actively explore knowledge (Conklin & Frei, 2011). Instruction encourages student engagement so their strengths are highlighted and their weaknesses are cultivated. Instruction is diverse emphasizing deep understanding; student products should demonstrate what they know. Therefore, teachers change curriculum and assessment to fit students” needs and measure their intelligences.

In order to move away from traditional ways of teaching and assessing students, all stakeholders (especially teachers and administrators) need a shift in their thinking about educational practices. This requires teachers to teach different instructional strategies that support critical thinking, creativity, and alternative ways to measure what
students know (Conklin & Frei, 2011). But more importantly, in order for teachers to have the freedom to bring about change to the curriculum and assessment it requires unconventional leaders to support flexible curriculum and a learning environment where students can partake in various learning experiences to demonstrate what they know (Conklin, 2010). This kind of instruction requires an extensive infrastructure change to take place with such schools (DePascale, 2011). The mind set of all stakeholders involves the need to change so their concept about education involves assessment and instruction that prepare students for the real world; college and career opportunities (DePascale, 2011; Kohn, 2000).

Consciously or unconsciously, administrators can hinder the learning process or culture of a school. In order sustainable educational reform to take place, administrators must become transformational instructional leaders within the schools and move away from a transactional style. School capacity is a critical factor in affecting instructional quality and student achievement (Newmann, King & Youngs, 2000). Leadership becomes key to improving student learning. Because administrators affect the overall productivity of a school, they must be willing to move away from the traditional way of leading schools. Administrators must be ready to establish relationships and build trust with their teachers in order to provide relevant and meaningful curriculum and assessment (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). They need to move beyond the old biases of leadership and work collaboratively with all stakeholders to problem-solve creative ways to educate and assess student knowledge. Administrators must be open to change and encourage their teachers to be equally prominent in the decision-making process. More importantly, they
have to embrace change in order to capitalize on the school’s vision and mission for learning (Burke, 2007; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). Therefore, a transformational leader is necessary in order to move away from traditional ways of evaluating students’ knowledge and be willing to implement authentic forms of assessment (Burke, 2007). Such a leader is one who embraces change, creativity, partnership, and relationships from the surrounding community of the school in order to become an agent of change.

Although the term authentic assessment is evolving the meaning has remained the same. Authentic assessment refers to criterion-referenced and is based on activities that represent classroom and real-life settings. Kohn (2000) believes authentic assessment offers an alternative to traditional standardized forms of testing such as multiple choice. Cioffi and Carney (1983) coins the term dynamic assessment. Then Stiggins and Bridgeford (1985) changes the term to performance assessment. Finally, Archbald and Newman (1988) propose the accurate term authentic assessment.

There are several reasons why teachers should not rely solely on standardized testing. When these tests were first developed they were generally viewed as instruments to measure and increase achievement (Haney, 1994; Madaus & O’Dwyer, 1999). As a result, teachers begin to narrow instruction to match test items (Kohn, 1999; Kohn, 2000). Rising test scores begin to reflect factors other than achievement such as the students being aware of certain test items before given the exam (DePascale, 2011; Kohn, 2000). As testing progresses, teachers and schools afford the ability to reform their sites and allow some latitude to sponsor standardized testing (Carnegie Task Force, 1986). This move is away from testing norms and creating real life problems for students to
solve. Standardized tests do not allow students to demonstrate true knowledge they have gain but allow evaluators to make inferences about their cognitive knowledge based upon multiple choice answers. Therefore, developing an effective assessment system for this next generation is needed (DePascale, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Authentic assessment is one way to measure information about student learning.

Many standardized tests are biased against genders or ethnic backgrounds (Kohn, 2000). The author believes typically “lower-income students do not perform as well and are often unfamiliar with the test format. Teachers can (and often do) “teach the test,” or help students develop skills less related to the curriculum and more related to the upcoming multiple-choice test” (p. 7). “A survey of teachers shows they believe standardized tests use unclear questions, do not provide useful information, and fail to address real educational concerns. Teachers also feel pressure to teach the test which limited students”education” (Kohn, 2000, pp. 19-20).

It is the considered view of some critics that tests as overused (Casas, 2003; Kohn, 2000). Standardized tests more or less measure a program’s success and not students’retention or logic ability. According to Wiggins (1990):

This is often beyond the scope of the exam’s original design. Traditional tests tend to reveal only whether the student can recognize, recall, or „plug-in”what was learned out of context….compares this process to gauging driving or teaching ability with a written exam Standardized tests cannot provide the information sought. Such tests can lower students”self-concept or decrease teachers’ expectations which lead to lower performance. (p. 1)
High-stakes testing often causes high-anxiety and stress for some children and makes this form of assessment particularly challenging (Kohn, 2000). Some states use the standardized test data to determine whether or not students are promoted to the next grade or graduate from high school (Kohn, 2000, p. 5). Pressure to pass these tests often impacts students in a negative way and takes the focus off authentic learning and assessment. This paradox often confuses students when they are asked to sit for hours taking a test that often has no relevance to the curriculum or activities they engage in on a daily basis. Their daily routines should not be interrupted for taking a test that measures concepts they may have not learned. This defeats the purpose of assessment. The learning process includes assessments that are as natural as possible (Casas, 2003).

Standardized tests are one-dimensional; they focus on the right answers and not the way students think (Kohn, 2000). They provide only a limited perspective of knowledge while emphasizing lower cognition skills; curriculum and instruction is then restricted and limited to the test (Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey & Stetcher, 2000). In the words of Perrone (1991):

The format of the test creates additional problems too. Students unfamiliar with multiple-choice format are at a disadvantage. The exam material may not interest students, meaning the test gauges attention spans rather than performance. The test environment conflicts with students’ learning environment. Children who have been routinely encouraged to be cooperative learners are forbidden to talk during testing. Children who have been taught to work problems out slowly are told speed is essential. (p. 2)
Therefore, other forms of assessment are needed for effective instructional planning and formative evaluation to take place. Tests should be just one form of formative evaluation. To cultivate deep understanding of knowledge and the ability to think critically, tests and other evaluative assessments need to match these goals (DePascale, 2011; Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001; Windschitl, 1999).

**Statement of Problem**

Today many educators are tired and frustrated with all the emphasis that has been placed on standardized tests however; they are still required to administer them due to the force of politics. Policy makers continue to promote standardized tests as a means to hold teachers and schools accountable for students’ education. Teachers are therefore pressured to teach curriculum that is test driven versus train students for the real world (Kohn, 2000). They are force to “water down” the curriculum and eliminate creativity in order to raise the test scores. The real art of teaching is being lost while policy makers continue to put more demands on teachers and schools to increase test scores. What about all the deficiencies found in standardized tests? Research proves that standardized tests are not necessarily the best way to assess students’ knowledge, however, we (meaning stakeholders) continue to ignore all the flaws and rely on such evaluations to make final judgments about what our children know (Casas, 2003; Kohn, 2000).

If educators move away from standardized tests, then what are the alternatives? Teachers need options in order to effectively assess what their students really know. There needs to be more meaningful kinds of assessments of what students really understand. Many researchers believe the only real way to measure students’ genuine knowledge is to
allow them to demonstrate what they know (Conklin & Frei, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Teachers should help students pursue meaningful learning opportunities that will empower and prepare them for the real world. These learning opportunities allow students to exhibit their knowledge in a multiple fashion and as a result be evaluated authentically. Teachers and schools need to move away from relying solely on traditional tests to measure what their students know. According to Kohn (2000) they provide an incomplete picture of what students actually know. Until the use of high stakes testing diminishes or becomes eliminated all together, the American educational system must become more creative with assessing our students’ knowledge in order to better prepare them for the 21st century. Therefore, using authentic assessments provides teachers with an alternative way to help students develop critical thinking skills while they question and exam their own learning while engaging in real-life activities. These real-life experiences provides all stakeholders including teachers, parents, students, and politicians with an alternative to traditional testing where the learning process actually observes versus assumes from a multiple choice test. Authentic assessments provide visual evidence of what students know and do not know.

There is an increase in the demands of educators for alternatives to traditional testing approaches; schools should not administer standardized tests to the lower grades (Kohn, 2000). He believes that standardized tests should not be given to students below fourth-grade. He believes students develop skills differently and at various stages so it is difficult to truly assess young children expecting them to have acquired the same cognitive skills. Although there are discrepancies about using standardized tests, they are
still widely used (Allen, Scheve, & Nieter, 2011; DePascale, 2011; Foote, Vermette, & Battaglia, 2001). Kohn (2000) says these are “relatively inexpensive to administer a multiple-choice exam” (p. 3). In order to replace traditional forms of assessment, alternatives must prove to be competent (DePascale, 2011).

Grant Wiggins (1989) highlights a change in testing and assessment. He suggests students’ knowledge should be center around “real world” situations. He believes students should be tested on tasks that they will perform in real life. For example, have students prepare tax returns for a sample client. Casas (2003) agrees that testing should not be educators only option to measure what students know. Other assessment options should seek out; ideally authentic teaching and assessments which includes portfolios, holistic scoring, and setting rubrics which would create a system that is productive and beneficial for students.

Wiggins (1989) solution to testing is rather drastic for some. “He proposes teachers “make [students] replicate, within reason, the challenges at the heart of each academic discipline…and worry about a fair, efficient, and objective method of grading them as a secondary problem” (p. 41). He likens a combination of teaching and testing to how dancers train and prepare for a presentation or recital and sees that as ideal. He further argues that “Though the performance can be evaluated, the primary goal is the performance itself. Even though teachers may still teach for a test, curriculum should be aligned with the performance tool” (p. 43). DePascale (2011) agrees that along with large scale assessment, instruction should prepare students for the real world. The skills they learn should be applicable to college or a career of some sort.
Authentic assessments call for a public performance of some kind (Conklin, 2006; Conklin & Frei, 2011; Foote, Vermette, & Battaglia, 2001). Students should be familiar with the evaluation process whether they are conducting a presentation or participating in a debate. The evaluation tool should measure the entire performance versus a single score on an exam. Also, students should be encouraged to reflect on their own work by conducting self-evaluation. Recommended assignments that could promote authentic, self-reflections include:

research projects, conducting oral histories, or journal writing. Portfolios become closely associated with authentic assessment too. A portfolio normally consists of collected samples of students’ work. For example, a high school student could be required to summarize their performance over the past four years by selecting a resume, video of a speech, a research paper, samples of artwork, or other items displaying their achievements. (Kohn, 2000, p. 4)

Portfolios provide a more comprehensive picture of students’ knowledge versus test scores show only students’ achievement in an academic pursuit.

Kohn (2000) suggests that since authentic assessment is subjective, they may cause controversy about their validity; the results appear to be subjective in nature. Therefore, developing a fair means of evaluation is challenging. The author believes although tests contain “subjective elements, teachers need a simple, effective method for objectively rating a student” (p. 5). Puckett and Black (2000) classify scoring into two categories using rubrics; analytic and holistic. The holistic approach involves using a single score based on the overall quality of student’s product or performance. They
further assert that for example, when assessing a written project, teachers create a rubric where a:

Five-point paper shows consistent style, contains no grammatical or spelling to the errors, accurately, and completely covers the topic. A four-point paper shows a few grammatical errors. A three-point paper has some serious errors or contains valid inconsistencies and so on. An analytic scale uses a series of statements that describe characteristics associated with each score in a range of achievement. The analytic scale provides a precise picture and is more “diagnostic” than other scoring systems. (p. 234)

However, the standards for authentic assessments are not set ahead of time but rather are developed to align with the current assignment or performance in contrast with predetermined distribution method or curve associated with the use of standardized tests scores (Puckett & Black, 2000; Rule, 2006). Because scoring of authentic performances are not predetermined they are also comprehensive. A set of criteria can be established to assess various areas or domains. The criteria should involve a certain grade or point value that aligns with an array of performances (Kohn, 2000; Puckett & Black, 2000; Rule, 2006).

Authentic assessment is a popular alternative or supplement for evaluating students, stakeholders should consider implementing this form of measurement (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001; Kohn, 2000; Rule, 2006). Current research investigates the value of using authentic assessment as an alternative way to measure what students know (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011; Campbell, 1999; Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001;
Kohn, 2000). Using solely traditional forms of tests will not provide a complete picture of students’ knowledge (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011; Conklin, 2006; Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001; Windschitl, 1999). Today current research supports using authentic assessment as an alternative form of evaluation as valuable (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011; DePascale, 2011). However, there are concerns about the reliability and validity of this type of assessment (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011; Kohn, 2000).

Today in the field of education, schools are forced to keep up and compete with students nationally on standardized tests. Such tests are often biased in nature and often do not measure the true ability of a student (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001; Kohn, 2000). Howard Gardner believes that all children can learn but they may learn differently (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011; Conklin & Frei, 2011). Authentic assessment provides an alternative way to measure what students know. Current research suggests that authentic assessment is an alternative or supplement to traditional forms of testing (DePascale, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Conventional testing distorts educational goals. On the other hand, authentic assessment fosters good education practices and enhances the learning process (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011).

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this case study is to understand the lived experiences of urban middle school students who are being evaluated with authentic assessments and how it affects their academic growth. Therefore, the objectives of this research are: (a) conduct a content analysis of the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide identifying the cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy, (b) examine how a teacher aligned his pedagogy choices
to the Pacing Guide, (c) examine strategies of authentic assessment in a selected urban school setting, (d) discover why teachers are choosing to use authentic assessment and uncover any advantages and disadvantages of using authentic assessments to document students’ academic growth, and (e) investigate leadership’s role in the implementation of authentic assessment.

This study seeks an alternative approach for evaluating urban middle school students integrating authentic and standardized assessments. In this study examples show how teachers can use authentic assessment simultaneously while teaching curriculum aligned with high-stake testing to measure students’ growth. Research supports that students’ academic growth is tracked by using portfolios, exhibits, presentations, journals, and projects. Authentic assessment brings reform to curriculum and instruction, it improves teacher and student morale and performance, strengthens students’ commitment and capacity. Students can direct their own learning and self-monitor their own progress too. Using rubrics or conducting student-teacher conferences, students can assess their performance and growth. Opportunities are also given to them to create, explore, analyze, or present knowledge that they have learned opposed to memorizing information for a test. Also, using authentic assessment allow students to play an active role in learning by demonstrating what they know. As students self-direct their own learning it becomes purposeful. Connections are made between new information and their own experiences. They are able to use past experiences and knowledge to connect with new information whereas traditional tests typically assess new information only. Learning becomes a meaningful task as students take on the role as teachers and learners.
The conceptual framework for this study includes the “six cognitive domains from Bloom’s Taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Bloom, 1956, p. 5). The matrix that outlines this conceptual framework aligns with the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). Conklin and Frei (2011) believe a valuable assignment should emphasize knowledge and skills that are authentic in nature (Conklin & Frei, 2011). Authentic assignments should contextualize students’ real-life situations which allow students to apply what they know to new situations thus incorporating various cognitive domains through authentic forms of assessments (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011; Conklin & Frei, 2011). So, authentic assignments should reflect the learning process and avoid unnatural tasks like traditional testing. More importantly, authentic and standardized assessments should go together to balance one another.

**Research Questions**

Five research questions guide this study: (1) How are the cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy incorporated in the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide, (2) How did the teacher align his pedagogical choices to the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide, (3) How do students experience authentic assessment strategies in a selected urban middle school that go beyond the Pacing Guide, (4) How does the teacher in a selected urban middle school use authentic assessment and are there any advantages or disadvantages, and (5) What role does leadership play in the implementation of authentic assessment in a selected urban middle school?
Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to show how urban middle schools can use authentic assessment to measure students’ performance on a multitude of cognitive domains whereas standardized, multiple choice tests evaluate only limited knowledge from specific items from which, evaluators make inferences about the performance and the test takers (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Few researchers address how teachers can effectively use both standardized and authentic assessments to complement one another in urban middle school settings. Moreover, few teachers know how to effectively integrate authentic assessment into the require curriculum to educate urban middle school students. This study is important because it will provide a content analysis of the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide and how authentic and standardized assessments can complement one another while improving students’ academic achievement. It also examines strategies that teachers can use to help students develop higher level cognitive domains and identify advantages of disadvantages of using authentic assessment. Also, it investigates leadership’s role in the implementation of authentic assessment. Thus, this research is significant for providing teachers, students, administrators, and policymakers with a propose change in testing students’ knowledge. Few studies focus on how to integrate standardized and authentic assessments in an urban middle school setting.

Organization of the Study

This study includes five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction highlighting how standardized tests have been used in the American school systems for several
decades and the problems that this form of assessment imposes. The objectives of this research study clearly states in the purpose section of this chapter outlining exactly what the researcher’s goals are. Then the research questions is formulated to show what the researcher aims to search out and answer while conducting this study to add to the current literature about standardized and authentic assessments. The significance of study section uncovers why this study is important to the field of education today and who benefits from this research.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review regarding the historical background of standardized tests. The literature review provides an overview of authentic assessment, concepts of standardized tests, the validity and reliability of authentic assessment. Then a conceptual framework is outlined to support this research. It provides an alternative way to measure students’ knowledge. This conceptual framework implies that learning is constructed by doing or creating meaning.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methods and approaches for this study. This chapter includes the research design. A qualitative research approach is used for this study. The site selection and participants is clearly identified. These sources are used to collect data for this study. These sources include observations, document analysis, and interviews. The data collection protocols and procedures stated shows how the data will be systematically gathered for this study. The instruments that were used are explained. The researcher’s background information and experience in the field of education is included as well. And to make sure trustworthy data is used for this study, validity and ethical
issues is discussed. How the data is analyzed for this study is also be explained in this chapter.

Chapter 4 outlined the participants in the study and the setting in which they were described. In addition, data was analyzed in this chapter identifying the patterns and themes that were found from each research question.

Then chapter 5 highlighted the major findings from the research. The findings were unfolded from the common themes and patterns that emerged from the data. This chapter also reviewed implications for the Constructivist Theory. Suggestions were also recommended for future research and concluded with closing remarks about the study.

**Summary**

Several reasons is identified why teachers must begin to move away from traditional ways of assessing students and help them foster authentic learning experiences to cultivate real-life skills. Standardized tests only test one domain of knowledge whereas authentic assessment face ill-structured challenges where students can problem-solve and face real challenges in the world. Traditional testing also involves a one-time measure or single occasion oppose to focusing on the processes of learning. Authentic assessment allows students to extend rationales over time; they can go back as often as they like and modify or adjust their answers as they obtain new knowledge and information. There is also no right answer per se. Students are aware of the expectations up front when using authentic forms of assessment too. They know how, what knowledge, and skills are assess ahead of time whereas standardized tests require no prior information ahead of time. Standardized testing only allows students to select an answer while solving a
problem taken from a passage or out of context versus explaining an issue using real material. Students are able to construct their responses by demonstrating what they learn using authentic assessment. They pursue multiple approaches and solutions to a real-life problem.

As educators move forward in the field of education it is important that alternative ways to measure students’ knowledge is considered and put into practice to better prepare them for the 21st century workplace. Therefore, authentic assessment is a great way to bring change to the curriculum and the learning process. It will allow students to integrate prior knowledge with new experiences while learning how to use higher levels of cognition. Students are able to take an active role in their own learning process while they develop and practice using such skills. More importantly, they will be better prepared for the workforce when their school instruction equips them for real-life experiences.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Most educators would say that standardized multiple choice tests have been around for a long time (Fletcher, 2009). In the 1840s the initial use of test-based reform began in Massachusetts (Darling-Hammond, 2004). The superintendent at the time, Horace Mann, developed tests that would measure student knowledge in various disciplines. The published results allowed schools and classrooms to compare one another (Hamilton, 2004). According to Fletcher (2009) many states by the 1870s began conducting such tests and publishing the results and student promotion became linked to students’ success or failure on these tests by the latter 1800s.

Prior to World War I, schools chose from over 200 tests to administer. As part of a movement, standardized multiple-choice tests were developed during World War I to view education as a “factory model” (Fletcher, 2009; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000). Such tests are subjected to statistical analyses and are scored automatically. These tests were responsive to no particular curriculum, no particular learners, and no context in particular. Hamps-Lyons and Condon (2000) stated “They were responsive only to the demand for reliability, for scores that could be perfectly replicated in parallel forms of tests, or with the same learner on different occasions” (p. 171). Hamps-Lyons and Condon noted that these multiple-choice tests have become a monopoly in the United States. The period following World War II, saw the expansion of the use of such tests (Linn, Miller & Gronlund, 2005). Many stakeholders became dissatisfied with the differences in student performance and educational opportunities, the Elementary and Secondary School Act became popular in the 1960s.
By the 1970s, stakeholders wanted the educational system to be equalized so states began mandating that more awareness be placed on academics (Camilli, Cizek & Lugg, 2001). Therefore, according to Newmann, Bryk, and Nagaoka (2001) the criterion-referenced testing movement intended to transfer important decisions about assessment from teachers and create standardization. By the 1980s, many educators began to raise concerns about the reliance of such assessment. The 1983 report A Nation at Risk, criticized the American schools stating that this educational system would result in destruction (Toppo, 2008). The report stated that students were graduating from American schools but could not handle reasonable challenging intellectual tasks.

For most of the 20th century, standardized tests have been used as documentation of student, teacher, and school performance. Although most of the information written about standardized tests are negative and caused opposition, the general public, state legislatures, and federal legislatures insisted on better performance from schools. In the 1970s and 1980s, teachers were very supportive of high stakes testing when the risk involved students only. Stone and Lane (2003) believed that policymakers hold schools and teachers accountable for test results. The limitations have become fatal flaws; schools needed to be held accountable externally like other organizations.

Therefore, as educators began to discuss ways to improve the quality of education in America, the country’s reliance on multiple-choice and other forms of standardized testing came under examination. Kohn (2000) wrote the reliance on standardized tests have been economically convenient but such tests do not support the development of skills and abilities that students need to be successful in life or to move forward in
specific discipline. Kohn continued that tests should incorporate curriculum that uses productive skills based on authentic tasks. In order to move the educational system forward, testing should move beyond an evaluative role to providing a supporting role.

A student’s future should not be based on a standardized test which ranks them or puts them in a category; passing or failing (Figlio & Getzler, 2002; Kohn, 2000). It is impossible for one test to measure the full scope of what students know. Teachers should do whatever was necessary to prepare students for standardized tests but real learning should be the ultimate goal for obtaining knowledge. Teachers began to move the learning process beyond the traditional classroom and provided authentic ways for students to be assessed. They were willing to confront the problems associated with standardized tests and educate others about alternative ways to measure what students know.

**Overview of Authentic Assessment**

Authentic assessment describes varying forms of assessments consistent with classroom goals, curriculum, and instruction. It is used to measure students’ cognitive ability on a multitude of areas opposed to standardized tests; they measure specific items which evaluators make inferences about students’ knowledge (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Authentic assessment by definition, criterion-referenced and was based on activities that represent classroom and real-life settings. It offered an alternative to traditional, standardized forms of testing such as multiple-choice tests (Kohn, 2000). Authentic assessment must connect to real-life situations and problems in some way. Warman (2002) described authentic assessment as the use of activities that would closely
resemble activities performed by individuals in the real world. According to Puckett and Black (2000) the assessment could be in the form of a performance test, an observation, a set of open-ended questions, an exhibit, an interview, or a portfolio. Elsworth (2011) stated that “authentic assessment can be described as procedures for evaluating learning performance using multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities” (p. 4). So authentic pedagogy would require teachers to combine assessment and daily teaching practices to create lessons that help students become proficient in assessment tasks (Warman, 2002). Students would construct knowledge through disciplined inquiry. Assessment would encourage students to solve problems with meaning beyond showing success in school (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000; Puckett & Black, 2000; Warman, 2002).

**Concepts of Authentic Assessment**

This literature review highlights the importance and advantages of using authentic forms of assessment in schools today. Authentic assessment allows both the teacher and student to collaborate throughout the learning process as change is brought to the curriculum. The curriculum becomes student-centered while they self-direct their own learning and assessment by engaging in real-life problems and situations. This literature clearly supports using authentic forms of assessment to connect prior knowledge with new information and experiences in a real-world setting. Through discovery and investigation, students obtain new knowledge through hands-on learning opportunities. This literature review also shows that using this form of assessment would better prepare students for the workforce as well.
Traditional testing has too long misrepresented the purpose for assessing students in the classroom. The educational system has taught both students and teachers that the right answers matter more than understanding (Kohn, 2000, p. 18). Learning has been associated with students cramming for a test rather than developing life-long thinking skills. High-stakes tests limit the curriculum, emphasize instruction with low-level cognitive skills while misrepresenting the interpretation of the data (Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey & Stetcher, 2000). Such multiple choice tests encouraged little challenging learning and measured only limited skills and abilities. Despite the demands and accountability placed on higher-order thinking skills, there was a move towards a more authentic approach concerning learning in the field of education (Elsworth, 2011). Stakeholders which included teachers and policy makers realized that besides high-stakes testing, students’ growth should be measured using multiple assessment tools. Therefore, authentic assessment was and is a great way to bring change to curriculum and instruction. When students are given opportunities to connect new knowledge and information to their prior experiences it allows them to be actively engaged, in the learning process, allowing students to demonstrate what they know and cultivate creativity. As a result they create, investigate, or show what they know as opposed to memorizing facts for a test. Students easily expressed what they knew through demonstration. It also allowed the teachers to assess and monitor their students’ growth and performance authentically using a variety of methods. Teachers were not just limited to paper and pencil tests to measure what their students know but could easily observe their students’ performance through multiple tasks, criteria, and standards. When the
focus becomes student performance rather than test scores the evaluation process will become meaningful and purposeful for the learning process (Kohn, 2000).

There are alternative tools that can be used to foster effective education. In addition to teaching curriculum aligned with high-stake testing, teachers should use authentic assessment to measure students” growth. Gardner (1983) proposed his theory of multiple intelligences, a complex assessment tools used to measure an individual’s cognitive profile. Student growth could be tracked by using portfolios, exhibits, presentations, debates, journals, and projects. These activities required the use of different abilities and intelligences. It considered all aspects of an individual’s learning ability through authentic forms of evaluation. The use of authentic assessment allowed for the in-depth monitoring of the progress of learning (Millis, n.d.). It functioned as a link between theory and practice (Rule, 2006) allowing the teacher to observe and reflect on connections between course work and field experiences (Elsworth, 2011). Therefore, authentic assessment brought reform to curriculum and instruction, improved teacher and student morale and performance, and strengthened students” commitment and capacity. Students directed their own learning and self-monitored their own progress too. Using rubrics or conducting student-teacher conferences, students assessed their own performances and growth. Opportunities were also given for them to create, explore, analyze, or present knowledge that they had learned opposed to memorizing information for a test. Using authentic assessment allowed students to play an active role in learning by demonstrating what they know. Learning became self-directed by the students and purposeful. Connections were made between new information and their own experiences.
They were able to use past experiences and knowledge to connect with new information whereas traditional tests typically assessed new information only. Learning became a meaningful task as students took on the role as teachers and learners.

One of the several movements toward authentic assessment was that it used multiple pathways to study and construct new knowledge. Authentic assessment helped students understand how they derived at a particular answer, whereas traditional testing only sought the correct answer (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000). These researchers believed students should contribute to the learning process while becoming responsible for creating and constructing their own knowledge. As students contributed to their own learning process they became aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and attitudes towards learning (Puckett & Black, 2000). Authentic assessment encouraged students to be self-adjusters of their own weaknesses. Also, the teacher’s creative lessons along with the students’ needs stimulated effective results. Therefore, authentic assessment allowed for a thorough analysis of students’ performance (Kohn, 2000; Williams, 2007). Assessment and teaching was linked to the learning process. The teacher functioned as a collaborator to create tasks and develop guidelines for scoring and interpreting student work (Kohn, 2000). However, it was the students themselves who made the assignments based on established guidelines. Kohn (2000) also suggested that students improve their performance when they are aware of the established standards on how they will be evaluated. Those standards are internalized in student activities; students had the responsibility to define and identify their work performance in conjunction with their teachers.
Puckett and Black (2000) agreed there are alternatives ways to testing and assessing students. Authentic assessment brought change to curriculum and instruction. Students self-direct their own when they were actively engaged in activities and self-monitoring their own progress. Expectations and purpose for learning was clearly conveyed before assessment even took place. Students knew up front what was expected of them and how they would be evaluated. Usually a rubric was distributed or posted so students knew exactly what the expectations were. That way they could easily monitor and assess their own work. Authentic assessment also encouraged students to take ownership of their own learning. They became active participants in the learning process by demonstrating what they knew. Students had fun learning while doing things that interested them, engaged, and had meaning for them (Hill, 2000). Unlike traditional testing, students were not limited to a time frame for evaluation; evaluation became ongoing when done authentically. Students revisited their work, made changes, or upgraded their assignments on a continuous basis by gathering new information, synthesizing, organizing, and communicating what they learned opposed to a final evaluation.

William (2007) believed that all children can learn but they may learn differently. Therefore, using authentic assessment was an alternative way to measure what a student knew. When given the opportunity students could express themselves in a multi-modally way. Using the same assignment, students were able to show what they learned by writing, acting, creating, drawing, or verbally sharing their knowledge. Using genuine assessments there were no limits to what students could produce and teachers fully understood what students knew. Teachers easily observed students’ talents, skills, and
intelligence in different ways too. This form of assessment was also fun and exciting for students. They became active learners when engaged in various types of activities. Students no longer sat passively by observing and listening to the teacher. When given the opportunity to do so they took ownership of their own learning. They also integrated prior knowledge and experiences with new information. This was real-life learning at its best when students integrated prior knowledge and experiences with new information.

Kohn (2008) stated that authentic assessment should be used simultaneously with required curriculum. It enhanced the development of students while redefining the curriculum. It is noteworthy that some assessments may be paper and pencil but this should not be the only way to assess students’ knowledge. They should be assisted to make connections using prior and new knowledge. Using authentic assessment fostered this concept of measuring learning. Students’ growth was measured by using multiple tools such as portfolios, journals, projects, presentations, exhibits, and debates opposed to traditional testing only. Students were engaged in the learning process by receiving feedback directly linked to assignments, guiding their own instruction, encouraged to use and develop higher levels of cognition.

Authentic assessment also provided stakeholders which may include parents, students, administrators, and community members with evidence of learning. Students’ performance could be demonstrated using an observable product. Growth could be easily seen and measured by using a variety of tools such as projects, presentations, debates, research, or writing. Their growth could be measured on a short-term or long-term basis opposed to a summative evaluation. Students freely monitored their own performance,
evaluated their own work, and even collaborated with others to foster the learning process (Hill, 2000). Kohn (2000) supported this idea that authentic assessment provided corroborative evidence for all stakeholders. Such evidence should first include the teacher’s evaluation along with several example of students’ work that promoted learning. Schools could have considered using a third party to evaluate students’ work for validity purposes.

Authentic assessment focused on performance tasks like portfolios, demonstrations, presentation, debates, etc. These activities may be less structured from traditional testing methods but more student-centered. Application and quality learning was promoted. Students are aware of the learning expectations and what should be accomplished before assessment even takes place. The purpose and expectations for learning was clearly defined and established up front often having a rubric in place to measure students’ performance. Students were give opportunities to authenticate learning, planning, decision-making, and communicating new information in creative ways that demonstrated what the learners know. Authentic assessment was correlated with real life experiences too (Kohn, 2000; Rule, 2006).

Traditional tests do not effectively measure student aptitude (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000; Rule, 2006). When individuals are seeking a job today, employers are looking to see what interviewees can produce. Therefore, portfolios are one form of authentic assessment that clearly demonstrated what students can produce. They provided a more equitable indicator of what students could accomplish opposed to a pencil and paper test. Portfolios allowed students to create, display, and defend their own work.
Creativity was also encouraged and promoted through the use of portfolios. The uses of portfolios are a great way to look beyond a test, quiz, or multiple choice questions to measure full talents and abilities of students. Kohn (2000) added that portfolios involve an accumulation of students’ work over time so their growth can be easily observed. Portfolios allowed students to go back, add or alter their work as they obtained new knowledge and skills while reflecting on past knowledge. To assess students authentically, teachers measured their abilities by evaluating projects, long-term assignments, reports, speeches, and essays. Rubrics were created to determine the quality of the work. The rubric allowed students to evaluate, challenge, or defend the authenticity of their own work. Students became active participants in their own learning process. They learned how to become problem-solvers and decision-makers which indeed prepared them for the 21st century job market.

Authentic assessment was a great way to promote shared ownership. Teachers and students collectively worked together to make assessments using a rubric to measure progress and growth. This type of assessment encouraged engagement and dialogue with the teacher and students, opportunities for students to evaluate their own work, and gave them a sense of ownership. Students worked with the teacher to discuss the criteria of the task before assessment took place. Expectations were clearly defined and established up front. It also provided a clear understanding of how the grading process will work. Since expectations were clearly communicated, the quality of students’ work increased while they assessed their own work following the guidelines of the rubric. This type of assessment enabled students to self-direct their own learning opposed to instruction being
directed by the teacher all the time. Authentic assessment promoted active participation for the students (Elsworth, 2011; Puckett & Black, 2000).

Authentic assessment was a great way to increase student involvement in the evaluation process (Kohn, 2000; Rule, 2006). Students could not only evaluate their own growth and progress but used a rubric as a measuring tool to pass judgment on their peers’ work. Using a rubric as a measuring tool was a simple way for students to evaluate their peers’ presentations, projects, portfolios, debates, papers, or reports. By following the criteria on the rubric, students critiqued and judged what their peers had produced for a particular project or assignment. This form of assessment allowed the students to become active learners and evaluators. Having them evaluate their peers’ work was not only a great way for them to learn from their peers but also gave them the opportunity to develop higher-level thinking skills too. By evaluating, they learned to view things from different perspectives and drew diverse conclusions about a topic. Students also became good viewers and listeners as they evaluated their peers’ work.

Students’ growth can be measured easily over time using authentic assessment. This form of assessment allowed for flexibility where required expectations could be met but not be prescriptive. Students were able to generate a product without having to be so rigid in nature. They were able to tie in personal experiences, skills, and creativity into their work. It allowed students over a period of time, numerous opportunities where they could go back and add information or details to their projects, writing activities, or exhibits as they obtained new knowledge skills. This allowed learning to be a continuous
process and meaningful for students. They could conveniently go back and revisit their work throughout the school year (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000).

Rule (2006) said there are four main components of authentic assessment. First, it involved having students deal with real-world problems. When learning had meaning or relevance, it gave students a better understanding and purpose for assessment too. When a genuine purpose was being evaluated achievement, motivation, attitudes, and learning increases. Also, open-ended inquiry, thinking skills, and metacognition were emphasized. Opportunities were given for students to think outside the box. They were encouraged to apply prior knowledge and experiences to new situations. High-order thinking skills were then cultivated and opportunities are given to demonstrate that you “know what you know.” One way of thinking or answering a question was eliminated yet students began to see multiple ways to answer a question or problem-solve. Additionally, authentic assessment measured social learning. Students interacted with their peers to exchange knowledge and information with one another. While strengthening their communication skills during social learning, they built relationships and established a sense of trust with one another. They learned to value and respect others’ opinions and beliefs. Multiple perspectives became viewed as important in the learning process. Multiple perspectives were cultivated and encouraged while one way of thinking becomes eliminated. Students were empowered to make choices to direct their own learning too. As students learned to make decisions about their own learning a sense of ownership was promoted. Students became teachers and learners at the same time. They began to take responsibility for their own learning as they learned how to effectively make decisions. Students need practice
solving real problems and performing complex tasks not provided in traditional testing (Elsworth, 2011; Rule, 2006).

Authentic assessment is a great way for students to retain information that is taught in school through application (Puckett & Black, 2000; Rule, 2006). Students are engaged in hands-on experiences that emphasized real-life experiences and school-based ideas. Authentic assessment allowed students to apply their experiences to the learning process. Genuine learning experiences are cultivated rather than artificial ones. It allowed both the students and the teacher opportunities to discover and display what students really know. Because of the hands-on approach to learning, students had a better chance of retaining the information. Information was not just being memorized for a test but application took place. Students were engaged in activities that allowed them to synthesis new and old knowledge. Higher-level thinking skills were refined too. Therefore, classroom activities are moved from memorization and recall to creating and synthesizing. Students took ownership of their own learning by demonstrating what they know when they created, presented, designed, or researched. Motivation towards learning was stimulated too. Students were often excited when they have an opportunity to generate their own products. Generally a sense of pride was established as they feel good about what they initiated or originated.

Elsworth (2011) stated that assessment should not be a burdensome process but educative in nature. It should provide students with perpetual feedback and chances to continue to grow and develop skills for the real-world. Opportunities should be given to make errors, corrections, or adjustments based on the feedback they receive from the
teacher. In the real-world, we learn best from our experiences and results. This eliminated the idea of teach, test, and move on to something new. This has been the traditional way of teaching and learning. Students should be tested on their ability to do and not just recall information. They should be allowed to transfer their learning into effective performances and products that are related to real-world demands, opportunities, and constraints. This concept promoted real learning. Also, students are provided with immediate and detailed feedback. Chances are given to submit as assignment, get corrective criticism and feedback, and then make revisions. Learning was improved when students made corrections and are engaged in receiving feedback. This process allowed students to work with the teachers and reflect on their own learning process. Collectively, the teacher and students assessed their work to determine whether they are using learning. This enabled students to become active participants in the learning process. They used their learning to generate or revise their work not just to pass a test. Students were taught how to adapt prior knowledge to new situations that they encountered.

Rule (2006) supported that real-world experiences and authentic assessment improved student achievement on national and state tests. Having students create original work involved applying challenging, interesting, and creative assessments they learned how to think “outside the box” and became problem-solvers. And when students learned how to problem-solve and were given opportunities to do so, not only did the nature of their work change but they learned how to effectively strategize for all types of assessments using their knowledge and skills opposed to remembering facts and procedures. It also involved inquiry into actual real-life problems. Assignments were
focused on more genuine, intellectual, and challenging work which promoted higher-level thinking skills which better prepared students for achievement tests. The results could then be used to produce or present the findings or information in a relevant way that went beyond the classroom. Using authentic assessments promoted application of knowledge and skills instead of memorization and recall of information. And when students learned how to strategize and were given opportunities to unravel dilemmas, the nature of their work changed as they became effective problem-solvers.

The major goal of educators should be to produce life-long learners by teaching certain skills that can be applied in various settings or situations. Traditional testing only measure what students know about particular subject matter whereas authentic assessment allow students to become problem-solvers by making flexible adaptations to new problems and situations. Using authentic assessment, they learned how to apply whey they already know with new knowledge and information to create innovative facts. It measured students” learning by integrating their experiences, creativity, and ability to make applications in multiple situations. Connections and associations were then made between information by identifying cause and effect relationships. Students learned how and when to put knowledge to use in real-life situations. This also required students to be able to transfer knowledge in multiple contexts or settings. Higher-level thinking was then nurtured using authentic assessment opposed to recalling facts or details (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000).
Validity and Reliability of Authentic Assessment

The literature addresses the validity and reliability concerns of using authentic forms of assessment. It supports this study because teachers can easily observe what students know along with similar tasks that they produce. Teachers can compare such tasks to help develop a clear understanding of what students know. This might require using multiple evaluators to validate the assessment findings in order to conduct reliable data during the evaluation process. The literature also shows that one form of assessment does not provide teachers with a valid or reliable picture of student achievement. Other forms of assessment need to be considered. Therefore, the literature suggests that more studies need to focus on incorporating authentic assessment into the learning process and how it may complement standardized tests.

Using forms of authentic assessment that was not standardized to specific norms and had varying criteria made standardization of national competencies a difficult task in education. The dependence of subjective ratings versus objective scores became an issue due to the variability found among the criteria. Reliability and validity were crucial to the acceptance of authentic assessment as an accurate measure of ability and knowledge. Rule (2006) argued that authentic assessment should be measured with the same validity criteria as other assessments and Guskey (2003) claimed that the authenticity of authentic assessment was not a sufficient measure of validity. The validity of an instrument he claimed was “fundamentally linked to how well the device reflects an underlying construct” (p. 26). Current research investigated the value of using authentic assessment as an alternative form of evaluation (Elsworth, 2011) and can be argued that student
achievement cannot be accurately measured solely through the use of standardized tests (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000). However, more studies need to be conducted that provide evidence that is valid regarding authentic assessment tools are incorporated into the educational evaluation.

When evaluating knowledge and achievement, issues of reliability were important to consider. The scores must be reliable across contexts and among individuals since important decisions were made based on test and performance scores. Therefore, authentic assessment tools were viewed as problematic because of the difficulty in establishing the reliability of scores that are derived from individual and subjective materials and performance. However, reliability only consisted of the technical accuracy of assessment measures to show the consistency that such strategies produced whereas validity was important when developing authentic assessment tools. Validity addressed the degree to which only the procedure or task claimed to measure (Mueller, 2005; Puckett & Black, 2000).

There are limitations to objective tests too (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000; Palm, 2008). How well students performed on a test can be affected by many factors: learning styles or personality of a test-taker, the testing context or time allotted for the assessment. Therefore, regardless of the assessment tool there are limitations that need to be minimized while the reliability and validity need to be interpreted. An assessment tool should provide clear theoretical definitions of the abilities to be measured, specify the conditions to be followed in observing performance, and quantify our observations so that measurement rubrics have the necessary properties (Kohn, 2000; Mueller, 2005).
The researcher defined reliability as the quality of tests scores. Such scores would remain consistent across instances of test use and individuals who are taking the test. This was also a measure of reliability. Factors should be clearly identified that are potential sources of error measurement are most important in the investigation of reliability. The classical true score (CTS) measurement theory, generalizability theory, and item response theory should be used to establish the reliability of test scores.

When estimating the reliability the classical true score was observed having two components: the true score and the error score. The individual’s ability was the true score and the error score was due to factors other than ability. One limitation of CTS model was that it considered all error to be standardized and random. It was difficult to know what factors are causing the variance in the scores. Also, it was difficult to control those factors in a subsequent administration process of the test. When using authentic assessment, the CTS model was not very useful when establishing the reliability of measures. For example, finding the reliability portfolios may be a problem due to the inconsistencies due to raters and cannot be separated from the discrepancies due to tasks. This may cause problems because rater variance could be easily controlled by rating instrument standardization and rater training.

Cardinet, Johnson, and Pini (2009) described the generalizability theory as one that separated the magnitude of sampling variability due to tasks, methods, occasions, etc. and provided estimates of the measurement error in the form of inconsistency components. This theory reflected the reliability of generalizing the sample scores to a larger domain of hypothetical measures. For example, using authentic assessment such as
portfolios dealt with variability due to raters and sampling variability due to tasks referred to internal consistency of assessment tool. Since finding the variance in a score was divided into components it was easier to manage the factors that cause error. It would be practical to reconstruct the test to reflect more consistency among the items if it was due to tasks. Therefore, using the generalizability theory evaluated the reliability of authentic assessment may be especially helpful because of the need to look at various aspects simultaneously, such as raters and tasks.

The item response theory provided another measurement that can be used to estimate the reliability of assessment scores: The individual taking the test. An advantage of the item response theory was its precision of measurement. It did not treat error inconsistency as homogeneous, the estimation of reliability is independent from the sample scores, and the individual’s estimate of ability was independent of the set of items taken or tasks performed (Cardinet, Johnson & Pini, 2009; Kohn, 2000). This was important in establishing the internal consistency of authentic samples of student work which tend to be individual compilations of knowledge and ability. Authentic assessment such as portfolios tends to lack standardization and the complexity to evaluate student learning.

Kohn (2000) believed that authentic assessment was a credible and valid measurement tool. It is valid because the teacher and students established the goals and objectives ahead of time by designing a measurement tool such as a rubric which was used to guide and assess the learning process. Using a rubric was valid because it only measured the tasks that were outlined prior to the assessment process and there was no
hidden agenda or bias often found in standardized tests. Students and teachers were aware of the exceptions upfront so there are no surprises during the evaluation process. Outside evaluators (like other educators or parents) also validated the teacher’s judgment by easily observing examples of students’ learning. Providing various samples and documentation of students’ work performances over a period of time in a natural setting was a suitable and valid alternative to standardized paper and pencil tests.

Rubrics provided students, teachers, and parents with a clear description of various levels of performances as an alternative way to assess knowledge through demonstration. The various levels of performance were rated by a point value to determine students’ knowledge of a task. Rubrics were great not only for evaluating the process of the content but provided students, teachers, and parents with clear expectations before the evaluation process of the task begin. It was important for them to be detailed so expectations are spelled out for the evaluation process and eliminated questions about how well the task was completed. Also, rubrics should be organized by using numbers to equally measure each factor of the criterion. A detailed and systematic description of each factor should be provided to clarify the criteria for valid and reliable grading purposes. Rubrics provided an alternative way to measure students’ knowledge while they demonstrated what they know in a real-life setting. However, it was essential for teachers to be consistent in their scoring methods using the same rubric to measure and compare student performances across large groups. The more teachers began using rubrics for authentic assessment they became comfortable and competent gathering
trustworthy data for valid analyses of student knowledge and meet the accountability needs of all stakeholders (Elsworth, 2011).

In order for data and inferences to be considered reliable depended on the consistency of results found on similar tasks observed and produced overtime by students. Such observations and products were compared to prior tasks to identify what the learner can or cannot do. Several examples of similar work involved the same cognitive domain or content area should be compared and contrasted to receive trustworthy data. Using comparative data provided a true picture and complete story about students’ academic ability. However, all data was dated and sequenced in order to effectively analyze and interpret students’ academic ability. This format made it convenient for stakeholders to easily observe and monitor true academic progress or achievement (Puckett & Black, 2000).

Truly the best way to evaluate students is by observing them in the classroom and looking for evidence of learning in a natural setting. This required time and effort from teachers and outside evaluators however these observations provided authentic samples and documentation about what students really know oppose to having students take standardized tests; they only allowed evaluators to form judgments about what they know. Documentation from observations also included student, teacher, and parent interpretations of what was learned. Documentation could be compared and contrasted as well for patterns of the performances observed and over time it provided valid data about students’ learning. Outside evaluators or educators also assisted with this process of assessment to further valid the teacher’s judgments. This increased the confidence and
authenticity of the evaluation data (Kohn, 2000). This process provided all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, administration, and policy makers) with real evidence of learning.

Kohn (2000) also suggested using multiple judges whenever possible would support a higher reliability rate. Using authentic forms of assessment easily allowed multiple individuals to monitor the progress of students’ performance from task to task. When many opportunities were provided for students to demonstrate their capabilities and exhibit their performances over time, teachers could collect reliable and defensible data. The ultimate goal was to ensure that the outcomes of the assessment truly reflect the student’s academic skills without any biases in order to establish reliability. The outcomes should have been accurate and meaningful in order to effectively measure students’ skills. This required the teacher to relate students’ performance, processes, and products to the established criteria and goals (Puckett & Black, 2000). Therefore, overtime effective assumptions can be made about students’ performances, products, and cognitive proficiencies.

**Constructivist Theorist**

The undergirding theory behind constructivist teaching is exploration. The theory of constructivism defines knowledge and how it is developed (Fosnot, 2005, p.10). Early constructivists emphasized that humans construct their own knowledge rather than reproduce someone else’s. This educational revolution is critically important today because schools must allow students learning opportunities to think, understand, and control their behavior while they construct their own knowledge. These opportunities
should permit them to focus on what they know, receive new information, and fit new information into the current structure. The most effective learning activities to develop knowledge should highlight authentic, interesting, holistic, long-term, and socialization (Puckett & Black, 2000). Constructivist classrooms allow students to take charge of their own learning; teachers support creative activities (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). Such activities encourage students to problem-solve while making knowledge purposeful. However, authentic problems usually occur in a real-life setting while a holistic activity is broad and multifaceted. So students should be allowed to test and strengthen their understanding of knowledge through experiences in the real world that allow them to challenge themselves. However, in order to truly implement constructivist teaching educators must have a paradigm shift in their thinking. Important in the implementation of constructivism is: (a) prior knowledge, higher order thinking and in-depth understanding rather than rote learning, (b) the use of language, writing, and other forms of expression to process information, and (c) collaboration between teachers and students. Educators must be willing to allow students to be active learners while they self-direct their own learning. Students must be autonomous, as they explore, make decisions, and become responsible for their own learning (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). Using constructivism, a teacher can generate purposeful activities that require students to build on and extend their mental model (Custer el. At., 2000). Independently students initiate and pursue knowledge through discovery and problem-solving real-life issues. This type of change in instruction would require educators to move from the traditional way of teaching and assessing students’ knowledge. Educators can focus on
engaging students in knowledge construction embedded in real-world contexts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). As a result, constructivist is characterized as an educational revolution (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001).

Although standardized tests are prevalent in schools today they require students to only reproduce knowledge (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000). So, teachers and administrators will need to innovatively find alternative ways to evaluate constructivist thinking. Fosnot (2005) stated:

> Without a reexamination and change in beliefs about the nature of knowing, there will be no substantial change in the enterprise of education; we will stay in a vicious cycle. Driven by the discrepancy between our students” scores on standardized tests and those of students from other countries, we search for solutions. (p. 242)

Therefore, authentic assessment is a great way to measure constructivist teaching and learning which emphasizes thinking and understanding of knowledge. Using authentic forms of assessments will allow all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, and administrators) to see and reflect on students” academic progress over time. Observing how students approach a problem can show their present state of knowledge (Dewey, 1991; Kohn, 2000).

**John Dewey**

John Dewey (1991) believed student”s knowledge grow from their experiences. As a well known philosopher and learning theorists, Dewey supported principles of constructivism because he believed in the importance of experience and the use of logic
in problem solving (Custer, Schell, McAlister, Scott & Hoepfl, 2000). He believed students should be allowed to transform, reorganize, reshape meanings and values; the mind is active so learning should be a result of one’s experience. He felt traditional education and assessment was a matter of routine; plans and programs were handed down from the past (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). A classroom should be viewed as a laboratory where experience is linked to the student; knowledge is constructed by individuals (Dewey, 1927). As students actively participate in the learning process through problem solving they begin to make sense of the world around them. He deemed schooling is not preparation for life, it is life itself; education is connected with personal experiences. This is learning in the purest form. Knowledge is constructed when students have an opportunity to create or generate meaning. Foote, Vermette and Battaglia (2001) said Dewey believed education should mirror the complexities of life: material should be supplied without rigidity or finality and thinking should be original. Furthermore, learning resides within the learner. It cannot be handed to someone; must be provoked through activity and revolve around actual problems and issues. Dewey believed that effective schooling should involve conceptualizing and solving real-life problems (Schutz, 2001). Students should be used as resources to unravel problems in their environment as they develop critical thinking skills. In order for students to foster inquiry, instruction must involve connecting experiences to the real-world through hands-on projects and experimental methods. Through hands-on approaches to learning, students’ level of understanding would develop and alter as they learn more about a situation. Therefore, their experiences would carry over from one activity to the next.
These educational activities would encourage students to make choices and self-direct their own learning. Dewey (1988) believed students should be inquirers who make meaning of the present situation or problem using past experiences and knowledge. He believed through experiences individuals form their beliefs and understanding about the world.

Dewey (1927) encouraged individuality although he believed that schooling should promote a balance for students. Students react and behave differently in various situations and settings. So, traditional forms of assessment should not be the only way to measure what students know (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Education should go beyond paper and pencil activities into training individuals to use their unique backgrounds and experiences. He warned, “An individual may lose his individuality. For individuals become imprisoned in routine and fall to the level of mechanisms” (Dewey, 1988, p. 112). So when schools opt to educate students through the traditional approach of skill and drill they become instruments of habit versus individuals (Schultz, 2001). “Adults have given training rather than education” (Dewey, 1988, p. 70). When schools fail to provide students with hands-on opportunities to learn and develop skills they are provided with an artificial education. There is no connection to the real-world around them when they are given paper and pencil type of assessments. Dewey (1991) argued “That there should be a natural connection of the everyday life of the child with the business environment around him and that it is the affair of the school to clarify and liberalize this connection” (p. 76). Today in order for schools to implement authentic forms of assessment educators must be willing to open up and promote learning in the
world beyond the school. When the schools begin to accompany this change, students will obtain the skills of building connections and making meaning with the world around them (Schutz, 2001). More importantly, they will be better prepared for the 21st century workforce. Learning would then mirror society which was Dewey’s ultimate plan for schools. Schultz (2001) stated that schools would emulate society when students are engaged in a continual process of learning and assessment where they collaborate and share common goals with their environment through combined inquiry.

Dewey (1916) believed that schools should be an institute that consists of interaction, communication, and cooperation with the community. He said, “Learning in school should be continuous with that out of school. He believed that schools could not educate students single-handedly. There should be a free interplay between the two” (p. 358). Schools should provide learning activities that are authentic and relative to students’ daily lives. Schools should afford students opportunities to apply what they learned in real-life settings by making choices and problem-solving. Whatever they learned in school should be applicable to the world around them. “What assurance is there in the existing system that there will be opportunity to use their gifts and the education they have obtained?” (Dewey, 1981, p. 319). So he believed that schools should teach students how to change their society. The learning activities they engage in should be relevant and useful to the activities that they will partake in when they leave school. “Educators here and there are awake to the need of discovering vocational and occupational abilities and to the need of adjusting the schools system to build upon what is discovered” (Dewey, 1981, p. 318). Therefore, authentic forms of instruction and
assessment would be fundamental to Dewey’s aim for education. He believed that learning was a progressive process where it consisted of a step here and improvement there (Schutz, 2001). Learning does not just take place on one occasion but rather takes place day to day. In essence, learning and evaluation is a continuous process and not just a onetime event. For that reason, constructivist methods will allow students to revisit, adjust, critique, and analyze the knowledge they receive. These methods would also allow students to collaborate with their surrounding environment (Shapiro, 2003).

So in conclusion, Dewey protested against formalism of American schools (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). He promoted and supported creative classroom activities that emphasized real-life needs and experiences.

If we put before the mind’s eye the ordinary classroom, with its row of ugly desks placed in geometrical order, crowded together so that there shall be as little moving room as possible, desks almost all of the same size, with just enough space to hold books, pencils, and paper, and add a table, some chairs, the bare walls, and possible a few pictures, we can restrict the only educational activity that can possible go on in such a place. It is all made “for listening” because simply studying lessons out of a book is only another kind of listening; it marks the dependency of one mind upon another. (Dewey, 1991, pp. 31-32)

Therefore, Dewey was open to new procedures for curriculum and evaluation that allowed students to be self-learners and evaluators. In order for this concept to be endorsed in schools, teachers must be willing to play the role as a guide, director, or facilitator and allow students to be self-directed learners. This constructivist concept
would cultivate students to be creators of knowledge while they create and control their learning in an atmosphere of mutual trust, collaboration, and high expectations. Because learning is not linear or sequential but rather integrated and complex, students should be allowed to integrate prior knowledge with new information. Foote, Vermette & Battaglia (2001) agreed with Dewey that constructivism calls for non-routine; students create and control their own learning. Learning should involve social interaction, numerous strategies that involve higher-order thinking skills, and alternative forms of assessment. More importantly, students become empowered to learning through thinking, exploration, and collaboration through authentic learning experiences and assessments while engaging in participation and partnerships within the community. Furthermore, learning becomes more powerful when students make meaningful connections between their schoolwork and their own experiences and situations (Conklin, 2010; Kohn, 2000; Puckett & Black, 2000).

Jean Piaget

Unlike the traditional way of learning, Piaget argued that the mind does not copy facts but instead organizes and transforms it into reality (Evans, 1981; Foote, Vermette, & Battaglia, 2001). He believed that a child’s ideas were “constructions” that involved mental arrangements and experiences. Piaget (1970) said, “This is why the traditional school of education is prejudiced in favor of theoretical principles: children are taught grammar, for example, before they have had practice speaking and the rules of arithmetic before they have had problems to solve, etc.” (p. 161). He supported the notion that learning was a result of modifying experiences as a result of behavior. When children are
given opportunities to experience or learn within the world around them it changed the nature of their experiences. In essence he deemed that one’s experience was a product of the child’s performance; experience was relative to action (Evans, 1981). Piaget clearly supported John Dewey’s notion about education that learning should involve active problem solving and should revolve around experiences. This type of learning would allow students to make sense of the world around them through experiment. And such experiences are then organized or arranged in the mind known as “schemata” (Evans, 1981; Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). He believed as individuals organize and tie together these patterns or “schemata” new knowledge is formed. Therefore, Piaget believed schemata involved adjusting and adapting of information and not imitation (Evans, 1981). So practical experiences allow students to develop deep understandings of content as they construct and problem solve. Piaget stated, “Knowledge does not begin in the I, and it does not begin in the object; it begins in the interactions” (Evans, 1981, p. 20). This viewpoint of learning encourages students to become constructors of knowledge versus photocopying information and therefore calls for alternative ways of evaluating the skills that have been obtained.

One main reason why schools use grades is to provide children with rewards for their achievement (Evans, 1981; Kohn, 2000). The author stated that Piaget believed not all learning has to be rewarded outwardly or extrinsically. Piaget would refer to this kind of learning as natural or unplanned where children would freely talk about their experiences. This kind of learning does not require any special rewards or memorization. Students just freely share their knowledge or understanding about a concept from what
they experienced. Through engagement of activities and events of the world around them, students developed and obtained new knowledge while partaking in real-life happenings. And because such happenings are authentic in nature, the information or knowledge unconsciously is processed or organized with prior knowledge (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). Piaget believed even when students are engaged in their own activities, learning is taking place that involves logical ordering of information and reasoning (Evans, 1981). Such engagement allows students to develop critical thinking skills while solving problems and constructing new knowledge. This is the whole concept behind constructivism; creation of knowledge comes from active participation as students develop original problems and answers as they learn how to think for themselves. Piaget said, “Everything stems from the subject’s activity. It is manmade. The totality of what is possible is the subject’s own creation” (Evans, 1981, p. 49). He wanted to see the entire educational system revolutionized; educating for an experimental frame of mind. Schools should allow opportunities within the curriculum for students to freely direct his or her own experiences to develop as an individual. Piaget said learning is “A matter of presenting to the children situations which offer new problems, problems that follow on from one another. You need a mixture of direction and freedom” (Evans, 1981, p. 53).

Crain (2005) stated that Piaget believed cognitive development was a natural process. Real cognitive growth occurs through exploration when children develop knowledge on their own without direct teaching. He claimed that through simple exploration of the environment children learn without anyone educating them. Cognitive structures emerge from experiences as one makes sense of the world around them.
However, often teaching can hinder the child’s natural inquisitiveness when instruction is limited to skill and drill activities such as worksheets and tests. Such activities stifled students’ creativity and did not allow them to truly be productive in learning (Kohn, 2000). They need opportunities to figure things out unlike worksheets and tests. Constance Kamii (2004) stated worksheets and tests train children to worry about getting the right answers versus learning how to problem solve. Instead of using worksheets and tests, schools need to provide experiences that children can work on for themselves; these problems can be found in their day to day lives. “Real learning comes from experiences that arouse children’s curiosity and give them opportunities to work out their solutions on their own” (Crain, 2005, p. 144).

**Lev Vygotsky**

Lev Vygotsky built on Piaget’s theory that new knowledge must connect to what we already know (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). According to Vygotsky (1997):

In education it is far more important to teach the child how to think than to communicate various bits of knowledge to him…Thinking, you see, denotes nothing less than the participation of all of our previous experience in the resolution of a current problem, and the distinctive feature of this form of behavior is simply that it introduces a creative element into our behavior through the construction of every possible connection between elements in preliminary experience, which is what thinking is essentially. By this very fact, it multiplies the limitless possibilities of all those connections that may be produced out of
human reactions, and makes a man’s behavior inexhaustibly multifaceted and exceptionally complicated. (p. 175)

He noted that individuals are multifaceted who use their experiences to create new knowledge. Knowledge is constructed in one’s mind then it is influenced by experiences. He suggested that learning involves actively receiving information and responding to it through social interactions.

So through social cultural learning Vgotsky believed cognition takes place. He believed students’ life experiences affect and influence their cognitive development. When students interact with others exchanging and sharing ideas, new thoughts and schemes are constructed. Furthermore, when students are given opportunities to manipulate information through interaction and conversation higher cognitive skills are being developed (Wink & Putney, 2002). So learning is influences and enhanced through our daily experiences with the surrounding world. “Instruction, after all, does not begin in school” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 208). It is through daily social experiences that knowledge is created or added to one’s current knowledge bank. For example, if one does not understand something through conversation or listening to others clarification can be discovered through social interactions; what we do with others instead of individually. Vygotsky believed when students interact with other cognitive skills continue to develop and new knowledge is constructed for other generations to use. He viewed mental processes as predominately a social cultural function; the surrounding world affects and shapes one’s knowledge (Wink & Putney, 2002). So from the Vygotskian perspective, students and teachers should work collaboratively with their surrounding environment
encouraging interactions with others to construct knowledge. Neither a prescribed educational program nor standardized tests would support Vygotsky’s idea of quality teaching and learning. A teacher’s role should be to encourage an authentic, purposeful learning experience. He believed good pedagogy requires teachers to relate the curriculum to the real world. Therefore, according to Vygotsky (1997) standardize tests only serve as a basis for students’ knowledge and should not be used exclusively to reveal students’ intellectual ability; such assessment tools only reveal a portion of a child (p. 334).

Like other constructivist theorists Vygotsky agreed that learning is not passive but rather involves generating ideas through language discovery. He believed language is critical in the cognitive process; it is a mental thinking tool (Wink & Putney, 2002). Language involves relating to others and thought. From Vygotsky’s perspective, language is used to share collective knowledge through problem-solving situations with others. Through problem-solving, students exchange old information with others while they obtain new knowledge. Further, this process of learning allows students to construct knowledge with others; each one shares their expertise in order to create and discuss new meaning. This learning process allows students to make the connection with prior and new knowledge; what they already know and what they have learned through their interactions with others in the classroom or shared experiences. The authors Wink and Putney (2002) added that exchanging of information permits students to play an active role in the learning process while they construct their own knowledge through experimenting, inquiring, interviewing, and investigating.
Although Vygotsky built on Piaget’s theory that knowledge should connect to what is already known, there were some obvious differences too. Both theorists focused on intellectual development but from different sociocultural paths. “Piaget was primarily interested in how knowledge is formed or constructed. His theory is a theory of invention or construction, which occurs inside the mind of the individual” (p. 10). Vygotsky however, was interested in the cultural and social influences on learning and development as well as how individual children actively internalize what they learn from others (Wadsworth, 1996). For example, in a classroom setting according to Piaget’s theory students would be encouraged to self-direct their own learning through discussion. The teacher would play a role as a facilitator and allow students to debate or discuss issues; there is no one right answer. Simultaneously the teacher would actively observe the thought process or cognitive level of students’ explanations. The human mental activity was important to Piaget; critical thinking is emphasized (Wink & Putney, 2002).

According to Vygotsky’s theory peer tutoring would be encourage to take place within the classroom setting. Through social interaction with peers knowledge is constructed; a right answer is derived collectively. Therefore, he believed human knowledge depended on the appropriateness of another’s mind; dialectical teaching and learning, sociocultural learning, and problem solving. On the other hand, Dewey’s theory would emphasize experimental. Students would learn using manipulatives (such as counters). Knowledge is constructed from whole to part.
Types of Leadership

Consciously and unconsciously schools are often hindered by certain factors that may enable students from performing certain tasks. According to Pascale, Milleman, and Gioja (2000) organizations must change in order to grow otherwise they will become stagnant. Real change can only occur when organizations identify and confront their challenges using the right instruments to bring about the appropriate transformation. Such factors may influence change and performance within the school. Performance and motivation of any organization increases when the culture is positive and may vary depending on the leadership style. Because school leaders affect the overall morale and productivity of a school, multiple interventions must be implemented to change the academic activities and student performances. Therefore, in order for sustainable reform to take place in education leadership becomes the key (Fullan, 2002). Leaders in part create the culture of an organization (Schein, 1992). Schein stated, “If the leaders of today want to create organizational cultures that will themselves be more amendable to learning, they will have to set the example by becoming learners themselves and involving others in the learning process” (Schein, 1992, p. 392). Not only do principals need to become instructional leaders, they need to become agents of change. What is a change agent? Leaders who are willing to troubleshoot the school’s problems in order to truly transform the organization (Shapiro, 2000). They must be willing to move beyond the traditional management style and form organizations. They must be ready to establish relationships, build trust with students and teachers in order for their leadership to be effective. They need to move beyond the old biases of leadership and work
collaboratively with all stakeholders to problem-solve and move the schools forward.

According to White, (2010):

Our chief claim is that leadership can be practiced by anyone in any kind of movement, community, organization, or institution…Leadership has little to do with formal authority or where one is in the chain of command, and a great deal to do with forming and sustaining relationships that lead to results in the common interest. (p. 128)

In order for leaders to maximize the school’s vision and mission, they must be willing to influence others to become equally prominent in the decision-making process and be open to change regarding instruction and evaluation. For that reason, the most effective organizations create a culture of leaders (Donaldson, 2001; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009; Schein, 2004).

Two of the most common ways of viewing leadership is transformational and transactional (Burke, 2008). James MacGregor Burns conceptualized leadership into these two categories as a new paradigm of leading (Bass & Riggio, 2006). A transactional leader pertains to the status quo; one who manages an organization distributing rewards and punishments to meet goals and objectives. According to Burns (1978) one of the hallmarks of transactional leaders is offering financial rewards for productivity or denying rewards for lack of productivity. They focus mainly in basic extrinsic motives and needs; based on rewards and punishments (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burke, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2007). Often positive reinforcement is exchanged for good job performance, merit pay for increased performance, or promotion for increased
Transactional leaders do not share a common stake in the organization. However, this type of leader is common and readily used in organizations. On the other hand, a transformational leader represents a sustainable approach to change. Although transformational leadership is an expansion of transactional leadership, such a leader is not afraid to make profound changes within the organization to take it to another level (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders realize it is challenging to handle complex problems in isolation so it is essential that they begin to utilize the gifts and talents of others. They encourage their employees to grow and develop into leadership roles within the organization. Schein (1992) greatest contribution to organizational culture emphasized “capacity building.” Capacity building is when leadership promotes a learning organization and a learning leader. “A learning culture must contain a core shared assumption that the appropriate way for humans to behave is to be proactive problem solvers and learners” (Schein, 1992, p. 364). His idea supports the theory of authentic forms of assessments. A good leader understands that the school’s vision cannot be fulfilled alone so all stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) must be inspired to commit to shared goals. All stakeholders should be viewed as valuable as leaders encourage inclusion and participation to show that each member is priceless. Therefore, a transformational leader would be necessary in order for teachers to transition from traditional forms of evaluation and implement authentic forms of assessment within schools however this model must fit the culture of the organization to accomplish the school’s vision and mission statement.
Transformational Leadership

According to Bass and Riggio (2006) a transformational leader encouraged their employees to go beyond their own individual expectations. Creativity is encouraged by leadership in order to promote innovative ideas and solutions for problem solving. As a result, standards and expectations are increased and encouraged by transformational leadership as high performances are achieved. There is no criticism for making mistakes or trying new approaches that may differ from the leader’s ideas because an authentic transformational leader cares about the needs, desires, and development of their employees because their goals transcend beyond their own self-interest and focuses on the common good of all stakeholders (Burns, 1978; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009).

Additionally, Burke (2008) stated that a transformational leader is one who is concern with the mission and strategy, leadership, and the overall culture of an organization and how it relates to external environmental factors to bring about sustainable change. This kind of leader would need to have many systems filtered in that interconnect and relate to student performance and assessment. This may mean restructuring teaching procedures and strategies that align with authentic forms of assessment. Furthermore, leadership should make sure such procedures and strategies align with the school’s mission statements since it impacts the organization’s overall performance. Also, teachers and leadership will need to participate collectively in the decision-making process, voice their opinions freely, while sharing ideas, and knowledge.

Transformational leaders encourage others to become leaders by coaching, mentoring, challenging, and supporting their staff (Bass & Riggio, 2006). So to truly
transform an organization, participation from everyone within the school would be essential; motivation would increase, a sense of ownership would be promoted among all stakeholders (students, teachers, and administrations), and ultimately affect students” productivity in a positive way. According to Donaldson (2001) a good leader is invitational. He or she should invite others to lead too. In doing so, roles and responsibilities would be distributed evenly among all staff members; this would help create strong relationships that include teachers, students, parents, and administrators. “I introduce a model of leadership residing in a collective relationship where participants are both „shapers of” and „shaped by” one another” (Donaldson, 2001, p. 41). As the overall climate improves, teachers will be more motivated to teach, students” academic achievement would increase, the school”s climate would improve and more importantly an atmosphere that is conducive to learning would be created with a transformational leader. Such a leader maintains open to the input of others realizing others” perspectives and contributions are necessary in order to bring about real change within the school (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). “They revere learning, they learn from their experiences and from their co-workers, and they are constantly sharing with others the fruits of what they have learned” (White, 2010, p. 5). Learning is a powerful concept but necessary in order for a transformational leader to be effective to revolutionize any organization. Students and teachers would be able to collectively learn and teach one another when implementing authentic forms of assessments. Students would have opportunities to share their experiences and new knowledge through various activities, projects, or through oral discussion. So a transformational leader would support the theory of authentic
assessment. The Burke-Litwin framework can be used by school leaders to plan, assist and analyze the necessary change needed to move the organization away from traditional forms of evaluation and begin implementing authentic types of assessment (Burke, 2008).

A transformational leader must first look at the overall history of the organization to identify its strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Leaders must be willing to properly assess the current state of the organization, examine any gaps between the vision and make proper adjustments necessary to move things forward. Once the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, threats, opportunities, and areas of improvement are identified then leaders can begin strategically planning how to best fulfill the mission and vision. Identifying these components will also provide them with a framework to implement and to bring forth the necessary academic assessment changes needed. It is also important to analyze the school’s environment policies, systems, and structures. Policies, systems, and structures should be aligned with the organization’s vision (Burke, 2008; Fullan, 2002).

After reviewing the overall history of the organization, school administrators should consider the various constructs of systems to implement as a means to bring improvement and effective change. Systems are analyzed from two different perspectives; transformational and transactional as a way of examining leadership (Burke, 2008). However, it is essential that the model fit the culture of the organization to accomplish an end; the vision and mission statement. Such constructs may include implementing a natural and open system for the organization to follow. According to Sergiovanni (2007):

These systems are supposed to help schools effectively and efficiently achieve their goals and objectives. This achievement, in turn, ideally strengthens the
culture and enhances meaning and significance. When things are working the way they should in a school, the life world and systemsworld engage each other in a symbiotic relationship. (p. 147)

Burke (2008) added systems provide a framework for organizations to follow. Within such systems leaders must be willing to establish relationships, implement new strategies, and remain open to change in order to bring the organization’s vision and mission to pass.

In order for school leaders to be successful, they need to think of transforming the organization through conceptual thinking, people and teams. Ensuring sustainable change requires a focused mind that is set for leading 21st century schools into academic success (Fullan, 2001). A transformational leader must be willing to encourage diverse individuals (all stakeholders; parents, students, teachers, community members, etc.) to come together collectively to work, affirm, be dedicated toward the common good and collective academic growth of all students (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). These are critical in order for true sustainable improvement to take place; the whole system must be moving forward in the assessment and evaluation process. This would require principals to foster shared commitment to the social environment along with principals across the district (Fink & Resnick, 2001). This would mean bridging the academic gap between high and low performing schools and at the same time raise the level of all students’ achievement. It is therefore crucial for school leaders to be open to alternative or authentic forms of evaluation in order to close the achievement gaps in order for sustainable reform to occur (Fullan, 2002). Leaders should consider all stakeholders’ (students, parents, and teachers) feelings towards the schools by conducting a survey. The
data from the surveys should provide leaders with vital information regarding the current state or condition for the school. Therefore, the culture of the school has a direct relationship on stakeholders’ commitment, performance, and the organization’s overall success (Burke, 2008).

It is challenging for educational leaders to establish sustaining relationships especially in difficult situations (Hay Management Consultants, 2000). Being able to motivate and energize a disaffected teacher is often a difficult task for school leaders although it is necessary to build such relationships otherwise teachers who are detached may contaminate the school’s environment. Owens (2007) noted:

Individual participants are never merely hired hands but bring along their heads and hearts: They enter into the organization with individually shaped ideas, expectations, and agendas, and they bring them differing values, interests, and abilities…Participants within formal organizations generate informal norms and behavior patterns: status and power systems, communication networks, sociometric structures, and working arrangement. (p. 55)

Therefore, a transformational leader will keep on giving in order to build healthy, lasting relationships with all staff members which would ultimately increase the organization’s and students’ productivity (Fullan, 2002).

Mary Follett Parker agreed, and made the point that we can never wholly separate the human from the mechanical side…But you all see every day that the study of human relations is business and the stuff of operating are bound up together. (Graham, 1995, p. 27).
Natural System

A transformational leader should consider implementing a natural system model. Mary Parker Follett was credited for identifying the concept of natural systems (Graham, 1995). Using a natural system will allow schools to work collaboratively and in conjunction with their surrounding community to obtain their academic goals stated in their vision and mission. Her work focused on the human relations view in the workplace. Schools should be able to exchange information and resources with local businesses while building, sustaining partnerships, and relationships. When school leaders begin working with one another a sense of unity is cultivated and everyone is focused on the same goal. In essence, schools become connected to other organizations and a sense of dependency is established too. Natural systems focus on the similarities of social groups. They equally realize the importance and significance of one another. In doing so, students would have opportunities to solve real-life problems while being assessed authentically. This dependency will enable all organizations to freely share information and knowledge, develop mutual respect and trust, and connect with one another. While enduring change, the natural system would encourage an organization to capitalize on outside resources and receive support from other businesses and associations. Although natural systems do not disregard goals as important, they view formal structures as unimportant to achieve goals (Owens, 2007; Schein, 2004).

According to Preskill and Brookfield (2009) a natural system would promote civic renewal within the organization. The organization becomes aware of community issues while being strengthen through support from other businesses. Therefore, school
leaders should not problem-solve in isolation but rather unite with other organizations within their community to fulfill their school’s vision and mission. Working with the surrounding community would allow leaders to receive the support and resources they need from local businesses to fulfill their vision. This would also eliminate school leaders feeling pressured to accomplish goals in isolation but rather become a force of change while working with other schools within the district and organizations in the community (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). More importantly, students would partake in authentic learning and assessment opportunities. When school allow their students to engage in authentic learning and assessment opportunities within the community they are providing them with first-hand knowledge and experiences that will allow them to develop skills to be successful citizens.

**Open System**

Leaders can apply an open system model to any organization. This type of system must be constantly aware of and be prepared to address the environmental events that influence the other components within the organization. Schools who implement the open systems model are not only influenced by the environment but become dependent on them. Learning does not take place in isolation within the four walls of the school. They should actually cooperate with other organizations to input resources or information from the environment, transforms them, and produces outputs (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Barnard (1938) believed that when a system of cooperation is attained, then cooperation is said to be effective. Cooperation is needed to bring about lasting change within an organization and to stand up for principles. Whereas closed systems (often associated with a
transactional leader) deal exclusively with controllable variables within an organization. Since schools and school districts are open systems, leaders are subject to events and changes that occur within the larger community, region, state, nation, and world. For example, open systems can be found in the strategies and interventions that are implemented to reach the 2012 goal of NCLB; 98% graduation rate. If the necessary academic strategies and interventions are implemented effectively, the overall school can benefit significantly. However, school leaders must be secure enough to allow others to be heard freely without feeling intimated. So a transformational school leader understands the necessity of collaborating with their staff to put into practice new ways of assessing their students authentically. Their focus is to bring about lasting academic change for their school. Therefore, implementing an open system would support the use of authentic forms of assessment. Schools would encourage students to not only learn in real-life settings but promote various forms of assessments such as using portfolios, journals, presentations, debates, etc. to observe what students know. Additionally, students would be able to connect new and prior knowledge with the use of open systems while teachers would have some flexibility with how they assess their students’ knowledge.

Since open systems are concerned with both structure and process there is usually stability and flexibility. The arrangement of roles and relationships are not stagnant. Barnard (1938) believed formal organizations are “Organic and evolving social systems” (p. 178). Because systems emphasize participation from everyone; exchanging of thoughts, opinions, and knowledge without biases being formed organizations must be
able to adapt and change (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Leaders’ main challenge is to achieve cooperation among the groups and individuals within the social system while achieving organizational goals. Using this system would require leaders to take on an apprentice role in order to trust and respect the opinions of others within the organization. To implement within schools, leaders may establish various committees within to help formulate academic strategies and interventions to bring about assessment changes and to fulfill the mission and vision. Each committee would freely discuss the school’s strengths and weaknesses while formulating possible solutions. In this regard, everyone becomes a leader which brings balance to the organization (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). Using committees would promote continuous change too. When a strategy does not work the committees can make the necessary adjustments collectively to move the organization forward towards the vision. Even though there are policies and procedures put in place within schools, an effective leader should filter in some external factors to keep the organization’s culture positive too. For example, leaders should provide opportunities for additional training or support for their employees such as workshops, seminars, or classes should be made available for continual growth and development purposes. These resources would spark motivation and ultimately affect the overall climate of the organization. External factors impact the motivation and overall environment of an organization. Therefore, school leaders must be able to predict or make reasonable guesses about the organization’s future and be prepared to respond accordingly (Burke, 2008). Fullan (2003) agreed that leaders should anticipate the needs that people will have during major change. Employees need to be able to trust their leaders, understand the
vision, and how the vision will be accomplished. They also need to know how they will be affected during this time of change. Although certain factors may not be predictable or unavoidable, leaders must be willing to establish open communication with their employees to help mobilize change. Additionally, school leaders must be willing to constantly look at the environment; measure students’ individual academic performance at all levels, and use simple assessment (Lawler & Worley, 2006). A good leader must find a balance. For example, in an educational setting certain policies and procedures must be carried out by individual school leaders that correlate with the district’s mission. Even though this may be the case, an effective leader will still use external factors such as guest speakers, resources, or training opportunities to keep students and teachers motivated and the overall environment positive. Therefore, authentic forms of instruction and assessment would be supported by a transformational leader.

**A Loosely Coupled Structure**

A loosely coupled structure would be necessary in order for teachers to move away from traditional forms of evaluation and implement authentic assessment. When a loosely-coupled structure is applied there may appear to be a disconnect within the school (or organization). Teachers appear to have complete control and autonomy within their classrooms; administrators have control and autonomy of their buildings, staff, and students. A loosely-coupled structure may subconsciously cause problems for an organization. If leaders do not have formal guidelines or procedures in place teachers could disconnect from the school’s vision and mission and become independent. So if classroom teachers decide to implement alternative ways to assess what students know
the evaluation method and procedures should be aligned with the school’s mission and vision; not working towards a different mission. It is vitally important for leaders to make sure if departments and committees are formed within the organization they are still tied to the organization’s mission (Burke, 2008). Even though they are individualized groups within the organization leadership should make sure they are still tied to the whole. Therefore, implementing a loosely-coupled structure could provide new insight and knowledge through collaboration while formulating various groups within the organization. For instance, in a school setting different teaching and assessment methods may be used in various classes as long as they are connected towards fulfilling the organization’s mission to improve students’ academic achievement. So moving from traditional forms of evaluation to authentic forms of assessment could work using a loosely-coupled structure.

**Intrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivators are usually sustaining in nature. Intrinsic rewards are usually meaningful because outcomes are based within the individual and not necessary based on what happens within the organization. For example, a teacher may pursue to further his or her education for intrinsic reasons. Whether they complete their education will be based upon the degree to which they are intrinsically motivated. The goal for any leader should be to get extraordinary performance on a sustained basis; intrinsic motivation plays an important part in leadership. Sergiovanni (2007) believed traditional strategies will get people to do only the minimum and nothing more, whereas intrinsic motivation is based upon the value of the work itself. Teachers and administrators are drawn by an inner
desire to be effective when intrinsically motivated. He stated, “What is rewarding gets
done, gets done well, and gets done on a sustained basis” (p. 128). This is essential in
order to effectively implement authentic forms of assessment. The author Sergiovanni
(2007) believed student achievement is linked to efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and
commitment from teachers. So if teachers and administrators are excited about
implementing authentic forms of assessment they will feel a sense of competence and
achievement, excitement, enjoyment and moral contentment when their students are
engaged in meaningful types of evaluations. Both teachers and students will feel a great
sense of satisfaction when academic achievement goals are reached. The negative
external factors will not affect their pedagogy. For example, the lack of parental support,
testing mandates, and community issues may affect the education process however
teachers will continue to work hard to educate their students. Sergiovanni (2007) believed
the real challenge for school leaders is to bridge the gap between the present practices
concerning evaluation and what needs to be done; intrinsic motivation plays an important
role on the federal, state, and local level in order to truly improve our schools.

Organizational Change

A new paradigm is vitally important to bring about successful organizational
changes in the 21st century. In the 1980s organizations focused on quality. They stressed
providing quality products and services for their clients. The 1990s highlighted speed;
doing everything quickly. Today the emphasis is on change (Leitschuh, 2005). So, in
order to move the educational system beyond the status quo of traditional forms of
assessment to a more authentic approach this would require an organizational change to
take place within the educational system. This change will need to be done internally and externally in order for sustaining change to take place. Reform may begin within individual classrooms, then lead to school-wide change, and eventually affect the entire district level. So, how can effective organizational change be implemented in schools today? Hallinger and Kantamara (2000) believed future leadership development must be grounded in local cultures. Therefore, school leaders must remain fluid and implement systems to provide a framework for the organization to follow. With such systems, leadership must be willing to establish relationships, implement new strategies, remain flexible and open to reform to bring about real organizational change. The ultimate goal might be for leaders to remain fluid and ready for change as the needs of the organization and climate changes (Leitschuh, 2005). Change in an organization should not be viewed as a linear process but rather must be implemented in phases (Burke, 2008). Leaders may begin the process one way but must have contingency plans as unforeseen things occur; unanticipated consequences. “Living systems cannot be directed along a linear path. Unforeseen consequences are inevitable. The challenge is to disturb them in a manner that approximates the desired outcome” (Pascale, Milleman & Gioja, 2000, p. 6).

The structure of an organization ultimately affects the overall climate and productivity. Leadership must have the appropriate structure in place in order for the organization to effectively produce. According to Bass and Riggio (2006) and Schein (1992) organizational culture is the glue that holds an organization together and reflects its identity and competence. This the values, goals, and assumptions shared by individuals that highlight the organization’s overall culture. Change is “A systematic
process in which we work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results” (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2005, p. 10). For change in the culture to take place within an organization, certain leadership factors are to be in place. First, a leader must have a vision. This thorough plan should include strategies and leadership behaviors. Strategies and leadership behaviors are vital to bringing about culture change. Different leadership styles affect the performance and morale of any organization. Therefore, in order to carry out effective change in the way schools assess students’ academic growth the leader’s motives and needs should correlate with appropriate strategies while identifying valuable instructional practices. Liker and Meier (2007) argued that the objective of the school should be to identify where the system failed rather than whom to blame.

**Cognitive Domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy**

The major principles of Bloom’s Taxonomy were to define the functions of or knowledge by cognitive domains. This theory categorized knowledge into six domains of human learning using a pyramid or hierarchy moving from simple functions of thinking to more complex. The simplest classification of cognition is knowledge. This domain deals with basic memorization of facts or remembering previously learned material. Here the goal is to simply learn information. This would usually involve tasks that require producing definitions, facts, or lists of information. No real thinking takes place at this cognitive domain.

After knowledge the lowest level of cognition, the hierarchy moves to a more complex domain call comprehension. At this domain, students are required to grasp the
meaning of material by either explaining or summarizing information. Understanding information is the focus here. Such activities would involve locating, recognizing, restating, or selecting meaning; there would be no opportunity for students to construct or demonstrate their ability to think in real-life situation or setting. Therefore, comprehension still represents a low level of understanding where no critical thinking or problem-solving takes place.

Almost mid-point of the hierarchy is the cognitive domain of application. Here students can take learned material and begin to apply it to new or concrete problems. The focus here is to use information. Usually two cognitive processes are linked to this domain: executing and implementing. Students begin to exercise or practice what they have learned in new situations to solve problems. A higher level of thinking is required at this domain. Students begin to demonstrate, illustrate, interpret, write, or practice what they know. They have the ability to use such knowledge in new and concrete situations. This may include applying knowledge to rules, methods, concepts, principles, or laws.

Analysis is beyond the application domain. Here students begin to use more cognitive processes like differentiating, organizing, and attributing. At this domain, students are able to identify what knowledge is important or relevant in a selection and understand the underlying purpose of such. They have the ability to break information down into smaller components to obtain full meaning. This may involve organizing information into parts, analyzing relationships, and recognizing all principles involved. This learning outcome represents a higher intellectual level than the knowledge, comprehension, or application domains.
Synthesis follows the analysis domain. At this domain students have cognitive ability to pull things apart and create a new whole. Here students put information together in new and different ways. Such activities would involve composing, designing, developing, proposing, or writing to formulate new patterns or structures. Creative behaviors are emphasized here as students demonstrate what they know. They begin to self-direct their own learning while becoming highly engaged in learning.

The most complex level of thinking is evaluation. At this domain, students have the cognitive ability to think in an abstract manner. They can judge material such as a poem, novel or statement to identify its importance. This learning outcome is the highest in the cognitive hierarchy because it contains all elements from the other categories in addition students can make judgments based on clearly defined criteria. At this level, students may argue, assess, defend, predict, rate, or evaluate material to demonstrate knowledge. At this level, students are highly active as they direct and initiate their own learning. Teachers become facilitators at this stage of learning.

This theory fits this study because the original conception of Bloom”s Taxonomy was to provide an alternative way to measure educational objectives without conducting an annual examination. The hierarchy model provided a bank of cognitive domains that could be used to assess students” learning ability. The Taxonomy consisted of various aspects of learning from simple to complex; from concrete to abstract. Similar to authentic assessment, Bloom”s Taxonomy provides a framework for educators to use that moves learning away from memorizing information to demonstrating knowledge through real-life activities. It supports the notion of authentic assessment that students should
initiate their own learning and play an active role in the evaluation process too. It also supports the whole concept that students should reorganize information or prior knowledge and generate a product that displays what they learned unlike standardized tests. As students self-direct their own learning, teachers would become facilitators. Therefore, Bloom’s Taxonomy also supports the concept of students taking part in their own evaluation process as they argue, defend, or validate their viewpoint. Like authentic assessment, this taxonomy allowed students to display the extent of their knowledge unlike standardized tests and they are not limited to what they are assessed on or what they can produce.

**Constructivist Framework**

The constructivist approach to learning originated from psychologist Jean Piaget. Constructivism implies that meaning is constructed within the mind of a doer. Piaget believed young children learned best when they had an opportunity to create meaning through interactions with their surroundings; both objects and people (Puckett & Black, 2000). “The overriding cognitive goal in the constructivist framework is that children think” (p. 24). Through these interactions their cognitive skills developed as they actively engaged in various activities within their environment. He believed learning takes place when all senses are being used through engagement. His theory supports the notion of early childhood classrooms. These classrooms are usually set up with learning centers, hands-on activities, manipulatives, much dialogue, and props. Such classrooms support the idea that students learn best by doing in a real-life setting and assessment often takes place through observations. Teachers can easily observe what their students know.
Authentic assessment is aligned with the constructivist approach to learning. Through experiences students construct their own knowledge and understanding of the real-world. Constructivism supports the concept that learning occurs best through interaction, inquiry, dialogue, the use of information, and emerging skills. Learning and assessment is ongoing and should not be measured by one test. Students should have an opportunity to connect new information and experiences to prior knowledge. When students are allowed to build on their prior experiences through exploration, inquiry, invention, problem-solving, and discoveries learning becomes meaningful and relevant as they develop critical thinking skills. Learning and assessment is no longer limited to drill and skill activities or test taking but rather students can demonstrate what they know. Therefore, this constructivist approach to learning is relevant to this study.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter focused on the methods and approaches selected for this study. This chapter also included the following components: the design, site selection, participants, sources of data, instruments, information about the researcher, data collection procedures, validity issues, ethical issues, and data analysis.

Qualitative Research Design

The study used a qualitative research tradition. The phenomenon under investigation provided observable facts, the research question, as well as the theoretical framework informed the choice of a qualitative design. Through observations, interviews, and document analysis data was collected. This study identified how authentic and standardized assessment can be integrated to enhance the academic growth of urban middle school students. Five research questions guided this study: (1) How are the cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy incorporated in the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide, (2) How did the teacher align his pedagogical choices to the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide, (3) How do students experience authentic assessment strategies in a selected urban middle school that go beyond the Pacing Guides, (4) How are teachers choosing to use authentic assessment and are there any advantages or disadvantages to using it, and (5) What role does leadership play in the implementation of authentic assessment? Therefore, using qualitative research was the best way to collect data about authentic assessment and answer the research questions. I gained an understanding of the participants and events in their natural state through observations,
interviews, and document analysis. The goal of my research was to understand the participants’ (eighth-grade students) perceptions of their experiences and the world around them by observation. This was called “phenomenological reality” (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2007). I understood that each individual, each culture, and setting was different. Therefore, I studied and appreciated participants’ uniqueness by examining issues in a naturalistic setting using the texts of everyday life through observations and interviewing (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2007; Creswell, 2009). However, if replications of behaviors occurred they may form tentative generalizations. According to Borg, Gall, and Gall (2007) this meant such generalizations may lose their validity from one setting to the next or from one time period to another. Qualitative research can be defined as “a series of tensions, contradictions, and hesitations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 26-27). So through observations, interviews, and document analyses I was able to make sense of the phenomenon being studied. This provided an authentic representation of the experiences.

One goal of qualitative research was to produce a thick description about the students who lived out the phenomenon the researcher is investigating. Phenomenon referred to a truth or understanding that emerges from life experiences (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). So through observations and interviews a narrative description can be analyzed to express how people understand their own world. The description painted a clear, visual image using all senses. It was as detailed as possible so one can experience and relate to the phenomenon without actually being present. Observations, interviews, or document analysis are methods that I used to collect their data. Then the theory was constructed and grounded in the participant’s own
understanding in qualitative research. A hypothesis was not necessarily generated up front. I realized I may not know enough initially about the study to generate a valid hypothesis. In qualitative research, after I collected data I had to analyze it to formulate my hypotheses. I realized there were variations in experiences. Therefore, I focused on measurable behaviors while I gained experiences and knowledge to generate meaningful hypotheses (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

I did not only use one method of investigation. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), I drew on multiple methods that respected the humanity of participants in the study. Depending on the problem that I investigated my sampling procedures, measurement tools, and research designs may vary greatly. I employed various methods of inquiry because their measurement procedures usually involved verbal descriptions and interpretations. I sought to understand a complex phenomenon by examining the context in totality. As I conducted interviews and observations, I began to recognize relevant themes and patterns in the total context. Therefore, during the data collection stage themes and patterns are highlighted (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2007).

Research methods were proposed that involved the forms of data collection analysis and interpretation. I used emerging methods. It was based on the participant’s meanings. The methods used did shift as data was collected. Questions and data collection changed as the participants’ experience unfolded. Qualitative methods included using interviews, observations, or documents to collect data. Such methods allowed the participant’s experience to be collected by me using a narrative approach. Using these methods also brought personal value to the study while participant’s meanings are
collected. Additionally, I focused on a single concept or phenomenon during this qualitative research to answer the research question (Creswell, 2009).

Borg, Gall and Gall (2007) believed collaboration should be an important part of a qualitative study. Collaboration helped eliminate status differences or bias viewpoints from me. For example, the participants and I worked together during the interview process. This allowed me to be able to interpret the meaning of the participant’s responses and establish a good rapport with one another. Participants could clarify any information misinterpreted by the researcher to validate the accuracy of the data too. The process of collaboration eliminated competition between the participants and I. It equalized everyone. I took on the role as a learner too.

According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) researchers should eliminate the expert stance and look to the participants as experts. My job was to learn about the phenomenon of study from the participants. So instead of generating hypotheses or designing experimental procedures I learned firsthand working with participants. I know those with direct life experiences about a phenomenon are real experts. So I used observations, I learned about such experiences or by interviewing I learned from what the participants said. Building feedback sessions fostered authentic collaboration relationships with participants. This allowed the participants and I to share their interpretation of their stories and I made revisions when necessary. Traditionally, qualitative researchers would share information with other scientists or colleagues but not with participants. However, the outcome of the research improved the lives of the
participants and not just furthered my career when I worked with participants and not speak of them (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) suggested that the qualitative model should include a reflexive component so I could examine my own biases. Reflexivity required me to examine any preconceived perceptions they hold, personal beliefs, or emotions that have entered into their research. It challenged me to examine my research agenda, assumptions, while deriving at a truth. If I were not actively reflexive, data may include errors or imperfections. Reflecting enabled me to accept the responsibility for examining oneself and increased the chance that the research process was not oppressive for the participants or judgmental. But rather the participant’s knowledge and experience was openly accepted with the research purpose in mind. However, reflexivity allowed me to be an active participant. My own subjective experience was a source of knowledge about the phenomenon studied.

This single-case design allowed me to collect and analyze data using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research enabled me to observe participants taking part in authentic learning and assessment procedures to examine academic growth. Through observations, I monitored the authentic assessment strategies that were adopted beyond the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide. I also conducted a content analysis of the Pacing Guide using Bloom’s Taxonomy to identify the cognitive domains. Data also included participants’ writing portfolios and projects, teacher’s binder, Pacing Guide analysis, interviews with participants and cooperating teacher; researcher’s observations and field notes documented students’ knowledge that was demonstrated.
One advantage of qualitative research was that it captured a holistic picture of the phenomenon being studied (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I used interviews, observations, or document analysis to obtain the participant’s perspective. Using these methods, I sought first-hand knowledge from the participants however; I listened and observed carefully to capture their story. The rich data gathered in a real setting provided a clear, precise, and authentic experience for me to use. Then I was able to interpret and understand the phenomenon being studied and draw on their interpretations for meanings. While always keeping the research purpose in mind, the participant’s experience was what I sought.

This qualitative research was also discovery oriented. I did not necessarily know up front what hypothesis needed to be proved but rather I explored or refined while data was being collected. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) believed that research for the qualitative model is hypothesis-generating. Unlike quantitative research, a hypothesis was not necessarily generated up front. I focused on measurable behaviors then formulated a meaningful hypothesis. I realized there were variations in experiences. Instead of creating hypotheses, I learned directly from what the participants did or said. Therefore, I did not know enough initially about the study to generate a valid hypothesis because some phases of the process changed as I began collecting data too; the research questions or methods to collect data were slightly altered. This qualitative research evolved and things shifted throughout the process. It explored new areas of research. Even though certain aspects of qualitative research changed, the focus remained learning about the problem or issue from participants and I addressed the research to which information was obtained.
One disadvantage of qualitative research is that there are built in or unavoidable biases (Glesne, 2006). I needed to be careful not to allow my own biases, values, or perceptions influence the data being collected by instituting verification procedures to validate the data. Sometimes unconsciously qualitative researchers make assumptions about a phenomenon based on their personality, demographic characteristics, and experiences. I had to learn and practice being unbiased and not allow my experiences to interfere. I sought to define clearly the phenomena being studied. The participant’s experience or story was the focus. I used procedures to study the phenomena that others would agree were reasonable or accurate. One way I addressed the issue of biases in this study was by using member checking. After conducting my interviews with the participants, I reviewed the data with them to make sure the information was accurately recorded and allow them to make comments. I used a peer review to look over or review my interpretations of the data collected. Using a peer review provided me with an external reflection from others or shared input from one who is not a researcher for this study. It also gave me another lens for interpreting the data and added credibility to the study. Triangulation was another instrument that was used to eliminate bias within this study and add trustworthiness to the study. Therefore, I used several sources like observations, interviews, and document analysis to collect data which added to the trustworthiness of this study.

Qualitative researchers may adopt four methods for collecting data: (1) participating in the setting, (2) observing directly, (3) analyzing documents and materials, and (4) interviewing in depth (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I used these methods to
collect data from the participants’ perspective. Marshall and Rossman (2006) further suggested that participant observation encouraged primary involvement in the social world of participants. It allowed me to see, hear, and experience their reality. On the other hand, “Observations involved noting and recording events, behaviors, and artifacts in the setting chosen for the study in a systematic manner” (p. 98). The participants defined situations from their own viewpoint. Gathering and analyzing documents and materials were a major part of this qualitative research which assisted in providing the context surrounding a specific setting. However, I depended quite extensively on in-depth interviewing. Patton (2002) put interviews into three categories: “informal, conversational interview; the general interview guide approach; and the standardized, open-ended interview” (pp. 341-347).

**Design**

“A single-case study was used to conduct this research. Case studies are complex because they generally involve multiple sources of data, may include multiple cases within a study, and produce large amounts of data for analysis” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 55; Yin, 2012). Marshall and Rossman (2006) stated that qualitative researchers use the case study method for various reasons; mostly to build upon their beliefs to describe a phenomenon being studied. It allowed me to clarify the complexities often associated with authentic assessment and uncover what cognitive domains from Bloom’s Taxonomy are missing from the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide. This single-case allowed me to show how authentic assessments can be used in conjunction with the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide. This study sought a new approach for evaluating
urban middle school students using authentic assessment to document student academic growth. This research shed light on the strengths of using authentic assessment. It was connected teaching to realistic, complex situations, and contexts. It addressed how to overcome the disadvantages of using authentic assessment in conjunction with the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide. This method showed some practical strategies that can be used simultaneously with the required curriculum of the Columbus City Schools to increase student academic achievement.

This single case study focused on multiple sources as Glesne (2006), Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Creswell (2009) have recommended. For this study, the design that was used for this case study focused on everyday experiences and events with authentic measures to support student achievement of urban middle school students. Data was collected through the assimilation of the curriculum and authentic assessments from observations, projects, writing portfolios, interviews from students and teachers. A field log was also used to provide detail accounts of my observations and reflective information was recorded to keep track of my experiences, thoughts, perceptions, and feelings, throughout the research process. Participants’ perspective was recorded using qualitative data.

**Site Selection**

This study took place within a six-week duration within the context of an eighth-grade Reading class at an urban middle school located in the central part of Columbus, Ohio to show how an urban middle school can use authentic assessment to measure students’ performance on a multitude of cognitive domains. This school was selected for
this study to see how the cognitive domains from Bloom’s Taxonomy was incorporated in the Pacing Guide, whether or not authentic assessment strategies were being adopted to use beyond the required Pacing Guide, identified why teachers are choosing to use authentic assessments and any advantages or disadvantages using authentic forms of assessment, and how the role of leadership affected the implementation of authentic assessment. This institution was a lottery school where students are bused in from various neighborhoods within the Columbus city area. This urban middle school currently had 500 students enrolled. The gender count included 211 (42.2%) males and 289 (57.8%) females. The ethnicity breakdown included 406 (81.2%) are black, 77 (15.4%) are white, 5 (1%) Hispanic, 5 (1%) Asian, 1 (.2%) Native American and 6 (1.2%) are from other races. A breakdown of the enrollment also included 33 (6.6%) choice assigned, 122 (24.4%) lottery assigned, and 345 (69%) addressed other assignment. There were no active or inactive ESL students. Out of the 500 students, 66 (13.2%) had been identified as special education. Additionally, 315 (63%) of the students received free lunch and 62 (12.4%) received reduced lunch (Columbus.k12.oh.us, 2012). The reading course was taught by a highly qualified teacher, who was encouraged and facilitated students’ learning within the classroom. Students were allowed to self-direct their own learning through hands-on activities, projects, and presentations with limited teacher-directed activities taking place. The teacher collaborated with the students throughout the learning process by observing and dialoging with students. Students were encouraged to use computers and other technical devices for researching and presenting new knowledge in class.
Selection of the Participants

The sample of this study consisted of eight (8) eighth-grade students from two different Reading classes (who have the same teacher) at an urban middle school in Columbus, Ohio. Students were selected using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to select an appropriate example of the participants and conclusions were able to be drawn from the population. Patton (2002) recommended six to ten subjects for a case study. All participants received reading instruction for six-weeks that included authentic learning and assessment opportunities in addition to traditional instruction following the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide. Purposeful sampling was used to identify a classroom where students within the population will meet specific criteria. The criteria for selection included:

(1) A classroom where authentic assessment was used in conjunction with the Pacing Guide.

(2) Teachers and students willing to participate in the study.

The rationale used for selecting the first criterion was two-fold. As the researcher, I wanted to observe classrooms and students where authentic assessment was used simultaneously with the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide. Also, I wanted to identify any advantages or disadvantages of using authentic assessment along with the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide. The second criterion suggested that each student’s willingness and teacher to participate is critical to this study. Since the design of this research involved participants and their documents to be observed, they willingly accepted their work as part of the study. Also, participants were willing to partake in an
interview process. Students and parents were given a permission form to complete in order to participate in the study. Letters were sent home for the selected students and their parents to sign. Once all the letters were received, I was able to begin the observation and interview process. Random sampling was used to select the participants for this study. For example, all students’ names were placed in a hat and randomly four names were drawn from both Reading classes to participate in the study until a total of eight samples were selected. The sampling process was used to increase the validity and credibility of the research. If students or their parents refused to allow them to participate in the study, that student would be eliminated and the random sampling process would start over selecting every eighth student. To protect the identity of the teacher and students, fictitious names were created by me for confidentiality purposes.

Sources of Data

Three different sources of data were used for collecting information for this study. They were observations, document analysis and interviews.

Observations

Observations were just one method that I used to gather data. The two types of observers included participation and non-participation. It required me to carefully look for specific behaviors, explore systematic experiences, and record various aspects of a situation. This included the setting, participant information, and participant’s gestures. I constantly reviewed their observations for evidence of particular behaviors which are vital in order to obtain their research goals. The continual process required skillful practice on my part as the researcher (Glesne, 2006).
This method was aligned with this research because as a non-participant observer, I was able to collect a record of the things that they have observed in a natural setting. This was an ongoing process throughout the six week period that will enable me to captivate expressive information and behaviors in a classroom setting about the strategies that are being used to measure students’ academic growth and the advantages of using authentic assessments and how they complement standardized testing. Observations allowed me to focus on a single element within the classroom opposed to a holistic view while I gain a better understanding of the participants’ learning environment. Identifying the advantages of authentic assessments was easy to monitor through observations. Each participant was informed during an initial meeting that informal observations will take place throughout the first grading period. These informal observations with the Reading teacher always took place within the teacher’s classroom. The data that was collected from my descriptive notes presented in a narrative format was dated and followed chronology of events (written in a field log). These field notes required some adjusting, expanding, and exploring to validate the integrity of the information to portray a clear picture of their experience. The analysis or interpretation needed to be credible therefore observations were an appropriate way to gather data for this study.

**Document Analyses**

Documents were great tools that were used to collect information about human behaviors. They helped me draw conclusions or formulate information to answer an infinite number of questions. As the researcher, I studied and observed documents to learn about history (Glesne, 2006). Documents provide me with valuable information to
continually refine, adjust, or expand their study. Such documents as artifacts, archives, or records provided me with information about cultures (Patton, 2002). They assisted me in understanding the nature of the environment. An analysis of a document involved “breaking up, separating, or disassembling research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units” (p. 453). When this was done a record was produced. The record was then used to provide a clear understanding about the document.

Analyzing documents fitted well with this research design. I was able to analyze the Columbus City Schools’” Pacing Guide and identified the cognitive domains using Bloom’s Taxonomy to draw conclusions and formulate information about students’ academic growth. The teacher’s binder also provided me with documentation about strategies that supported authentic assessment beyond the Pacing Guide and how it supported standardized tests. Students’ journals and projects also provided me with meaningful and relevant data to gain insight about participants’ academic growth. Merriam stated, “Personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world,” (p. 112). My field log provided useful data that was used as well to analyze various components of observations and documents observed. I was able to reflect on these findings by writing my thoughts, feelings, and experiences down in my reflective journal. Reflecting allowed me to examine any biases or identified any errors from preconceived perceptions and added richness to the data that I collected.
Interviews

To collect data to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of interest, I used interviewing as a method. Interviewing was a multifarious process that involved a lot of time and planning by me. There was a lot that was considered before, during, and after an interview was conducted. There were certain behaviors that were practiced in order for the interview to be effective. I learned to be cognizant of verbal and nonverbal language. I paid close attention to the respondent’s body language and was able to skillfully pull out information from the interviewee’s, redirect, or rephrase their questions while establishing a level of trust. However, recording the interviewee’s perspective was an explicit, step-by-step process. An interviewer must practice certain behaviors while interviewing (Glesne, 2006). It involved listening intently, being observant, remembering information, and keeping track of time. These behaviors were difficult to master but required continual practice. A good interview question should cover many angles (Patton, 2002). The nature of the questions was open-ended so respondents could share their experiences. Questions covered one’s past, present, and future if possible so the person being interviewed can share in their own words. Then I analyzed the data to discover patterns about the respondent’s experience.

Interviews were critical to this study because it allowed the interviewees (participants) to become the experts and myself (the researcher) to be a learner (Glesne, 2006). While listening and observing intently, I was able to collect data from the participants about the advantages of using authentic assessment and how it complemented standardized tests. I gained firsthand knowledge and an understanding
from the participants about their academic growth. Also, as the researcher, I was able to establish a relationship and a level of trust with the participants which helped authenticate the data. Participants became opened and honest with me about their academic growth.

**Data Collections Protocols**

One protocol that was used to collect data during this study was a rubric. A rubric was used to evaluate participants’ performance on projects and writing portfolios. The rubric included a set of criteria which includes a description of various levels of performance that was used to evaluate what participants know. Further, each level was assigned a value (for example 3 or 4) that indicated what they know. Using rubrics was a great way to provide them with a set of rules or procedures before and during the learning process. Participants were aware of the learning expectations up front with the use of the rubric. Assessment was linked to the purpose of the assignment. They were able to self-direct and monitor their own learning too. The rubric allowed for written feedback from the teacher; this included identifying strengths and weaknesses or suggestions and recommendations for future assessment. A rubric was used to evaluate the teacher’s binder. This rubric included a description of the various levels of authenticity of assignments that are assigned to participants. The evaluation of the binder was connected to the purpose of this study: (1) How are the cognitive domains from Bloom’s Taxonomy incorporated in the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide, (2) How did the teacher align his pedagogical choices to the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide, (3) How do students experience authentic assessment strategies in a selected urban middle school that goes beyond the Pacing Guide, (4) How are teachers choosing to use
authentic assessment and are there any advantages or disadvantages to using authentic assessment, and (5) What role does leadership play in the implementation of authentic assessment?

**Instruments**

Rubrics were great assessment instruments that focused on specific behaviors or outcomes of the learner. Using descriptions of the criteria, students’ performance, product, or process was easily evaluated. Rubrics provided the teacher and students with clear expectations and outlined what was important in the evaluation process. When conducting observations and assessments, they helped to target students’ progress and quality of their work. Rubrics also provided students with immediate feedback; gave positive support and encouragement while fostering the learning process. Such feedback allowed students to fix their mistakes or practice emerging skills. The main benefit of using a rubric was it provided all stakeholders (student, teacher, parent, administrators, and policy-makers) with clear evidence of students’ progress and performance within the classroom (Puckett & Black, 2000). Rubrics can be classified and scored into two categories (Rule, 2006). The scoring methods for grading rubrics were either analytic or holistic. An analytic scale consisted of statements that refer to the characteristics associated with each score (in a range of scores). The statements were described in a sequence in which the learner should go to become proficient. The scale provided a clear picture of what students know. Student’s performance or products were evaluated according to the standard at the time of the assessment. However, holistic scoring was based on the overall quality of the student’s performance or product. This scoring rubric
was usually quick and easy to use. Usually a score of 1, 2, 3, or 4 (1 representing the lowest score and 4 the highest) was used to identify the student’s participation or performance. A set of guidelines described the value of each number and score.

Rubrics were used in this study as a measurement tool to evaluate students’ writing portfolios and performances on their projects. A series of statements explained each numerical value that provided the teacher with a clear understanding of the students’ academic level. The rubric focused on the students’ learning processes and communicated their level of understanding. The teacher provided the students with immediate feedback either verbally (by conducting a conference) or in written form. Teacher comments offered students additional support and direction throughout the learning process. Such comments were easily shared with parents, administrators, or policymakers as they observed students’ academic performance. A rubric was used to evaluate students’ writing portfolios. Writing portfolios were evaluated based on the scoring criteria within the rubric. Again the scoring scale provided the teacher and students with an accurate assessment of what they knew based on the predefined criteria. Immediate feedback was provided so students can obtain additional knowledge and insight as they enhanced their academic skills. A set of criteria was also used to evaluate the teacher’s binder; identified what strategies of authentic assessment were being used to measure students’ academic growth and the cognitive domains from Bloom’s Taxonomy (see Appendix D).

Another protocol that I used to collect data for this study was a field log. I used a field log to record information that I learned about the phenomenon of this study from the
participants. When observing the participants, I recorded detail descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. My descriptions included all senses to paint a clear image of what I observed and capture the participants’ learning experience. My field log allowed me to capture the participants’ behaviors.

After gathering the data in the field log, I used a reflective journal to review and ponder over the data that was collected. Reflecting allowed me to gather a clearer and deeper understanding of the phenomenon that I observed. As I analyzed and reviewed the data, I looked for patterns, themes, and meaning about what I observed for further understanding. As I identified patterns, themes, and meanings it became important to identify whether or not the participants were demonstrating what they know during the assessment process or whether they were still engaged in traditional pencil and paper forms of testing. Reflexivity also allowed me to identify any biases or errors I had in the data collected. Furthermore, my ultimate purpose was to gain an understanding and interpret the participants in their natural state of learning while I evaluated the authenticity of their assessments.

Interviews were also be used and recorded to collect data to gain an understanding of the phenomenon being studied. All interviews were conducted one-on-one in a private area of the school building to protect the participants’ privacy and confidentiality. Student interviews were conducted during the school day while the teacher interview took place after school. This multifarious process required me to practice certain behaviors at one time. While asking the interviewees various questions, I tape recorded the participants’ responses and watched their verbal and nonverbal language. I skillfully
pulled out information from each interviewee, redirect, or rephrase any question if needed to establish a level of trust and comfort. I started the interview process with less threatening questions to promote comfort (cover background or experiences first). Then I moved to more difficult questions which required more thinking. I had to pay close attention to their body language to discern whether or not they were comfortable or not during the interview process. My goal was to learn and not be an expert during this process. Once the interviews were over, I had to transcribe the data that was collected.

After interviews were complete, I transcribed each interview using a computer. This process was long and tedious however it provided me with critical data for this study. I replayed the interviews and typed the interviewees’ responses precisely. Once the data was transcribed, I went back and double checked the accuracy of the information; then analyzed the data to discover patterns about the respondent’s experiences. I also used member checking to ensure the accuracy of the data too. Participants asked to read and edit the transcriptions to check and verify the accuracy of the interview documents. Reviewing the transcriptions with each interviewee helped to guarantee the trustworthiness of the data.

**Data Collection Procedure**

A case study was conducted in a Reading class selected for the sample. Data collection began in April of 2012 for six-week period (4th grading period). The students randomly selected were observed because they partook in authentic learning and assessment. They were willing to cooperate in this study. Then I explored authentic assessment using in-depth data collection through the adoption of multiple data sources.
Sources of data collected were through observations, writing portfolios, projects, presentations, a teacher binder, and interviews. A field log was kept by me to track notes and reflections about the observations. I identified patterns and common themes while observing the participants in a natural setting (the classroom). Participants’ documents were also observed by me. These documents included students’ writing portfolios and projects exhibited in the classroom. Again, I looked for evidence of authentic learning and assessment of such documents and how students’ learning was affected. The teacher’s binder was observed and evaluated as documentation of authentic assessment. The teacher’s binder consisted of copies of the students’ assigned projects. The cooperating teacher and students were interviewed using a six question interview guide. All nine interview sessions (eight from students and one from the teacher) were tape recorded with permission of the participants then transcribed by me. I reported a case description and case-based patterns in order to identify how they contributed to the objectives of this study. The assessment system regarding the participants’ learning included structure from the following criteria:

1. How are the cognitive domains from Bloom’s Taxonomy incorporated into the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide?
2. How did the teacher align his pedagogical choices to the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide?
3. How do students experience authentic assessment strategies in a selected urban middle school beyond the Pacing Guide?
(4) How are teachers choosing to use authentic assessment and are there any advantages or disadvantages to using it?

(5) What role does leadership play in the implementation of authentic assessment?

**Researcher**

As an educator, I currently have nineteen years of experience in the field of education. With such a diverse background in education, I have been privileged to have taught in many different arenas. I have worked in every possible educational setting from public to private, elementary, middle, high school, urban, suburban, international, regular, and special education schools. I have taught every grade from second through twelfth. Additionally, I have taught at a separate special education facility for severely emotionally disturb students. I spent the first seven years of my career, teaching in Chicago Public Schools in the inner-city. I then spent the next five years, working at a private school in Canal Winchester, Ohio. Then the last seven years, I have been teaching within the Columbus City Public School District. I hold teaching certificates in two states; licensed to teach kindergarten through twelfth-grade in the state of Illinois and hold an administrative license. In Ohio, I am certified to teach kindergarten through third and fourth through ninth-grade. I hold endorsements in reading, language arts, and social sciences. Currently, I am completing my doctoral degree at Ohio University in Urban Education Administration.

Early in my teaching career with the Chicago Public Schools, I learned how to be creative with my teaching methods and evaluation process. Due to the lack of funds and supply I had available to me in 1993 at John D. Shoop School in Chicago, I had to
quickly learn how to creatively teach my students without textbooks, paper, etc. I believe it was the beginning of an exciting journey of teaching for me. I quickly took on Marva Collins philosophy about education; a good teacher only needs a piece of chalk to teach. With a lack of materials, I learned how to prepare creative lessons and activities for my students. This included projects, writing activities, and learning through educational games. I began evaluating my students’ performances by using a scale or rubric to measure their academic growth. In 1993, I did not know anything about authentic or alternative assessments but this is how I began my teaching journey. I fashioned creative assignments that went along with the quarterly benchmarks that I was required to teach. Even though many of my students were reading far below grade level (third graders reading at kindergarten level) I began to see much growth when they were able to demonstrate what they knew. Academically, they may not test well but their growth was evident through writings and projects. Surprisingly so, at the end of the year these students had made leaps and bounds academically. Many had two years of gain in reading on the Iowa Achievement Tests. Some made even three years of gain in reading. I was ecstatic! I believe this was credited to multiple things including the integration of standardized and authentic assessment to enhance the academic performance of my inner city students.

I have been teaching this way every since. I bring nineteen years of experience to the field of education, integrating authentic and standardized assessment to enhance student achievement. I have personally seen the tremendous impact it has had on my students’ motivation towards learning, academic growth, limited (if any) behavior issues,
and they are actively involved in their own learning process. I have been amazed over the years of what my students can produce when they are given the opportunities to display what they learned oppose to taking a test and then move on to something new. My students’ learning has always been evident through their projects and writing samples which has always aligned with their standardized assessment growth. From my personal experiences, the combinations of authentic and standardized assessment have been so effective that I encourage other educators to teach this way. Students’ writings, portfolios, projects, and presentations are definitely valid measures of what they know. The proof of learning is obvious by just observing my students’ work. Concrete evidence can be easily seen and put on display for others to view.

**Validity Issues**

Using multiple forms of data collection, was one way I wanted to design the research plans so the study was as trustworthy as possible. Verification procedures are often used for validating qualitative research (Glesne, 2006). Although all of these aspects may not apply to each study, validity issues should be considered and discussed in all research proposals. Therefore, in terms of reliability and validity issues in qualitative research, the concepts of justifiability, transferability, and generalizability were considered (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

**Prolonged engagement and persistent observation.** To establish prolonged engagements and persistent observations, I spent quality time with the subject or subjects in order to build trustworthy relationships. The goal was to develop a broad perspective of the phenomenon, culture, or group. I looked for common themes, patterns, or
consistent behaviors. Therefore, I spent a considerable amount of time observing such behaviors. The amount of time required depended on the nature of the study “in order to acquire sufficient observations to be able to assess the distortion which may exist in the data” (p. 198). I acquired in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through systematic observations and these also enabled me to assess the quality of the data. It was also important that these relationships are maintained (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

“Prolonged engagements and persistent observations” applied to this study in order to collect reliable data. Before the study began, I met with each participant for an initial meeting to establish a relationship with them. During the six-week data collection period, I spent a considerable amount of time in the classroom observing the students in their natural learning environment. Using a field log, I collected the data; recording a detail description of what was being observed. Common themes, patterns, and behaviors of the participants were my focus while the observations were being conducted. I also observed the students documents (projects and writing portfolios) and recorded a detail description of what was examined in the field log. After the data was collected, I spent time reviewing the information in a reflective journal. This helped me to review what was observed for accuracy. Conducting interviews required me to establish a prolong relationship with the participants. I needed to spend quality time with each participant getting to know them. This helped establish a level of comfort and trust so participants felt that they can open up and talk freely. After the data was collected, I needed to review
the information with the participants for accuracy. The entire interview process required me to invest a significant amount of time with each participant.

**Triangulation.** Another way to gain trustworthiness:

During data collection was through triangulation across sources, methods, and settings. Using triangulation required the researcher to develop evidence for an interpretation from interaction with several sources, particularly several types of informants as the purposive sampling plan unfolds. Triangulation across methods required me to test an interpretation in data gathered using several different methods. The ability to use multiple methods may depend upon other aspects of fieldwork, including the presence of a team of researchers. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, pp. 199-200)

Triangulation was part of the data collection process to ensure the credibility of this study. Interviews, documents, and observations were used as methods to collect data. The bulk of the data came from classroom observations; I looked at how participants were engaged in their learning process and assessment. A field log and a reflective log was used by myself when conducting observations and reviewing documents as a tool to check and review the accuracy of the data that was collected. Then, I reviewed the data collected in the field log with each participant to ensure the truthfulness of the information. The data collected during the interviews provided me with “a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 196).
Peer review and debriefing. Peer review and debriefing was used to also determine the reliability of the findings by conducting an external reflection from others or shared input. Lincoln and Guba (2005) suggested:

reflecting with peers as a technique for enhancing credibility of interpretation. By this they meant the qualitative researchers should occasionally meet with peers who are not researchers on the project but who will serve to evaluate and question the emerging interpretation before the researchers become fully committed to it. (p. 201)

Using peer review and debriefing for this study ensured that the data I collected was trustworthy. I reflected with other colleagues and administrators to check the credibility of the data collected receive feedback, and suggestions from them to guarantee my interpretations were accurate for this study.

Negative case analysis. Negative case analysis was not used for this study to ensure that the data I collected was credible. I did not need to look for any data that would not support my hypothesis. Meaning was not sought and then modified to provide negative evidence for an original hypothesis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; McCall & Simmons, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Clarification of researcher bias. Patton (2002) described clarification of researcher bias inclined to selective perceptions or biases of investigations. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) every researcher unconsciously brings preconceptions and their own interpretations of the problem being studied. I reflected upon my own subjectivity and monitored it throughout the research.
To avoid using biases in my data, it was crucial that I spent time reflecting on the information collected in my field log. Throughout this procedure, using my reflection journals allowed me to clarify, identify, and monitor any biases that I had throughout the data collection process. The reflection journal was a great way to track my biases and allowed me to keep my focus on the phenomenon being studied and capture the participants’ story; not my own. This was important in order to collect credible data.

**Member checking.** “Another technique for establishing credibility was a member check, in which the interpretation and report was given to members of the sample (informants) for comment. Their comments served as a check on the practicality of the interpretation” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 203).

I will use member checking as a way to confirm the accuracy of the data that I was collected. I had all participants review the data that I collected from the interviews and observations. I asked them to make comments about my interpretations as a way to serve as a confirmation of my data analysis. These comments also enabled me and the participants to collaborate together during this data collection process and allowed them to gain a sense of ownership during this study.

**Rich, thick description.** Rich, thick description helped to capture the participants’ actions or behaviors in a natural setting and allowed the reader to enter the researcher’s context. The observation included descriptive notes about the study’s findings. Later I was able to review their findings and envision a clear picture of their experience (Patton, 2002). Glesne (2006) recommended observers to use all senses to describe the setting in which the observation is taking place. Using all senses to describe
the setting not only paints a clear, visual picture but helps the researcher remember the phenomenon.

It was essential that my observations written in my field log provided a clear, descriptive picture of the phenomenon being studied. I was able to review my detailed notes later and they painted a clear visual image of the participants’ world. Also, anyone should be able to read my thick description, be able to experience, and relate to the phenomenon without being present. A rich, thick description was a part of my data collection for this study.

**External audit.** “An external audit allows an outside person to examine the research process and product through reviewing (auditing) field notes, research journal, analytic coding scheme, etc” (Glesne, 2006, p. 236).

External auditing was used in this study. I asked various colleagues to review my coding system for analyzing data to ensure the validity of the information. My colleagues were able to provide me with beneficial information that helped guarantee the trustworthiness of the data.

**Ethical issues.** There are ethical issues that were considered during qualitative research. I needed to protect my research participants against any potential physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm. There was also consideration for special needs for minors, mentally challenged individuals, prisoners, pregnant women, or physically impaired individuals. I had my research plans reviewed by my college or university Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that the proper ethical precautions are being taken. During the data collection process, harmful or intimate behaviors may be
disclosed. My focus was to collect data based on the research question and judge the information that was being shared. Also, I maintained a level of trust with my participants. Additionally, after data was analyzed and kept for a reasonable amount of time it should be discarded so it is not found by other researchers who may misinterpret or misuse the information. There was reciprocity between the participants and I. Both individuals benefitted from the research. Collaboration was a great way for both individuals to partake in the research process. For example, participants may co-research throughout the research process or the researcher may simply share their data findings with the participant for accuracy. Debriefing was used to check the accuracy and integrity of the data obtained from participants (Creswell, 2009).

There were other important ethical issues that were considered when this research was conducted. Informed consent forms were signed by participants before they engage in the research. This form stated that during data collection, the participant’s rights will be protected. Some other important elements that were considered in the consent form were the purpose of the research, benefits for participating, notation of any risks to the participant, and guarantee of the participant’s confidentiality. Researcher also reviewed the federal regulatory provisions before doing research to be aware of any laws concerning research. I needed to be careful not to suppress or invent findings to meet my or an audience’s needs. I maintained a professional standard at all times. I respected the participants and the information that was shared but also I was considerate of their time. I, as the researcher, should be prepared and on time (Johnson & Christian, 2007).
There are definitely some ethical issues that were considered when conducting this study. Before collecting any data the research plans were reviewed by Ohio University’s faculty advisors and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to make sure the necessary safety measures were put in place to collect data in an ethical manner. Also, I made sure that the participants’ privacy was protected. Participants were required to complete a consent form giving the researcher permission to use them, their work, and it guaranteed that their confidentiality was protected during this research project. The data or findings collected were not discussed with anyone else besides the participants themselves. The researcher discussed the data findings with the participants for clarity to make sure the information collected was accurate. This helped eliminate fraudulent behavior on the researcher’s part. This process allowed the researcher and participants to collaborate and form a trusting relationship. Any data collected from students’ writing portfolios, projects, or interviews was locked up and stored in a safe place.

**Data Analysis**

Creswell (2009) suggested that researchers “make a list of major ideas that surface when analyzing data” (p. 150). This helped me make sense of the situation or data that was collected. The data analysis process involved:

- Identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns. I categorized, tabulated, and recombined data to address the initial propositions or purpose of the study, and conducted cross-checks of facts and discrepancies in accounts. Specific techniques included placing information into arrays, creating matrices of
categories, creating flow charts or other displays, and tabulating frequency of
events. (Yin, 2012, p. 73)

Every qualitative researcher’s coding process is different. Roberts (2010) outlined eight
useful tips for coding data. These tips are:

(1) Read all transcripts to get a sense of the whole phenomenon, (2) Pick the most
interesting and shortest document to review asking oneself” What is this about?”,
(3) Using columns make a list of all topics and cluster similar themes, (4) Take
the list and go back to the data and write codes next to the topics as an organizing
scheme to see if any new categories or codes emerge, (5) Find the most
descriptive words to use for your topics and turn them into categories. Draw lines
between categories to show interrelationships, (6) Finalize abbreviations for each
category then alphabetize these codes, (7) Assemble the data material in one place
and perform a preliminary analysis, and (8) Recode your existing data if
necessary (pp. 159-160).

Data findings may include key events, settings, people, processes, and issues (Auerbach
& Silverstein, 2003). I made sense of the situation by providing a clear, detailed,
narrative analysis of the phenomenon observed. This analysis enabled me to evaluate
specific observations and theory to build general to specific details about the
phenomenon I studied.

In my field log and reflection journal, data was gathered and presented for the
observations and documents in a narrative format. The data was dated and written in a
chronological order. The narrative descriptions provided me with detailed information
about the phenomenon being studied. In order to analyze the data collected from the observations or documents, in my field log and reflecting journal I needed to carefully read through the data several times and create a framework to display the data and the coding process. The data needed to be converted into categories or themes in order to analysis. Therefore, after I identified reoccurring patterns and themes, I created a way to code the data. The data was sorted or grouped to help me identify themes. Such themes helped me define the behaviors of the participants and make sense of the whole phenomenon being studied. I categorized the themes using key words.

From the interviews, a transcript analysis was conducted by me. The transcript analysis provided me with clarity of themes, additional information, and evidence of students’ academic growth. I coded the transcriptions by using words to identify characteristics or issues, descriptions were used to identify certain behaviors, and qualifications identifying positive and negative themes.
Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

Three major sources were used to analyze data for this study. The sources of data included observations, interviews, and documents for this qualitative study. The observations, interviews, and documents were analyzed for patterns and themes in order to determine in what ways authentic assessment strategies enhance student learning in an urban middle school setting. A total of nine participants were interviewed during the data collection process. The participants included eight eighth-grade students and one teacher. The documents analyzed included Columbus City Schools’’ Pacing Guide, participants’ writing portfolios, teacher’s binder, and researcher’s field log.

School Context Description

The observations took place in a classroom setting that was located on the second floor of an urban middle school building all the way to the far west side next to a stairwell. The school consisted of a brick building approximately 7 years old. The classroom was sectioned off with the desks. Two rows of desks faced the west direction and two rows of desks faced the east direction (coming in towards each other). Then near the door, there was a small group of four desks clustered together that formed a square shape. The teacher’s desk was behind the desks that were facing east. Next to the teacher’s desk was a small table with an Elmo on it and a telephone. Behind the teacher’s desk were two cabinets (one was a file cabinet). On the east wall behind the teacher’s desk was a dry erase board with information written on it like due dates and two small bulletin boards with posters on them. On the ledge of the dry erase board were some literature books on display. Beneath the boards on the east wall were three short storage
shelves that included books; dictionaries. There are two areas in the classroom with computers; the west wall had two with a printer and the north wall had two computers. The classroom has two windows along the south wall of the classroom that have long green curtains hanging from them. The walls were painted white. Along the west walls of the classroom were also two small bulletin boards with only paper on them and boarder and a dry erase board. Below the boards were silhouettes of students. They were displayed on long white boards outlined in black paint with a lavender background. A revolving book case was also at the back of the classroom near the west wall; various chapter books were displayed. Along the north wall of the classroom were storage cabinets. On the counter top of the storage cabinets were bins that had the students’ writing journals in them. Outside the storage cabinets there were posters that displayed various types of figurative languages like onomatopoeia, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and symbolism. The United States’ flag was also on display on the north wall near the door. Above the door was a clock. Near the door was a long table that had a crate of file folders in them. Hanging down from the center of the classroom’s ceiling was an overhead projector.

Profile of Participants

Eight eighth-grade students were randomly selected to participate in this study. Surprisingly, all participants were female. Females dominated that eighth-grade at this particular school. All participants attended the same urban middle school in Columbus, Ohio. Four of the participants were in the same Reading class and the other four were in another class. The participants were taught by the same teacher with the same instruction.
The participants were either thirteen or fourteen years of age. Even though all females were randomly selected (names were pulled out of a hat) I do not believe the data would have been different if a male or two were selected. The themes and patterns were consistent among all participants.

**Research Question 1**

The focus of this research question was to examine how the cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy were incorporated in the Columbus City Schools” Pacing Guide. Content analysis of the Pacing Guide assisted in answering this research question. Six common themes were based on Bloom’s Taxonomy were adopted and used in analyzing and discussing this question. They were evaluation, synthesize, analysis, application, comprehension, and knowledge. I will present a chart that breaks down the common themes in the Columbus City Schools” Pacing Guide for the eighth-grade Reading curriculum showing how the cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy were incorporated (see Appendix E). Majority of the assignments required students to create projects (synthesize), analyze information (think and do), and evaluate their work. I analyzed the Pacing Guide for the eighth-grade Reading curriculum for the fourth quarter. Approximately 90% of the assignments required students to use higher cognitive levels according to Bloom’s Taxonomy that went beyond the knowledge, comprehension, and application domains. Most of the assignments emphasized analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. For example, after students read a selection from “Anne Frank and Me” during week one of the Pacing Guide focused on the characters” interactions in the literary text and how these affect the plot. This assignment went beyond recalling or
memorizing information. Students had to be able to view the characters from different perspectives and understand their behavior patterns. They also had to examine the characters’ actions and how it affected them as a character. So students had to be able to pull information apart and see how it relates to the whole. Another assignment during week one, involved having students analyze the genre to express a theme from the story. Again students had to pull information apart from the story and decipher what theme was being expressed in this literary text. Most of the assignments for the fourth quarter called for students to, analyze, synthesize or evaluate. Another example of students using higher order thinking skills involved, after reading The Diary of Anne Frank (the suggested novel) they had to evaluate features, characteristics, and how structures helped the author achieve their purpose. Students had to make judgments and defend information and how it relates to the text. They further had to evaluate how credible and useful the sources for a research assignment for The Diary of Anne Frank were. Again, this assignment involved using higher cognitive skills. Students had to assess other sources and analyze whether or not it was useful. This assignment went beyond basic cognitive skills; knowledge and comprehension. Only about 10% of the assignments focused on lower levels of cognition dealing with comprehension and knowledge. Some of those assignments involved: using correct punctuation and capitalization for writing assignments; recognize figurative language and its function, use multiple resources to enhance vocabulary comprehension, identify recurring themes, etc. These activities only require students to recall or memorize information or skills previously learned. Here students would reproduce definitions of vocabulary words, recognize various types of
figurative language, and select themes. No real thinking is involved in these activities. Therefore, my analysis of the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide verified that various levels of cognition are being implemented for assignments however the majority required students to use higher-level thinking skills which are developed when lessons move from memorization and recall to creating and synthesizing (Kohn, 2000). Since the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide recognizes higher cognitive skills is important, it would make sense for the teachers and leaders in the district to use both standardized and authentic assessments to complement one another and measure students’ academic growth. Authentic assessment leans toward higher order thinking skills which supports the Pacing Guide activities. Standardized forms of assessment are crowding out creative learning, damaging to students’ self-esteem, and forcing teachers to teach for a test (Kohn, 2000). Standardized tests do not measure creativity, imagination, conceptual thinking, judgment, or effort whereas authentic forms of assessment would be able to measure higher cognitive skills by allowing students to demonstrate what they know (Conklin & Frei, 2011; DePascale, 2011; Kohn, 2000).

**Research Question 2**

The focus of this research question is to examine how the teacher aligned his pedagogical choices to the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide. The three common themes that showed how the teacher aligned his pedagogical choices to the cognitive domains were evaluation, synthesis, and analysis. Although the teacher did not follow the prescribed activities from the Pacing Guide, he still covered the required cognitive
domains with different activities. The sources of data used to answer this question included: observations, interviews, and documents.

**Peer and self-assessments: Evaluation taxonomy.** The first theme that demonstrated how the teacher aligned his pedagogical choices with the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide was the complex cognitive level of evaluation. The class observation on May 17, 2012 (1:05-2:20 p.m.), I witnessed the teacher leading a group discussion and an evaluation process with three students. They were sitting near the door in desks clustered together. The students went around giving feedback about their performances and their group members. The teacher went through each category on the rubric with students: quality of work, time management, problem-solving, working with others, and pride. Two of the participants were engaged in the group discussion and evaluation process with the teacher. They both gave their perspective about the group”s overall performance, group members, and about themselves. At times the teacher would prompt the students during their discussions by saying:

Teacher: How do you rate yourself and why?

Candace: I like my group evaluating me so that the next time we do an activity I would know what to do better and how to help out more. I think it”s fair because everybody evaluates either themselves or they can evaluate someone else. People who work with you can evaluate what you did so they know whether or not you did what you needed to do. They worked with you and know what you did throughout the whole process.
Jackie: If you write a paper using a rubric and the person who graded the paper saw problems with something you had done, then you would be able to work on it again; try and fix it because someone allowed you to know what you did wrong. Your peers write down things to help you improve or let you know what you did or could have; that’s evaluation.

Participants had to judge their own writing and projects using criteria from a rubric. This level of thinking required them to argue, assess, defend, rate, or evaluate material to demonstrate knowledge. They also had to evaluate their peers’ or group’s work as well. Assessment and teaching was tied to the learning process and authentic assessment allowed for a complete analysis of students’ performance (Palm, 2008). This level of thinking required participants to be highly active in their own learning process; they had the opportunity to direct and initiate learning at this evaluation cognitive domain from Bloom’s Taxonomy. The teacher played a facilitator’s role at this level of learning. He allowed the students to direct their own learning and evaluation with their peers. He simply walked with room, observed the students working, and answered minimum questions. He encouraged the students to collaborate with their group members. Additionally, he functioned as a collaborator also when he created tasks and developed the guidelines for scoring and interpreting students’ work (Kohn, 2000).

My observations confirmed higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy cognitive domains being used: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Through observations I was able to see the participants working collectively with their peers on their radio play projects. They were actively engaged in the learning process by dialoguing and discussing the
radio play with their classmates. Active participation was promoted using authentic assessment (Puckett & Black, 2000). This level of cognition allowed them to take ownership of their learning as they worked with their peers exchanging and sharing knowledge. This project emphasized high levels of cognition according to Bloom’s Taxonomy. It enabled participants to connect prior and new knowledge together as they thought and created the radio plays. This highlighted the cognitive domain of analyzing. The cognitive domain of synthesizing was also used by participants. They were seen creating scripts, researching information, designing sound effects, and evaluating one another. Participants had an opportunity to self-evaluate themselves using criteria from a rubric as well as assess their peers’ performances. Authentic assessment increased the students’ involvement in the evaluation process (Kohn, 2000; Palm, 2008). Evaluation is the highest form of cognition according to Bloom’s Taxonomy. Self and peer evaluation allowed the participants to rate or assess one another and provide feedback. This process was a great reflective activity as well. The participants were given time to reflect on what they did and did not do during the learning process and received corrective criticism from their peers. The reflective process also allowed all participants with feedback highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation process should provide feedback, opportunities to continue to grow, and should not be a troublesome process but educative (Elsworth, 2011). It enabled them to partake not only in the learning process but also the evaluation process using real-life experiences. The teacher’s role was seen as passive. The teacher was not seen as the leader in the classroom but rather a facilitator. He allowed the students to guide themselves through the learning process as they exchanged
and shared information with their peers. He was available if students needed any assistance but he occasionally encouraged them to rely on the peers for information, suggestions, or recommendations.

The interviews confirmed the theme of evaluation as one of the pedagogical choices of the teacher. During the interviews participants were asked:

Teacher: What do you like about the evaluation process in the Reading class?
Jackie: If the person who graded the paper saw problems with something you had done then you would be able to work on it and try and fix it because someone allowed you to know what you did wrong.
Amber: We get great feedback and stuff and how they think we are doing.
Candace: I would want like my group to evaluate me so like next time we do the activity I would know what to do better and how to help out more.

Authentic assessment help students understand how they derive at an answer (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000). The interviews confirmed that the participants enjoyed doing peer assessments in Reading class. Throughout the radio play project, the teacher incorporated authentic forms of evaluation. The students were required to use a rubric to evaluate their roles in the radio play project as well as the other members of their group. The teacher created a rubric with criteria where all students had to use to evaluate themselves and others. The categories on the rubric included evaluating: quality of work, time management, problem-solving, working with others, and pride. For each category, the participants had to rate themselves or their peers with 4, 3, 2, or 1 (four being the highest score). At this cognitive level of evaluation, participants had to think abstractly in order
to rate the radio play projects in class. They had to think beyond just recalling or memorizing information at this higher level of thinking. They had to not only use the rubric for rating the projects but also be able to justify the score. All students had to be able to explain why a certain score was given. Evaluating required them to judge, assess, defend, or rate one’s work. They also made recommendations or suggestions if needed. This is the highest level of cognition from Bloom’s Taxonomy. Evaluating required the participants to use all levels of cognition and to make judgments based on criteria from a rubric distributed by the teacher. Having the established standards upfront for evaluation from a rubric helped improved their overall performance; they knew what was expected on them (Kohn, 2000). Students commented:

Nancy: I like we evaluate ourselves then others evaluate us on how maybe they saw us do our projects. Then the teacher comes in and he looks at how we did and how well we worked together.

Jackie: Peer evaluations allow you to know what areas you need to work on and it just lets you build with the audacity to try and strive harder to make things better.

Christian: I like the way we are evaluated in Reading class. I like that we have discussions.

Thus, participants demonstrated their appreciation for peer evaluations and how they felt it benefitted them during the interviews.

Participants’ writing portfolios demonstrated that the teacher utilized the evaluative cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy in alignment with the Columbus
City Schools’ Pacing Guides. These portfolios required students to use higher levels of cognition. According to the Pacing Guide assignments included:

- Writing responses to literature that extend beyond a summary including references to the text, give informational presentations, identify and analyze how an author uses figurative language, sound devices, and literary techniques to shape the plot, compose a narrative that established a specific setting and plot (pp. 3-19).

Mr. Tillman in this case adopted the use of authentic activities and assessment. He required his students to create a radio play. They had to write original scripts (which included establishing the setting and plot), shape the plot, make sound effects, etc. and present the projects to the class. Prior to assigning the radio play project, the teacher distributed a rubric with criteria what would be used to evaluate the final project (see Appendix B). Therefore, students know up front what was expected of them (Elsworth, 2011; Palm, 2008). All students partook in the evaluation process of the radio play projects too. At the conclusion of the projects, each group evaluated each member in their group along with themselves. Also, each grading period students were required to produce various types of essays such as narratives, persuasive, expository, and a business letter which is aligned with the Pacing Guide. However, Mr. Tillman would have students write about real-life issues so they can connect to the world around them. He commented:

“What’s the point of writing something that is not real? That’s my opinion; that’s my take on it. The students struggle with fantasy; particularly our population is not good with science-fiction. It’s not grounded in real-life. They struggle with
relationship; with each other, with adults, and their parents. So I try to keep it as real-life as possible. That way I can keep their interests”.

For example, at the beginning of the year he had them write personal narratives about themselves. They had to write about something that no one knew about them. After writing, students were put into groups to share their writings and their peers used the Columbus City Schools’ writing rubric to evaluate the essays. Using the criteria from the writing rubric, the areas of evaluation were: content, organization, and conventions. Students would rate each area with a 4, 3, 2, or 1 (four being the highest). Collectively, each group was able to provide all members of their group with feedback about their writing based on the criteria from the rubric. For the business letter, Mr. Tillman had the students write a complaint letter to a real company. Students had to select a product that the company manufactures and tell them what is wrong with it. Again, the writing assignment is tied to a real-life problem. Writing this business letter also gave students an opportunity to evaluate the company’s product and provide them with recommendations about ways they can make improvements. Students learn differently so opportunities should be given for them to express themselves in a multi-modally way (Williams, 2007). Therefore, teaching and evaluating according to Bloom’s Taxonomy fits the Constructivist Theory because it provides an alternative way to measure students’ knowledge like authentic assessment.

**Radio play projects: Synthesis taxonomy.** Another theme that reflected the alignment of the teacher’s pedagogical choices with the Pacing Guide was synthesis. Participants noted:
Candace: I think everybody could help one another work together more and be creative. If you design things it’s your own thoughts and you can be creative with it. Everybody can put in what they think.

Amber: We get better understanding and if you make your own project you won’t be able to understand everything because you may have not been taught certain things.

During class observation (1:10-2:15 p.m.) on April 26, 2012, I witnessed the participants actively conversing with group members, writing down information, and laughing within their groups. One participant made sounds; different noises like sound effects for the play. Another student used hand gestures as she conversed with her group. She continuously used her hands to express herself and made sounds with her hands by cupping them together (a loud clapping sound) to create reverberations for the play. Also, the participants created characters for the play and wrote dialogue for the play. In addition to developing the scripts, they had to compose their own music or sound effects to go along with the script. At this cognitive level of the Bloom’s Taxonomy participants’ work required them to pull information apart and create something new. Participants had to compose, design, and develop their own radio plays with their peers. This level of thinking required them to think beyond lower levels of cognition such as knowledge or comprehension and required them to be creative and demonstrate what they know using prior knowledge along with any new information that they may have researched. This radio play project required participants to self-direct their own learning while they were highly engaged in the learning process too. This project allowed participants to plan,
make decisions, exchange new information, and authenticate learning in creative ways to show what they know; authentic assessment was correlated with real-life experiences (Kohn, 2000; Palm, 2008; Rule 2006).

Students had to take ownership of their own learning which is an essential component of synthesizing; while the teacher took on a facilitator’s role. The teacher simply walked the room to monitor the learning process and observed the students working collaboratively. The teacher’s role should be to observe and reflect on connections between class work and field experiences (Elsworth, 2011) while linking theory and practice (Rule, 2006). Participants had to work collaboratively with their peers to compose sound effects, develop and write their own scripts. They demonstrated knowledge through peer collaboration, discussion, composing, designing, developing, and writing their radio plays. Authentic assessment provides corroborative evidence for everyone involved in the learning process (Kohn, 2000). This domain of Bloom’s Taxonomy required participants to think versus memorizing information. The participants’ writing portfolios also confirmed the cognitive domain of synthesis from Bloom’s Taxonomy. Several samples of participants’ writing were observed in their portfolios. They demonstrated what they know through various genres of writing. Participants had examples also involved participants to compose their own business letters to companies. All these teaching methods and assessment supports the Constructivist Theory. Constructivism emphasizes that students control and initiate their own learning in a non-habitual manner (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001).
Think and do: Analysis taxonomy. Analysis was another theme that highlighted how the teacher’s pedagogical choices aligned with the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide. During class observation (1:00-2:30 p.m.) on May 3, 2012, I witnessed groups using computers to type up their scripts and doing research. Two groups were using computers to type their scripts, one group sat in the hallway rehearsing, and one group sat at desks working. Some participants practiced reading their scripts orally; working collaboratively with their groups. They were contributing to the group’s project by sharing and exchanging information, listening to others read, typing and researching information. Students remarked:

Nancy: I like hands-on learning. We do different projects instead of sitting at a computer typing all day. We have things where we go out of the classroom and learn; we go get things in our community like the radio play project. It gets you to learn more about other people because you are in smaller groups and you get more done. It was fun. It would be better to be evaluated on a project instead of a test because when anybody hears the word test they get anxious. Everybody does their best on projects and puts all their effort into it. Nobody worries about deadlines or really procrastinates. So projects are better for assessment.

Elizabeth: I can learn it easily; mentally and physically but mostly mentally.

At this cognitive domain participants had to identify what knowledge was important or relevant to the composing of their radio plays. Participants had to organize information into parts, analyze relationships of characters, and recognize all principles involved. They had to break knowledge down into smaller components in order to obtain
full meaning of the radio play. They had to learn how to effectively make decisions and practiced solving real problems while performing a complex task (Elsworth, 2011; Palm, 2008). Participants’ writing portfolios also required some levels of analyzing as well. Their writings required them to organize their thoughts and ideas in order to produce a written piece. Using portfolios encouraged creativity. Portfolios provided a way to measure participants’ full talents and abilities beyond a test, quiz, or multiple choice questions and their growth could be observed (Kohn, 2000). They had to think and to at the analysis domain of Bloom’s Taxonomy which required a higher level of cognition beyond the knowledge, comprehension, and application level. Also, this supports the Constructivist Theory that students’ knowledge grow from experience and the use judgment in problem solving (Custer, Schell, McAlister, Scott & Hoepfl, 2000; Dewey, 1902).

**Research Question 3**

The focus of this research question was to examine how students experience authentic assessment strategies in a selected urban middle school classroom that goes beyond the Pacing Guide. There were four common themes that showed how students experienced authentic assessment strategies in a selected urban middle school that goes beyond the Pacing Guide. The themes that showed redundancy were revisit assignments or making corrections, peer evaluations, engaged, and reflection. Three sources of data that were used to answer this question included observations, interviews, and documents. All student participants’ answers on class instruction and the evaluation process were analyzed along with the participant teacher’s answers to questions about class instruction
and the evaluation process. Data received from writing and project rubrics as well as classroom observations on the evaluation process were analyzed.

**Let’s fix it: Making corrections.** The common theme making corrections or revisiting work showed how authentic assessment strategies were adopted in a selected urban middle school classroom beyond the Pacing Guide. During class observation (1:10-2:10 p.m.) on May 10, 2012, two groups were sitting in the hallway taping, one group remained in the classroom, and the other group was down the hallway revising their scripts. Students used props like the elevator, a box, noises, or sounds from their mouths for sound effects. Groups used digital recorders, cell phones, and tape cassettes for recordings. There were recordings taking place; some students were listening to others record or critiqued their plays through oral discussions. Students stated:

Amy: If you accidentally mess up on a project or you don’t finish it in time, you should be able to go back and at least fix what you need to fix or do some extra credit or something to bring up your grade.

Kelly: You can learn from your mistakes so you don’t have to make the same ones over and over not knowing what you did wrong.

Unlike traditional tests, authentic assessment strategies allowed the participants to make corrections or revisit their work. Majority of the participants liked the fact that they could go back and make corrections or edit their projects. They felt this helped them obtain more knowledge and allowed them to learn from their mistakes. Revisiting their work allowed numerous opportunities for them to go back and add new information or details to their projects (Elsworth, 2011; Palm, 2008). This strategy was an important part of the
learning process whereas with traditional assessments you only get one chance to get the answer right. Authentic assessment strategies allowed them to really gain an understanding of knowledge. Using these strategies the participants were able to have group discussions about their work. Having discussions and receiving feedback from their peers was helpful in many ways. Authentic assessment promotes and measures social learning (Rule, 2006; Vygotsky, 1997) while communication skills are strengthened, relationships are built, and others’ opinions are valued and respected. First, these discussions brought clarity and understanding when they did not understand certain concepts. They were able to receive different perspectives from their peers too. This allowed them to look at things from a different lens and not just one way. They also exchanged ideas and information with others. The discussions also provided opportunities for them to reflect on what they did or did not do. Reflecting was a great learning strategy. Everyone’s voice was equally important to hear and was respected. And exchanging information and knowledge with others supports the Constructivist Theory. Social experiences enhance knowledge and bring clarification through conversations (Vygotsky, 1986).

Get involved: Engaged. The theme on students’ engagement was demonstrated in the following ways: During an observation from 1:10-2:15 p.m. on April 26, 2012, I observed the students sitting in groups orally discussing the radio play project; some students were reading and some were making sound effects. The groups consisted of three or four students; all students were part of a group. I saw some students writing down information or note taking while engaged in conversation with their group
members. The overall classroom atmosphere was rather noisy; students were engaged in
dialogue with their group members. Some were orally reading radio scripts out loud.
There were also sounds of chatter and laughter too. They had to take on a sense of
ownership creating and designing the radio play projects. It required them to initiate their
own learning by writing scripts, creating characters, composing sound effects, and props.
All learning was student-led; it began with the participants and their groups. They had to
make decisions collectively with their group members about what kind of project they
wanted to create and present. This required participants to learn how to work with others;
taking on leadership roles and making decisions. On May 21, 2012 from 12:55-2:20 p.m.,
I witnessed participants sitting and listening to the radio plays; they appeared to have
been listening intently. Periodically students asked the teacher questions or made
comments. At times, Mr. Tillman asked the students questions to initiate dialogue. They
no longer sat passively by listening to the teacher but rather took ownership of their own
learning; they connected prior knowledge and experiences with new information
(William, 2007). More importantly, this project required them to integrate real-life
experiences. When things did not work out they also had to problem-solve; find solutions
to various problems. Learning was student-led and not teacher-led. The teacher’s role was
more passive as he facilitated. The teacher allowed the students to self-govern their own
learning and evaluation process with their peers. In the participants’ writing portfolios I
saw samples of their work that required them to be highly engaged. Participants had to
brainstorm their ideas (prewriting activity), organize thoughts, write essays, and then
proofread rough draft. After participants proofread their rough draft then they had to fix
any errors before the evaluation process began. Using the Columbus City Schools’ writing rubric, participants would evaluate their essays using the criteria. After they evaluated their essays they would exchange with a peer and assess theirs. The writing portfolio assignments required participants to be highly engaged in the learning and evaluation process. This form of assessment allowed the teacher to observe the students’ talents, skills, and intelligence in various ways (Kohn, 2000; William, 2007). The Constructivist Theory supports students being highly engaged in their own learning. This supports Dewey’s belief that learning should exist without restraints; thinking should be original and not a final process (Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001).

**Empowered to grade: Peer evaluations.** This theme showed how an authentic assessment strategy was used beyond the Pacing Guides through the use of peer evaluations. During the observation (1:00-2:15 p.m.) on May 18, 2012, I observed a group of five students working in the back of the room going through the evaluation process using a rubric. One student (from another group) facilitated the oral evaluation process. She (a student facilitator) walked the group members through each part of the process using a rubric. Each group member went around and gave their opinion about their group’s and member’s performance. Another group of four sat with the teacher and went through the evaluation process. The teacher led the students’ discussion about their performance using the rubric. The rubric criteria included evaluating: quality of work, time management, problem-solving, working with others, and pride. Towards the end of the class period another group sat near the door and started the evaluation process. They sat in a group of desks that were in clusters near the door. A student from another group
distributed the rubric to the group and started taking them through the evaluation process. The teacher stated:

“We want them to think at the highest levels. We want them to evaluate and think critically; analysis according to Bloom’s Taxonomy but not everyone can do that. So it takes a lot. You have to guide them through questioning.”

Participants were allowed to evaluate themselves and their peers using criteria from a rubric. Participants benefitted from this evaluation process. They were able to receive information about how they did and what they can do to improve. This evaluation process brought understanding to concepts that were unclear, provided answers, and feedback to help enhance their learning process. Unlike traditional forms of assessment there is no feedback or input in the evaluation process. Participants played a part in the assessment process. It helped them learn. Authentic assessment allowed them to evaluate their peers’ work, learn from others, but also developed higher-level thinking skills (Kohn, 2000; Palm, 2008). They also liked having the criteria upfront before the assessment process begins. They said they knew exactly what was expected of them before they started the project. Students remarked:

Amber: I like when people are evaluating you; they would value the other person more. And you get to know that person more.

Kelly: Expectations are clear.

Amy: They are no surprises; everything is out in the open.

Authentic assessment brought change to the curriculum and instruction while allowing students to self-monitor their own progress (Puckett & Black, 2000). The criterion from
the rubric was given to them at the time the project was assigned so the participants could monitor or predetermine their own assessment. This evaluation process was fair and beneficial to them. They were given an opportunity to direct and initiate their own learning and assessment process. Authentic assessment strategies empowers versus being evaluated with traditional forms of testing. Traditional forms of testing provide them with no feedback just a final grade or assessment. All the participants received feedback from the peer evaluations. This supports the Constructivist Theory that through conversations and listening knowledge is created or discovered (Vygotsky, 1986).

**Think about it: Reflection.** The last theme on reflection was demonstrated through observation. On May 21, 2012 (12:55-2:20 p.m.), I witnessed the students listening to radio plays from a tape recorder. All students appeared to be listening intently; some students had their heads down listening on their desks. The lights were off; a little light came in from the two windows. At times you could hear sounds of laughter as students listened to the radio plays otherwise, the class” atmosphere was very peaceful. The radio plays consisted of conversations, singing, rapping, and other sound effects. Periodically students whispered comments to their peers. The teacher sat at his desk listening too. The teacher interjected from time to time; asking students to identify character voices. At times students clapped at the end of the radio plays. Afterwards, the teacher led a discussion. He said:

“So what did you think and why: Did you like working with your group? Would you change anything after listening to it again?”
Students raised their hands and responded to the question. The teacher orally gave some general feedback about what he liked about the radio plays; what he thought about the transitions. After listening and critiquing the radio plays, Mr. Tillman led another discussion; suggestions and recommendations were given by students about what could have been done differently. Mr. Tillman affirmed:

My classroom is set up to have dialogue. We are not in rows so we can have discussions about what we are reading. So they can really share their ideas with others since we are preparing them for the 21st century skills so they have to learn how to work together. I encourage discussions because not everyone gets the same message or interprets the same thing out of a piece. And when we engage in discussion there is clarification for other kids; and so that increases their comprehension or understanding.

I observed the participants reflecting with their peers on their class work and project. The participants worked collectively with their peers exchanging information about their work progress and growth. Using criteria from a rubric, I observed each participant evaluating themselves and their peers. Each participant had an opportunity to orally state how they felt they did on the radio play project. They used a rubric one through four (four being the highest) evaluating the following components: quality of work, time management, problem-solving, working with others, and pride. Using the rubric, they stated why they felt they earned a four, three, two, or one in each category. It gave them an opportunity to reflect on their individual performance; how they felt they did and how they could have improved. Then the peers in their groups had an opportunity
to reflect on their performances as well. Multiple perspectives were viewed as important, encouraged, and promoted during the implementation of authentic assessment (Rule, 2006). Each member of the group took turns doing a self-reflection. Afterwards, group members also gave input to individual members stating how they felt one another did in each category according to the rubric. Students commented:

Amy: I like the way we do this in class. How things get explained and how we get the perspective of different people. It helps me learn better.

Candace: I like how we discuss it together. It helps us figure out things out about each other. It helps us work together and participate. We evaluate each other on what we did; we tell each other how well we did.

Nancy: I like that we evaluate ourselves and others. It’s not like a bias thing. Different people give feedback.

Participants felt the reflection process was extremely helpful and they enjoyed it. It allowed them to think about how they academically performed on the project, considered how they might improve on future projects, and gave them the opportunity to take ownership of their own assessment. Reflecting allowed the participants to have dialogue with their peers about their work while they evaluated their academic performance. Reflecting also enabled and encouraged them to have dialogue with their peers about their strengths and weaknesses. This process also allowed them to identify and pass judgment about their own work. More importantly, reflecting allowed the participants and their peers to critique/judge their own work and how they can improve their academic performance in the future. Learning was used to generate and revise their work.
and not just to pass a test (Elsworth, 2011). The interviews also confirmed that the participants enjoyed the reflection process. They felt overall it was helpful. Reflecting with their peers enabled them to know right away what they needed to do; it identified their strengths, and weaknesses. They liked communicating and working collectively with their peers thinking about how they performed. The Constructivist Theory encourages interactions with others to construct knowledge.

**Research Question 4**

The focus of this research question was to examine how the participating teacher used authentic assessment and whether there were any advantages or disadvantages. Three themes emerged namely; receiving feedback, creating projects, and collaboration. Three sources of data were used to answer this question including observations, interviews, and documents. Observations of teacher’s and students’ grading method were analyzed along with the grading documents that were used for the evaluation process. Also, participant students’ and teacher’s answers about the evaluation process from the interviews were analyzed.

**What do you think: Receiving feedback.** This theme showed how the teacher used authentic assessment by allowing students to receive feedback on their assignments. On May 24, 2012, I observed (1:00-2:10 p.m.) students working quietly in groups exchanging information with one another. Soft whispers or sounds from conversations could be heard as students engaged in discussions and received feedback from their peers. The teacher moved around the classroom to one group at a time discussing the results with students. The teacher initiated the conversation with the students. He asked
questions about how they derived at their answers on language puzzles. The teacher went through answers orally with each group then he had each students design their own puzzles. Students responded:

Christian: Everyone seems to enjoy at some point getting their point across; we have debates on our thoughts of things. I guess that’s good.

Amy: The teacher tells us what we did right or wrong so before we record it, it will be right. So I think that’s pretty good.

My observations, interviews, and documents showed that the participants liked receiving feedback about their work performances. Feedback allowed them to know what they did or did not do upfront. It helped them to understand concepts better. Feedback from others was just a great way to just bring clarity to unknown things. Participants felt this process was beneficial and non-threatening too. They felt their peers provided them with honest feedback about their work performance and evaluated them fairly according to the criteria on the rubric. Receiving feedback from peers allowed all participants to become active learners and evaluators. Collectively, the teacher and students assessed their work to determine whether they are using learning and making the necessary corrections (Elsworth, 2011). Giving feedback gave them an opportunity to use and develop higher-level thinking skills according to Bloom’s Taxonomy. Feedback provided participants with different perspectives and different conclusions about their academic performance. They remarked:

Kelly: You can learn from your mistakes so you don’t have to make the same ones over and over not knowing what you did wrong.
Elizabeth: Mr. Tillman tells me what I have to do or what I am missing. Using authentic forms of assessment allowed various individuals to monitor the progress of students’ performance and supported a higher reliability rate (Kohn, 2000). It also taught them how to become good communicators and listeners when they provided or received feedback from their peers. Bloom’s Taxonomy supports the Constructivist Theory where students learn how to validate their viewpoint by taking part in the evaluation process.

**Show what you know: Creating projects.** Another theme that reflected how the teacher used authentic assessment included creating projects. On May 24, 2012, I observed from 1:00-2:10 p.m. students creating frame-ups; expressions that decipher an expression. They were working independently at their seats using paper, rulers, and markers. All students appeared to be on task; creating their expressions. Comments were made:

Teacher: You have to convey the expression.

Nancy: Creativity shows you different ways that students learn so that it will be easier to grade than just give them test, test and test. You want to know how they are functioning so they should be able to create so the teacher gets a better feel for their class.

Christian: It shows originality and it helps us enjoy our work more. If we show our personality in our work we seem to be more into it and more excited to do the work.
My observations, interviews, and participants’ documents confirmed that they took pleasure in creating projects. I witnessed the participants being highly engaged in the radio play project. Each member of the groups participated and collaborated with their peers to create and complete the radio play. Through the interviews the majority said they liked working with others to create or design and they felt students should be able to do so. Comments were made:

Elizabeth: I can learn it easily; mentally and physically but mostly mentally.

Candace: Everybody works together more and becomes creative. Like if you design things it’s your own thoughts and you can be creative with it.

Jackie: It shows different creativity and it shows like different ways that students learn. You know how their brains are functioning. They should be able to create so the teacher gets a better feel for their class.

My observations confirmed that teachers are using authentic assessment when they allow their students to create and demonstrate what they know whereas traditional testing does not allow students to demonstrate or create knowledge. The radio play provided evidence of learning; students produced an observable product that could easily measure their academic growth (Hill, 2000; Kohn, 2000). Traditional forms of testing only allow the teachers to assess their students through multiple choice types of questions. I observed participants having fun learning with their peers creating projects. There were highly engaged discussing, designing, and critiquing the radio play projects. They demonstrated knowledge through the writing of scripts, creating sound effects, characters and their roles. I saw them enjoying the evaluation process too. Allowing students to demonstrate
what they know is a great way to measure their full talents and abilities which can easily be observed (Kohn, 2000). The teachers allowed them to take full responsibility for learning and evaluating themselves. They were given a rubric with criteria upfront that included categories that they would be evaluated on. So they knew ahead of time what was expected of them and their group members. So this teacher chose to use authentic assessment by allowing students to self-evaluate themselves and their peers. Also, the teacher gave the students a rubric with criteria ahead of time that would be used to evaluate their academic performance. This type of assessment provided engagement and dialogue between the teacher and students, promoted self-evaluation, and allowed students to take ownership of their own learning (Palm, 2008; Puckett & Black, 2000). Often I witnessed the participants laughing and giggling with their peers while they were working and doing the evaluation process. Candace commented, “I liked the way our radio plays were assessed. It was evaluated when we worked with Mr. Tillman. He had us working together, evaluating ourselves, and how we think our group did.” Authentic assessment allowed the teacher to play a facilitator’s role while the students initiated the learning and evaluation process. And there were many advantages to this process. Not only were students highly engaged but it allowed them to be creative in the learning and evaluation process.

**Helping hands: Collaboration.** Collaboration was another theme that showed how Mr. Tillman used authentic assessment. On May 3, 2012, I observed (1:00-2:30 p.m.) students working on their radio play projects during Reading class. Students were broken into groups working collaboratively. Some students from each group were on the
computer typing scripts. Some were tape recording their scripts using a microphone. All
students appeared to be on task working with their group members. The observation on
May 10, 2012 (1:10-2:10 p.m.), I also saw participants collaborating with their group
members. One was downloading sounds from her cell phone; the recording for the group
was being used for background sounds or music. All participants had practiced saying
their scripts with their groups. Some were changing their voices to take on the role of
their character. They all listened actively and participated with their groups. Participant
Jackie remarked, “Students should be able to create or design their own work but most of
the time students already do that. The teacher allows students to express themselves.” My
observations, interviews, and documents validated this. I observed students working
together about 98% of the time. I saw the participants working on their radio projects and
other assignments with their peers. Through collaboration in groups they were able to
share information and knowledge with one another to research, create, and present their
radio plays. Using authentic assessment promoted collaboration for learning (Hill, 2000;
Kohn, 2000). All group members were actively involved in the learning and evaluation
process too. Authentic assessment also promoted active participation for all students
(Palm, 2008; Puckett & Black, 2000). Each participant appeared to have a role or task to
complete while they worked within their groups. Even though they had their own
individual task they still collaborated with their group by dialoguing, critiquing,
researching, writing, and revising their radio play projects.

Beyond the Pacing Guide participants worked collaboratively with their peers to
create and design a radio play project. This project went beyond using a text book,
worksheets, selection tests, or timed writing assignment. Participants had to work in
groups collectively with their peers to create their projects, edit, and evaluate their work.
This process allowed them to become aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and attitudes
towards learning (Puckett & Black, 2000). Warman (2002) stated that authentic pedagogy
will require teachers to create lessons that allow students to become experts in evaluation
tasks while combining assessment and daily teaching practices. This project also required
them to use some real-life experiences which they thought made learning fun. Students
are often excited when they generate their own products; they feel a sense of gratitude
while doing things that interested them, engaged, and had meaning for them (Hill, 2000;
Palm, 2008). When students have opportunities to exchange and share ideas, new
thoughts or knowledge involving higher cognitive skills are developed which supports
the Constructivist Theory (Wink & Putney, 2002).

**Research Question 5**

The focus of this research question was to examine what role leadership played in
the implementation of authentic assessment in the selected classroom. The two themes
included using authentic assessment to support standardized tests and finding a balance
for using bot forms of evaluations. Three sources of data were used to answer this
question including observations, interviews, and documents. All student participants” and
cooperating teacher”s answers from the interviews were analyzed. The teacher”s teaching
methods and the participants” interactions were observed and analyzed. Participants”
projects and portfolios were analyzed too.
**Finding a balance: Using both forms of evaluations.** This theme confirmed that leadership was critical in balancing the use of authentic and standardized assessment in the classroom. On May 17, 2012 (1:05-2:20 p.m.), I observed the teacher taking notes as the students from one group provided feedback to one another regarding their performance on the radio play project. The other groups were in the hallway outside the classroom recording, rehearsing scripts, and critiquing one another. Even though the teacher was required to teach certain skills to prepare the students for standardized evaluations (such as quarterly assessments and the Ohio Achievement Assessment) he still integrated authentic activities and assessments within the classroom. My observations confirmed that leadership played an important role in the implementation of authentic assessment. Mr. Tillman commented:

> Leadership is important. They have to see the balance with test scores and authentic assessment. The whole objective is to get students learning.

> Standardized assessment is a snapshot of a kid in a particular time and space.

> Authentic assessment is ongoing. You see progression and growth from one stopping point to one starting point. Kids get to do more activities which have no right or wrong answers.

> Dewey (1927) agreed that schools should provide a balance for students and traditional forms of assessment should not be the only way to measure what they know. He reiterated that connecting everyday life and the skills that students are learning and developing in school is paramount and prepares them for the workforce. After the students completed their radio play projects I observed the students engaging in group
evaluations. They used a rubric to evaluate their individual performances on the radio play project then they critiqued each group member. The teacher allowed them the opportunity to practice analyzing their peers’ performances which is a real-life skill to obtain. They were also allowed to dialogue and exchange information, their thoughts, and make judgments about the performances. I saw the teacher meet with each individual group as well. He conducted group conferences. During this time the teacher allowed each member to share how he or she felt they performed on the project using the rubric. Each member had to evaluate themselves (using 4, 3, 2, or 1 for their score). They had to explain why they felt they earned that score on the project using the criteria from the rubric. The teacher encouraged each member of the group to orally share their thoughts. Collaboratively and authentically the evaluation process was completed and supported by the teacher and the building leadership. Learning and assessment should be an intertwined process where they go hand and hand (Dewey, 1916; Shapiro, 2003). It should be seen as a continuous process and not a one-time event like traditional testing. Therefore, finding a balance between authentic assessment and standardized testing would support the Constructivist Theory.

I also witnessed the whole class conducting oral evaluations and discussions about the radio play projects too. The teacher led the students through whole class discussions about their projects after individual groups evaluated themselves. He played each group’s radio play orally to the class. As the students listened, they were to think about how each group performed, what could have been done differently, or what improvements should be made to enhance the radio play. Afterwards, individuals began
raising their hands to share their thoughts and provided feedback for the groups. At times students would comment or add to another’s thought. Such discussions provided new insight and knowledge for group members but also allowed them to view things from a different lens. Vgotsky (1997) believed learning consists of social interactions where receiving and responding to information is encouraged. Sometimes the teacher would respond to a comment or encourage students to elaborate on a thought. Additionally, conducting oral evaluations and discussions required the students to respect and trust one another. This form of evaluation supports the constructivist theory where learning involves alternative forms of assessment, social interaction, and strategies involving higher-order thinking skills (Conklin, 2012; Kohn, 2000; Puckett & Black, 2000). Authentic assessment encouraged students to learn how to analyze information and evaluate too. It gave the students an opportunity to learn how to analyze and assess the performance of the projects while developing critical thinking skills. This process required them to use higher-level cognitive skills. It also enabled them to reflect on their performances too. Reflecting was another strategy used by the teacher that fostered critical thinking skills while students learned how to dissect information. Therefore, leadership played an important role in the implementation of using real forms of evaluation. A transformational leader supported a teacher’s authentic pedagogy with the use of innovative lessons and assessments that went beyond the Pacing Guide. Good instruction led to authentic forms of assessment. However, the teacher found a balance between using authentic assessment and standardized testing which is required by the state.
Maintain it: Supporting standardized test. This theme also confirmed that leadership played a role in the implementation of authentic assessment supporting standardized test. On April 26, 2012 (1:10-2:15 p.m.), I observed the teacher moving throughout the classroom observing the groups; students worked collaboratively with others while the teacher played a facilitator’s role. On May 10, 2012 (1:10-2:10 p.m.), I also witnessed students working in groups on their projects. Students initiated their own learning while the teacher assisted students with their recordings as needed. The teacher moved around the room and the hallway observing students working. At the end of the class period, the teacher led a class discussion asking, “What have you learned about recording so far?” One response included, “It’s hard making sounds but it if fun.” The teacher concluded the discussion reminding students of the due date of the final recording; Wednesday, May 16, 2012. Mr. Tillman stated:

“I personally think authentic assessment should support standardized tests and Standardized tests should support authentic assessment. Unfortunately, if you are looking at the school level time is a factor. It appears No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top is missing the authentic assessment piece; it is not there. It just gives a snapshot. The problem with that is you don’t get the whole child. You get a partial image.”

My observations and participants’ documents confirmed that authentic assessment should support standardized tests. After watching the participants create, present, and evaluate their radio play projects I witnessed them constructing their own knowledge through collaboration, investigation, conversation, and the use of new information. This
radio play project required them to use higher-levels of cognition which would definitely prepare them for standardized testing but also equip them for real-life experiences. This project also promoted using Howard Gardner’s (1983) theory of multiple intelligences. Participants had to use various levels of cognition to complete this project. It required them to use language skills when they wrote their scripts and rehearsed them. Logical skills were used to analyze and evaluate the scripts. The radio plays also consisted of music, sound effects, and even bodily-kinesthetic were involved. The participants and their group members partook in physical activity to create noises or some sound effects. I witnessed a lot of interpersonal skills being used. The participants had to work collectively with the members of their groups to create and perform their plays. This involved ongoing dialogue about the projects too. They had to continuously discuss and make changes to their projects prior to their presentations. Also, group members had to learn how to appreciate and value one another’s opinions and feelings throughout this project. They had to constantly critique their projects collectively as a group and then individually. Authentic assessment encompasses the cognitive domains while predicting future performances and experiences (Allen, Scheve & Nieter, 2011; Conklin & Frei, 2011) which support the Constructivist Theory; learning should reflect society where activities and assessment share common goals with the environment (Dewey, 1991; Schutz, 2001). Since standardized tests are multiple choice and only require students to select on answer these students who engage in authentic learning and assessment are being prepared beyond the cognition of knowledge and comprehension that encompasses traditional forms of evaluation. DePascale (2011) believes that since large scale
evaluations may not be going away anytime soon teachers should include instruction and assessments that prepare them for the real world; college or career endeavors. The authentic learning and assessment that took place within this classroom setting was not only supported by the school’s leadership but also supports standardized tests and beyond. So, real authentic pedagogy requires school leadership and teachers to combine assessment and daily instruction method to prepare students to solve real world problems that go beyond the classroom (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000; Warman, 2002). Therefore, a transformational leader is one who does not criticize but rather supports teachers implementing new teaching methods and assessments that go beyond what is required of them. This also supports the Constructivist Theory where learning is cultivated in an atmosphere of collaboration, high expectations, and mutual respect.
Chapter 5: Summary, Suggestions, and Conclusions

Introduction

This study aimed at understanding the lived experiences of urban middle school students who were evaluated with authentic forms of assessment and the effects it had on their academic growth. I used a phenomenological case study to seek an in-depth comprehension of the participants’ academic experiences in the classroom. The previous chapters reviewed relevant literature, presented a theoretical framework, and data. This chapter concludes the dissertation. It summarizes the previous chapters and presents the major findings of the research. Also, this chapter discusses the study’s implications for theory and practice and suggests recommendations for future research.

Summaries

This section summarizes the previous chapters. Chapter one highlighted the background of the study, problem statement, the purpose, and research questions. This chapter provided an overview of the study and exposed why this is important to the field of education. Also, it outlined who will benefit from this research.

This chapter offered an overview of traditional tests and the effects it has had on the field of education. It also highlighted the demands that standardized tests have put on educators and how it has altered the purpose of instruction. Standardized tests do not provide a true picture of what students know (Kohn, 2000; Rule, 2006). It only allows evaluators to draw conclusions about students’ cognitive abilities. These multiple choice tests cannot provide a complete assessment of students. Students simply pencil in their answers on these multiple choice tests without having an opportunity to discuss, defend,
or demonstrate what they know. Then evaluators form judgments about students based on this one form assessment.

Standardized forms of assessment have been overused and have caused teachers to water down their instruction to teach to the tests (Casas, 2003; Kohn, 2000). Teachers find themselves eliminating creativity in the classroom in order to prepare their students for such testing. They feel pressured to make sure their students perform well on these tests so they neglect teaching authentic activities (Kohn, 2000); real learning and assessment is lost. Students are taught using lower levels of cognition versus cultivating higher-order thinking skills too. Activities that emphasize recall or memorize promote lower levels of cognition like traditional forms of assessment. Higher levels of cognition would require students to create, present, debate, or defend what they know; not part of standardized tests.

These standardized tests have caused students and teachers to feel pressured. These tests have been used to assess the abilities of students and used as the bases for decision-making regarding the students’ progression in school. This one form of assessment has been used to determine students’ futures. This type of assessment causes high stress and anxiety for students (Casas, 2003; Kohn, 2000). Also, their self-esteem is often affected by their outcomes on such tests. This format of testing has created many problems and negative outcomes for many students; categorizing or labeling students (Figlio & Getzler, 2002; Kohn, 2000).

In recognizing the real challenges faced by standardized tests and the negative effects it has on the educational system, this study sought to explore the possibilities of
authentic assessment. Using authentic forms of assessment promotes meaningful learning and evaluation opportunities for students. Students are able to demonstrate or construct what they know (Conklin, 2006; Conklin & Frei, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Through exhibits, presentations, debates, portfolios, or writing they can show what they know versus being assessed with a pencil and paper test. Authentic assessments allow students to perform publicly what they know (Conklin, 2006; Conklin & Frei, 2011; Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001; Kohn, 2000).

Using authentic assessments also allow students to partake in the evaluation process. Students are given opportunities to self-evaluate themselves and their peers using a rubric (Puckett & Black, 2000). When students are assigned a project or presentation a rubric is given to them upfront so they know what is expected of them. Following the rubric, students can go through the criteria to evaluate how they or their peers performed on that assignment. This form of assessment teaches students how to judge, defend, or evaluate their academic progress. It also allows them to use and develop critical thinking skills (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000).

Even with all the demands placed on standardized testing and accountability, there is a shift towards a more authentic form of assessment (DePascale, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Authentic forms of assessment offer educators an alternative way to measure what students know while providing them with a more comprehensive picture unlike traditional forms of assessment. However, leadership plays a key role in the implementation of authentic forms of assessment. A leader who is unconventional would
likely support educators having the flexibility to change, alter the curriculum, or assessment process (Conklin, 2010). Such a leader would be one who is willing to establish relationships and build trust among his or her staff (Blanchard, 2005; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). This leader would be transformational; he or she embraces change in order to get the most out of the staff within the organization. A transformational leader encourages creativity, flexibility, and collaboration among the staff in order to move the organization’s mission and vision forward (Burke, 2007; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). They understand the power of relationships and partnerships.

In the attempt to investigate the benefits of implementing alternative forms of evaluation, this study aimed at understanding the lived experiences of urban middle school students who were being evaluated with authentic assessments and the effects it had on their academic growth. To do so five main questions were asked:

(1) How are the cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy incorporated in the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide?

(2) How does the teacher align his pedagogical choices with the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide?

(3) How do students experience authentic assessment strategies in a selected urban middle school that go beyond the Pacing Guide?

(4) How does the teacher in a selected urban middle school use authentic assessment and are there any advantages or disadvantages?

(5) What role does leadership play in the implementation of authentic assessment in a selected urban middle school?
By answering these questions, this study hoped to bring to light the potential benefits of implementing authentic forms of assessment in the classroom rather than just relying solely on standardized tests to provide a complete picture of what students know. Hopefully, educators and policy makers will focus more attention on implementing alternative ways to assess students in order to captivate a true picture of what they know and not really solely on standardized tests. It also sought some practical ways teachers can implement authentic forms of assessment simultaneously with standardized tests in the classroom and leadership’s role in this process. As the instructional leaders, administrators’ role is critical in the execution of authentic assessment.

Chapter 2 provided a literature review that consisted of a historical background of standardized tests. The literature also included an overview of authentic assessment, concepts of authentic assessments, the validity and reliability of authentic assessment. Bloom’s Taxonomy was used as a conceptual framework that supported the research. This framework provided an alternative way to assess what students know. This conceptual framework implies that students learn by constructing knowledge by demonstrating or creating meaning.

The first section of the literature review consisted of a historical background of standardized tests beginning in the late 1800s, the 1900s, and now the 21st century. For each time period, I observed how standardized tests were used and what outcomes were achieved.

In the mid-1800s standardized tests were utilized to measure student knowledge in various disciplines. By the late 1800s, these test results were published to compare
and contrast various schools (Hamilton, 2003). Students’ success or failure on these tests determined whether or not they were promoted to the next grade (Fletcher, 2009).

The use of standardized tests shifted and expanded in the 1900s (Linn, Miller, & Gronlund, 2005). Education became viewed as a “factory model” where such tests provided statistical analyses of students and were scored automatically (Fletcher, 2009; Hamp-Lyon & Condon, 2000). These tests were not linked to any particular curriculum, specific learners, or no particular content. The use of standardized tests began to dominate the evaluation process in the United States (Hamp-Lyon & Condon, 2000; Linn, Miller & Gronlund, 2005). Many stakeholders became disappointed in the discrepancies in students’ performances so by the late 1900s states began to put mandates on the curriculum, instruction, and assessment process to equalize education, make schools, and teacher accountable for students’ test results (Stone, 2003; Toppo, 2008).

Now during the 21st century, so many demands have been placed on schools and teachers by policy makers that have limited what can be taught. Schools and teachers are now put under scrutiny for students’ outcome on these standardized tests and are being held accountable (Kohn, 2000; Stone, 2003). Because of this, educators are looking for alternative ways to improve the quality of instruction and assessment (Kohn, 2000; Toppo, 2008). Schools and students are being labeled into categories such as passing or failing; promoted or retained (Figlio & Getzler, 2002; Kohn, 2000). This has hindered the whole purpose for evaluating students; education should be about students obtaining knowledge.
The next section of literature provided an overview of authentic assessment and what the term means. By definition the term is based on various activities that represent classroom and real-life learning supported by criteria (Warman, 2002). These activities should mirror actions or behaviors that reflect the real world (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000; Puckett and Black, 2000). These activities may require students to produce a project, portfolio, an exhibit, or conduct a presentation. Students would construct knowledge while learning and the assessment process would encourage problem-solving skills that can go beyond the classroom (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000; Puckett & Black, 2000; Warman, 2002).

The third area of literature was relevant to the concepts of authentic assessment suggested advantages of using authentic forms of assessment. It focuses on students” thought processes; how they derive at an answer whereas traditional forms of assessment focus on one correct answer (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000). Focusing on one”s thought process is more beneficial to the learning process; it emphasizes moving students from lower levels of cognition to developing critical thinking skills. Therefore, authentic assessment seeks to obtain a thorough analysis of what students” know through performances (Palm, 2008). Through the construction of knowledge, students automatically begin to use higher levels of cognition. They are no longer required to memorize or recall information but rather take what they already know and apply, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate. So authentic assessment encourages students to move away from pencil and paper form of assessments and promotes using critical thinking skills to construct knowledge. Therefore, creating or constructing their own knowledge
contributes to the learning process and they become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (Puckett & Black, 2000).

Another advantage shown in the literature for implementing authentic assessment showed that students are actively engaged in activities and they self-monitor their own progress. This form of assessment requires them to learn how to evaluate their own activities. Students learn how to use a rubric with criteria to assess their own work. The rubric allows them to easily monitor and measure what they know or do not. The rubric indicates exactly what they are expected to know or perform. This evaluation process encourages ownership of learning and assessment (Hill, 2000; Kohn, 2000). As students complete their assignments, authentic assessment allows them to go back, revisit or make corrections to their work. This evaluation process is ongoing and not limited to a particular time frame or confined by certain constraints. Using authentic assessment provides a flexible, creative, and holistic way to measure students’ knowledge; they freely monitor and evaluate their own work (Hill, 2000; Williams, 2007).

The literature on authentic assessment also showed that it can be integrated with the required curriculum (Kohn, 2000; Palm, 2008). It enhances and refines the curriculum and assessment process. Some assessments may be paper and pencil but should not be limited to this form of evaluation. Besides standardized tests, students’ growth can be measured using other tools like journals, presentations, projects, exhibits, or debates. Authentic assessment focuses on performance tasks (Kohn, 2000; Palm, 2008; Rule, 2006). This would provide all stakeholders with a complete picture of what students know. Using authentic assessment would allow teachers to have a diverse collection of
evidence to show what students know in addition to standardized tests; traditional tests would not be the only assessment tool to showcase students’ knowledge.

The literature clearly indicated that authentic assessment provides all stakeholders including parents, students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers with evidence of learning (Elsworth, 2011; Hill, 2000; Kohn, 2000). This form of assessment allows for students to create an observable product to show what they know. These products may include projects, exhibits, writing, presentations, or research. The observable product would clearly demonstrate what students know and provide evidence of learning. All stakeholders could easily see and measure their growth and performance level over time. It would provide a complete picture by providing several examples of students’ work; a collection overtime. Therefore, authentic assessment provides proof of learning on a continuous basis and not just a snapshot of what students know (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000; Palm, 2008).

Another advantage to using authentic assessment focused on students gaining real-world experiences (Rule, 2006). When students have to create their original work they learn how to become problem-solvers. They engage in activities that encourage them to strategize; using knowledge, talents, and various skills versus memorizing information. Authentic assessment promotes higher-level thinking skills as students investigate and examine the world around them; solving real-life problems (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Elsworth, 2011; Rule, 2006). This form of assessment is a great way for students to integrate theory and practice; take what they know and apply it to real-life situations. This eliminates the concept of learn something new, take a test, and move onto
something new again. But rather promotes learn something new and apply it or transfer to
a situation. This is a great way to promote the concept, that everything you learn can be
applied to real-life problems. Also, authentic assessment fosters the concept that learning
takes place outside the classroom; it is an on-going process.

The last area of literature focused on the validity and reliability of authentic
assessment. Authentic assessment supported this study because it allows all stakeholders
that include parents, teachers, students, administrators, and policymakers to observe
products that show what can be produced. These products can also be compared to
similar tasks to observe students’ growth over a period of time; because one form of
assessment does not provide teachers with a valid or reliable picture of student
achievement (Elsworth, 2011; Kohn, 2000; Rule, 2006). Also, multiple evaluators (like
other teachers or parents) could observe these products to validate the assessment
findings. Just like standardized tests there are limitations however authentic forms of
assessment are credible and valid measurement tools (Kohn, 2000; Rule, 2006). They are
valid because the teachers and students set the goals and objectives ahead of time and
develop the measurement (a rubric) that guides and assesses the learning process. So the
rubric only measures the tasks that were addressed prior to the assessment process.
Therefore, it validates this form of assessment. There are no hidden agendas or bias
incorporated in authentic assessment which is often found in standardized tests (Kohn,
2000; Puckett & Black, 2000).

The second part of this chapter details the theoretical framework I implemented
for this study: a constructivist theory. This chapter began by providing a rational for
utilizing this theory and a brief history of how this theory emerged and evolved. I also highlighted major constructivist theorist who help to conceptualize this theory and offer an explanation has to how they fit this particular study. The theoretical framework section ends with similarities and differences among each theorists and how when combined offer relevant information to this constructivist theory.

It was very important to adopt a constructivist theory for this study. This theory is about integrating knowledge and learning; what knowledge is and how students develop information. Constructivist teaching focuses on allowing students to learn through exploration. Such classrooms are set up to allow students to engage in purposeful activities that allow them to build or extend their cognitive abilities (Custer el at., 2000; Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001). This is important today because teachers must begin to allow students opportunities to construct their own knowledge so they can think, understand, and control their own learning. Like early constructivists, they emphasized constructing knowledge instead of reproducing what someone else knows. This theory offers a different perspective to theorize and understand the reality of standardized tests and an alternative way to measure students’ academic progress. Dewey’s approach supported the importance of students problem-solving through hands-on experiences and the use of logic (Custer, Schell, McAlister, Scott & Hoepfl, 2000; Dewey, 1902). He believed that education should reflect real-life problems; activities should encourage students to make choices and problem solve while they self-direct their own learning. He believed in creative activities where students create knowledge. Dewey’s approach to education provides a way for learning assessment that emulates the workforce. The
Piagetian approach supported Dewey’s ideas about education, that learning should be centered on problem-solving and revolve experiences. He agreed that students develop cognitive skills from their experiences of the world around them. However, Piaget believed that when students constructed knowledge it involved arranging and organizing new knowledge into mental patterns known as “schemata” (Evans, 1981; Piaget, 1970). So he believed since students adjust and adapt information they become constructors of knowledge versus reproducing information (Evans, 1981). They connect prior and new experiences to produce new knowledge. Like other constructivist theorists, Vygotsky believed learning should be an active process however, he believed social experiences create or add to one’s knowledge. His approach to education includes allowing students to interact with their peers to construct knowledge. Through collaboration and conversation with others clarity of information is brought and exchanged to develop new knowledge (Wink & Putney, 2002). From the Vygotskian viewpoint, teachers should encourage social interactions in the classroom so students can construct new knowledge from one another. He agreed that learning is not a passive process but involves producing new ideas through language discovery. Using constructivist theory offers a fitting framework to promote authentic learning and assessment options for classroom teachers.

Chapter 3 focused on the methods and approaches for this study. The research design was included in this chapter too. For this study a qualitative research approach was used. The site selection and participants were also identified clearly. Data was collected using three main sources. These sources included observations, interviews, and document analysis. The protocols and procedures that were used to collect data were
clearly stated that showed how it was collected for this study. Validity and ethical issues were discussed to ensure that trustworthy data was used for this study. The instruments used to collect data were also explained and analyzed in this chapter. This chapter highlighted the themes and patterns that evolved from the data.

The first section of this chapter set the framework for the design of this study. I showed how my research questions warranted for a qualitative investigation (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2006). My study aimed at understanding urban middle school students’ experiences of authentic forms of assessment used in conjunction with standardized tests, which made qualitative design a suitable framework (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2009). I choose a single phenomenological case study to guide this study.

Phenomenology was selected because of its purpose; to study the lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I decided a phenomenology case study would be the best fit because it embraces gaining an understanding of the participants in their natural state through observations, interviews, and document analysis. By observations, I sought an understanding of participants’ perceptions of their experiences and the world around them (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2007). Furthermore, the nature in which this study took place suggested a case study approach.

This study also aimed to organize a research approach that was responsive to the realities of the participants. A constructivist framework was used in the analytical process and collection of data. Representing the stories of the participants the study focused on everyday experiences and events with authentic forms of assessment to support the
achievement of urban middle school students. The core of this study remains the implementation of authentic assessment as an alternative way to measure participants” knowledge.

In this chapter a detailed description of the research setting, the selection of the participants, the methods, and procedures used to conduct the study are provided. An urban middle school in Columbus, Ohio, was the location for this study. The major reason for selecting this setting was to see if the cognitive domains from Bloom”s Taxonomy were incorporated in the Pacing Guide and whether authentic assessment strategies were being implemented to use beyond traditional tests in an urban setting. Familiarity with the environment, accessibility of information, and cost made this location appropriate for this study.

In April of 2012 the field work began and lasted for six weeks. Nine participants were the center of this study; eight eighth-grade students and one teacher which is recommended for a case study (Patton, 2002). The eight student participants were randomly selected. Their names were pulled out of a hat. Four participants were from an eighth-grade Reading class seventh period and the other four from an eighth period Reading class. All participants had the same teacher for instruction. The researcher wanted to observe classrooms and students where authentic assessment was used in conjunction to the Columbus City Schools” Pacing Guide. Therefore, this was the rationale for selecting participants from these two classes.

Multiple methods and techniques were used to capture the experiences and realities of the participants. I integrated participant observations, document analysis,
student, and teacher interviews to obtain a diverse perspective of how authentic assessments are being integrated in an urban middle school setting. Observations allowed me to view specific behaviors, explore experiences systematically, and record different aspects of the phenomenon being studied. These observations were a continuous process that required time and skill for me the researcher (Glesne, 2006). Analyzing documents allowed me to draw conclusions or put information together to answer the research questions. Conducting interviews allowed me to gain firsthand knowledge and understanding of the participants’ academic growth. The participants took on an expert role while I became a learner (Glesne, 2006). I was able to listen and observe intently to collect data from the participants about the advantages of using authentic assessment and how it complements standardized tests. The interview process also allowed me to develop a relationship with the participants.

In order to assess and guarantee quality the issues of credibility and trustworthiness were considered. I relied on the triangulation of data, prolonged engagement in the field, member checks, and peer debriefing (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Denzin, 2000; Glesne, 2005).

Ethical issues were also addressed in this chapter as they apply to every part of the research process. Following Ohio University’s procedural ethical guidelines guaranteed protection of all participants from potential harm associated to their involvement in the study, I also debriefed with the participants to check the accuracy and integrity of the data that was collected (Creswell, 2009). Debriefing was a great way that
I established a level of trust and respect with the participants. This process also allowed us to collaborate and produce an ethical research practice.

The last part of this chapter explained how the data was analyzed and interpreted. After all the data was gathered in my field log and reflection log, I transcribed and translated. I read carefully through all data several times creating a framework to display the data and the coding process. I began looking for common themes or patterns after reading the transcripts, my field and reflection log multiple times (Creswell, 2009). After I identified reoccurring patterns and themes, I began to categorize and attach codes. I used a basic coding system just labeling and highlighting the data. Once I identified the themes I began to make sense of the data and found meaning. I categorized the themes into key words or phrases (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Chapter four introduced the nine participants who participated in this study. The ethnicity and gender of the student participants were the same; 100% were female and African American. They were all thirteen and fourteen years old in the eighth grade taught by the same teacher in an urban middle school setting. On the other hand, the teacher participant was make and of Caucasian decent. There was no single aspect of the participants’ live (education, gender, social class, etc.) that defined their relationship with authentic assessment.

**Major Findings**

The major findings that emerged from the research will be presented in the section; the following are the questions which guided the research:

(1) How are the cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy incorporated in the
Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide?

(2) How does the teacher align his pedagogical choices with the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide?

(3) How do students experience authentic assessment strategies in a selected urban middle school that go beyond the Pacing Guide?

(4) How does the teacher in a selected urban middle school use authentic assessment and are there any advantages or disadvantages?

(5) What role does leadership play in the implementation of authentic assessment in a selected urban middle school?

In the first research question, I aimed to find out what cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy were incorporated in the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide. I found out that approximately 90% of the assignments required students to use higher cognitive levels according to Bloom’s Taxonomy that went beyond the knowledge, comprehension, and application domains. These assignments required students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Only about 10% of the assignments focused on lower levels of cognition such as comprehension and knowledge (see Appendix E).

Some examples of assignments that required students to use higher cognitive levels included: After students read The Diary of Anne Frank (the suggested novel) they had to evaluate features, characteristics, and how structures helped the author achieve their purpose. Another assignment involved students evaluating the credibility and usefulness of sources for a research assignment for The Diary of Anne Frank. These are just a couple examples where students have gone beyond basic cognitive levels of
recalling and memorizing information. But students had to use complex levels of thinking. These assignments required them to think abstractly and use all elements of cognition to make judgments.

Only a small percent of the assignments from the Columbus City Schools’ Pacing Guide required lower levels of cognition. Some of those assignments involved: using correct punctuation and capitalization for writing assignments; recognize figurative language and its function, use multiple resources to enhance vocabulary comprehension, identify recurring themes, etc. These examples called for students to remember previously learned material only. No real thinking took place during these assignments. Students completed these assignments based on what they already knew.

The second research question revealed how the teacher aligned his pedagogical choices to the cognitive domains of the Pacing Guide. It showed how the teacher aligned his pedagogical choices to the cognitive domains using evaluation, synthesis, and analysis. Even though the teacher did not follow the actual assignments from the Pacing Guide, his activities were aligned with the cognitive domains from Bloom’s Taxonomy. Students were engaged in activities that required higher levels of cognition.

To begin with, after participants completed their radio play projects they were allowed to evaluate their performance and their peers using criteria from a rubric. They both gave their perspective about the group’s overall performance, group members, and about themselves. This process allowed them to engage in higher levels of thinking as they had to defend, justify, or argue their view point. Evaluating allowed the participants to take ownership of their own learning and assessment process. (Hill, 2000; Kohn,
2000). They had to be able to justify orally with others why their particular grade was given and what was missing. They had to be able to give an explanation for their scores or validate it with reasoning.

When participants were completing the radio play projects they had to use the cognitive domain of synthesizing. At this cognitive level of the Bloom’s Taxonomy participants’ work required them to pull information apart and create something new. The teacher gave the class the guidelines for the radio play however they had to figure out how to create it in their groups. Each group had to write their own script, create characters, sound effects, etc. This cognitive level required creativity and originality. Synthesizing also calls for engagement; students are highly involved in the learning process.

The radio play project also required participants to use the cognitive domain of analyzing. At this cognitive domain participants had to identify what knowledge was important or relevant to the composing of their radio plays. They had to be able to organize information and differentiate to see what is relevant or not. The participants had to work collaboratively with their group members to break information into smaller parts and recognize what components were needed for the radio play. This level of thinking also went beyond the lower levels of cognition; knowledge and comprehension.

The third research question disclosed how authentic assessment strategies were adopted to use in a selected urban middle school that went beyond the Pacing Guide. The themes found in this question that showed redundancy were revisit assignments or
making corrections, peer evaluations, engaged, and reflection. These were strategies that the teacher used in his classroom to enhance students’ academic growth.

As the participants worked collectively in groups on their radio plays they were allowed to revisit or make corrections to their projects. After they wrote their and rehearsed them, if they did not like the results they were able to go back and alter or change their lines. They could add new information or delete whatever was not necessary. The same was true for the sound effects or music. If the radio plays included sound effects or music and they did not like the sound of it they were allowed to delete or edit their projects before the final due date. Revisiting work or making corrections allowed students to learn from their mistakes and gain an understanding of what needed improvement. Also, it enabled them to gain new insight during the learning and assessment process.

Peer evaluations were another strategy used in the classroom that went beyond Pacing Guide. Each participant had an opportunity to go around and give their opinion about their group’s and members’ performance. They used criteria from a rubric to give feedback such as strengths and weaknesses; suggestions and recommendations. This evaluation was a good way for students to receive feedback from their peers about their work. It also cultivated relationships and a way to foster mutual respect and trust for others. They had to learn how to listen and receive information from others. Peer evaluation encouraged active participation and collaboration among students in the classroom. Such evaluations also support active participation among the students while they self-direct their own learning and evaluation process. The teacher played more of a
facilitator’s role observing the class interact with one another. He was able to observe students’ knowledge.

Another strategy used in the classroom that went beyond the Pacing Guide was engagement. The radio play project required students to be highly engaged in the learning process. The classroom setting was often noisy as the participants read their scripts and dialogued with their peers. Students were seen researching on the computers, exchanging information, writing scripts, listening to music, tape recording, etc. The learning process was student led as they worked with their peers on this project. Therefore, the overall tone of the classroom was busy; there was a lot of interaction taking place among students.

Reflecting was another strategy used in the classroom that went beyond the Pacing Guide. These participants actively listened to each groups’ radio play projects that the teacher played in class. After they listened intently, the teacher led oral discussions about what they heard. They were able to reflect on each groups’ radio play. The teacher would lead the discussions by asking questions to be answered. When an evaluation was given on a project they had to explain why that score was specified. Students orally shared information about the radio plays and made suggestions; what could have been done differently. Sometimes group members responded to the comments that were made about their project. They used a rubric one through four (four being the highest) evaluating the following components: quality of work, time management, problem-solving, working with others, and pride to evaluate the projects. Reflecting is a great strategy that allows students to play an active role in their own learning and evaluation.
process. It gives them an opportunity to think about what they did or did not and how they can improve. It also brings clarification to areas of uncertainty or sheds light on the unknown.

As the study moved forward, the fourth research question examined how teachers chose to use authentic assessment and were there any advantages or disadvantages. I identified three major categories that showed how authentic assessment was implemented by a teacher: receiving feedback, creating projects, and collaboration.

I observed an advantage to using authentic assessment when participants received feedback from their radio play projects. I heard conversations as students engaged in discussions and obtained feedback from their peers. The teacher moved around the classroom from one group to the next discussion the results with students as well. Receiving feedback was a great way to enhance the learning and evaluation process. It allowed all students to be active learners and evaluators. They had to listen to the comments that were made by their teacher and peers. If students had any questions or comments they were able to make them as well. Any comments or information the participants wanted to share with others they were encouraged to do so. Giving and receiving feedback also encouraged all students to value and respect one another as they obtained valuable comments or advice from their peers.

Another advantage I witnessed was how the teacher chose to use authentic assessment was when students created projects. During most of my observations I saw the participants creating projects, writing pieces, or language expressions. Creating projects brought life and excitement to the learning and evaluation process. The learning
and evaluation process was all hands-on. It enabled students to play an active role in the classroom. I observed students singing and laughing while they worked diligently on their projects. The class atmosphere was full of energy and enthusiasm towards learning. When participants were creating they were able to use their full talents and abilities too. Learning was not limited. They were able to be flexible and adventurous while learning.

In addition, collaboration was another advantage to using authentic assessment. Participants were able to work collectively with their peers to enhance their learning process. I saw participants working with their peers on various activities within the class setting. They were able to exchange information and ideas with one another. Collaboration encouraged participants to develop relationships with their peers, strengthen their communication skills, and share knowledge with others. It fostered student led learning and evaluations too. Cooperatively group members had to learn how to interact and get along with one another. Everyone was viewed as equally important when collaborating.

Finally, the fifth research question examined how leadership played an important role in the implementation of authentic assessment. They used authentic assessment to support standardized tests and they found a balance for using both forms of evaluation. I observed the teacher using authentic assessment to support traditional ways of testing. The teacher taught higher level thinking skills which is explicable to all forms of assessment.

Leadership was critical in balancing the use of authentic and standardized assessment in the classroom. Even though the teacher was required to teach certain skills
to prepare the students for standardized evaluations (such as quarterly assessments and the Ohio Achievement Assessment) he still integrated authentic activities and assessment within the classroom to support traditional forms of evaluation. Various rubrics were used in this classroom to evaluate students’ activities. The teacher used rubrics for grading students’ work authentically. The teacher established the criteria up front so students know exactly what the evaluation process will entail. This allowed the students and teachers to work together evaluating activities.

Leadership also found a balance using both forms of evaluation; standardized and authentic assessments. Even though standardized tests are required by the school district and the state, authentic forms were also used to complement traditional evaluations. The lower level cognitive skills were not the only ones taught or emphasized. Quarterly assessments were conducted in addition to authentic forms. Students were able to evaluate their own work collectively with the teacher using established criteria from a rubric. So students used higher cognitive skills when they evaluated their own work or their peers. However, they were also familiar with the quarterly standardized tests that were given. I knew how to take paper and pencil tests as well. So leadership knew how to balance and administer both forms of assessments at this urban middle school.

Implications for Theory

In this study I chose a constructivist theoretical framework to investigate and understand the lived experiences of urban middle school students who are being evaluated authentically and how it influenced their academic growth. Three constructivist theorists John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vgotsky were utilized to capture and
conceptualize the multifaceted and rich relational experiences that the participants developed in their classroom setting. All theorists supported the constructivist framework for authentic assessment. They believed learning takes place through exploration in a real-life setting while knowledge is constructed through engagement.

For this study, the constructivist theoretical framework emphasized elements that captured the participants’ lives. The participants were engaged in their class assignments by collaborating, creating, dialoguing, and evaluating their own work. They were seen initiating their own learning by using critical thinking skills to connect prior knowledge with new information to problem-solve and make decisions. They were responsible for their own learning and evaluation process using this framework.

I believe this study benefits policy makers, teachers, students, administrators, and parents. Using authentic forms of assessment is a great way to measure students’ academic growth and it provides a more accurate picture of what they know. Students’ knowledge can easily be seen by observing their work or their performances. It also allows for them to explain or justify what they know. Authentic assessment promotes critical thinking skills too. Students are able to participate in the evaluation process too; it provides them with an opportunity to assess their own work.

Policy makers can benefit from the use of authentic forms of assessment. This form of assessment measures the true ability of students and provides an alternative way to evaluate knowledge. They can easily observe what students know through the use of projects, public performances, journals, or exhibits. Their knowledge can also be tracked over a period of time by using portfolios and students can explain what they know. Policy
makers would not have to form assumptions about what students actually know; their portfolios, journals, or exhibits can speak for itself. They will be able to visibly see a collection of what students know. What students produce will provide clear evidence and will measure their true ability. Therefore, policy makers will get a clear, true assessment of students which standardized tests cannot provide.

Authentic assessment provides a great option for teachers to implement in the classroom. Besides using traditional forms of testing teachers can measure students’ academic progress by allowing them to show what they know in a real-life setting. This form of assessment brings creativity and flexibility to the classroom. Authentic forms of assessments allow teachers to be creative with their measurement tools and it provides a comprehensive picture of students’ knowledge. They can create criteria and set up rubrics for evaluating various projects, presentations, journals, etc. to measure what students know or don’t. It provides an opportunity for students to defend or justify what they know too. Therefore, authentic assessment allows the teacher and students to collaborate together. The teacher’s role shifts when this form of assessment is put into place in the classroom and the students become the teacher. Teachers take on a more passive role or facilitator while the students become actively engaged in this evaluation process. When teachers give students an assignment or project a rubric with criteria is given to them to use so they can self-evaluate themselves; the teacher lets the students know upfront what is expected of them. There are no surprises to this form of assessment. Using authentic assessment encourages the teacher to allow students to construct projects, exhibits, or present what they know. It allows students to play an active role in the classroom. So
teachers are able to become more innovative in their lessons and evaluating their students. This also allowed them to view their students’ knowledge in a multifarious way. Pencil and paper tests are not the only way for them to measure what their students know.

Students definitely benefit from authentic forms of assessment. This evaluation process allows them to demonstrate what they know versus pencil and paper exams. Authentic forms of assessment permits students to play a part in the actual evaluation process. They are able to work collaboratively with their teachers to assess what they know. Using a rubric with criteria, students can go through each component and evaluate what they know. They become actively involved in the assessment process as they evaluate their work or their peers. They are able to use critical thinking skills using this authentic assessment unlike most traditional forms of assessment. Furthermore, evaluation is the highest level of cognition. Authentic forms of assessment also enable students to put theory into practice. They can tie their real-life experiences into their assignments. This is beneficial because they learn how to integrate prior and new knowledge. Also, when students engage in real-life learning and evaluation it teaches them how to problem solve. Problem-solving is an essential skill that is promoted during authentic forms of assessment. It allows students to develop skills for higher education and the work force which would prepare them for the real-world. I think using authentic assessment also brings creativity to class assignments and the evaluation process. Students are no longer limited to worksheet or textbook activities but are encouraged to create, present, or exhibit what they know. Such assignments bring excitement and creativity to the classroom as they construct knowledge. Students are able and
encouraged to direct their own learning with such assignments too as they actively participate in the learning process. Collaboration is promoted too. They learn how to work with their peers collaboratively exchanging information, researching, dialoguing, and evaluating one another. This usually brings excitement to the classroom and relationships are fostered when students are able to work with their peers. Students no longer sit passively by but rather play an active role in the learning process. Therefore, real life assignments promote the use of authentic forms of evaluation. As students are allowed to design exhibits, generate projects, or conduct presentations about what they know the evaluation process changes. They no longer partake in pencil and paper forms of assessments but rather alternative forms of evaluation are fostered too. They are able to learn how to self-evaluate their own work using authentic assessment.

Parents can benefit when teachers use authentic forms of assessment in their classrooms. Often parents do not understand the scores or information that they receive about their kid’s performance on standardized tests. I believe standardized tests results often do not bring clarity or provide a clear picture for parents about what their child know. They are often left with questions or in a state of confusion. Therefore, when schools implement authentic assessment parents can witness their child’s knowledge and growth. They can observe their child’s projects, journals, portfolios, presentations, etc. to witness what they know. Using authentic forms of assessment is an ongoing process too. So parents can view overtime how the child has improved; they can observe their strengths and weaknesses. Since authentic assessment provides immediate feedback with criteria from a rubric parents can know how their child is performing in the classroom.
The feedback from the rubric is clear, concise providing detail information about the child’s performance. It is an easy tool that parents can read and understand. It also promotes ongoing communication between the teacher, student, and parent. A rubric is a great tool that informs parents about their child’s academic growth in a comprehensive way.

I believe administrators or school leadership can benefit from the use of authentic assessment. Authentic assessment can be used in conjunction with traditional forms of evaluation. Since standardized tests only provide school leadership with a snapshot of what their students know, using authentic forms of assessment can be used simultaneously so a more complete picture of their knowledge can be seen. Implementing authentic assessment will allow school leadership to see how their students are performing and how they are progressing academically. They can observe students’ work continuously to see what they know or do not. Authentic forms of assessment allow students to explain, defend, or justify what they know. This form of evaluation fosters higher level thinking skills. This is beneficial and the goal for leadership; to produce students with real-life skills and abilities so their students can be productive in the workforce. Using authentic forms of assessments moves away from conducting low level thinking skills and promotes the use of critical thinking skills. Also, authentic assessment allows school leadership to conduct informal conversations with their students about what they produced. These discussions are a great way for leadership to foster communication with their students about their academic performance on projects or presentations. Students can easily share with leadership what they produced on their
project or exhibit. This is a great assessment tool that encourages relationships to be established between leadership and the students. As the students and leadership engage in conversation about what they constructed they begin to cultivate a sense of trust, respect, and a relationship is cultivated. This is important in order to sustain a healthy school climate and academic success for all students. Using authentic assessment can also encourage leadership to tap into community resources. Since students are engaging in real-life assignments or projects leadership can form partnerships with outside organizations. These partnerships can allow students to assist with community projects or help solve a problem. This would provide a great opportunity for leadership and students to develop and put to use their skills, abilities, or talents.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

For future research, one may look at what conditions will need to be put in place to ensure that authentic forms of assessment retain their theoretical integrity when implemented into practice. This study could show educators and policy makers how to use authentic assessments without compromising or losing the honesty of this evaluation process. It could reveal some practical precautions to take during the implementation process.

Since the participants of this study were primarily girls, future research may investigate how authentic assessment strategies would work for boys. The study could reveal some realistic ways to measure boys’ knowledge in real-life settings while highlighting the advantages and disadvantages.
The American school system is moving towards a national curriculum, with the implementation of Common Core Standards going into effect in 2014. This new curriculum would involve a performance piece. Therefore, future research may look at effective ways to integrate authentic assessment with Common Core Standards.

Conclusion

I embarked on this research journey to understand how urban middle school students are being evaluated using authentic forms of assessment and how it affects their academic growth. Conducting this phenomenological case study allowed me to gain a thoroughly comprehension picture of how teachers can use alternative approaches for evaluating students’ knowledge while integrating standardized assessments. Throughout this journey, I was able to witness the lived experiences of the participants who partook in this study.
References


DePascale, C. A. (2011). Salvaging race to the top assessment: When it comes to race to the top there's much more than testing. *Education Week, 30*(37).


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Appendix A: Bloom’s Taxonomy

Bloom’s Taxonomy (Revised)

- Create
- Evaluate
- Analyze
- Apply
- Understand – Describe, Explain
- Knowledge - Remember

Based on an APA adaptation of Anderson, L.W. & Krathwohl, D.R. (Eds.) (2001)
# Appendix B: Radio Play Rubric

## RADIO PLAY

**GROUP MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Work</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides work of the highest quality.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provides high-quality work.</td>
<td>Provides work that occasionally needs to be checked/reviewed by other group members to ensure quality.</td>
<td>Provides work that usually needs to be checked/reviewed by group members to ensure quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time-management</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routinely uses time well throughout the project to ensure that things get done on time.</td>
<td>Usually uses time well throughout the project, but may have procrastinated on one thing.</td>
<td>Tends to procrastinate, but always gets things done by the deadlines.</td>
<td>Rarely gets things done by the deadlines and the group has to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities of other persons because of this person’s procrastination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem-solving</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively looks for and suggests solutions to problems.</td>
<td>Flexibly suggests solutions without rigidity.</td>
<td>Does not suggest or define solutions, but is willing to try out solutions suggested by others.</td>
<td>Does not try to solve problems or help others solve problems by doing the work.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working with Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively listens to and supports the efforts of others.</td>
<td>Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others.</td>
<td>Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others.</td>
<td>Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pride</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work reflects this student’s best efforts.</td>
<td>Work reflects a strong effort from this student.</td>
<td>Work reflects some effort from this student.</td>
<td>Work reflects very little effort on the part of this student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Date Created: May 14, 2012 12:58 pm (UTC)

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## Appendix B (1): Radio Play Performance Evaluation Rubric

### DRAMATIC ARTS

#### RADIO PLAY PERFORMANCE EVALUATION RUBRIC

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<th>Name(s):</th>
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<th>Below Level (0-29%)</th>
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<th>Level 3 (80-99%)</th>
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<td>Genre/Terminology</td>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>to a minimal degree</td>
<td>to a moderate degree</td>
<td>to a considerable degree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rehearsals/Group Dynamics</td>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>to a minimal degree</td>
<td>to a moderate degree</td>
<td>to a considerable degree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consideration</td>
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<td>to a moderate degree</td>
<td>to a considerable degree</td>
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<td>Ensemble Skills/Rehearsal Skills</td>
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<td>to a moderate degree</td>
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<td>Vocal Technique</td>
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<td>to a moderate degree</td>
<td>to a considerable degree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plot Structure</td>
<td>not at all</td>
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**Comments:**
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Appendix C: Writing Rubric
## Appendix D: Teacher’s Binder Rubric

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<th>Teacher Role</th>
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<td><strong>Creating</strong></td>
<td><strong>Active participant</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates Extends Reflects Analyses Evaluates</td>
<td>Designs Formulates Plans Takes risks Modifies Creates Proposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifies Accepts Guides</td>
<td>Judges Disputes Compares Critiques Questions Argues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probes Guides Observes Evaluates Acts as a resource Questions Organizes Dissects</td>
<td>Discusses Uncovers Argues Debates Thinks deeply Tests Examines Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows Facilitates Observes Evaluates Organized Questions</td>
<td>Solves problems Constructs Calculates Compiles Demonstrates use of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates Listens Questions Compares Contrasts Examines</td>
<td>Explains Describes Outlines Restates Translates Demonstrates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applying</strong></td>
<td><strong>Active recipient</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interprets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remembering</strong></td>
<td><strong>Passive recipient</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directs Tells Shows Examines Questions Evaluates</td>
<td>Responds Absorbs Remembers Recognizes Memories Defines Describes Retells</td>
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Appendix E: Analysis of Pacing Guide

2011-2012 8th Grade Reading Pacing Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4th Qtr Assessments</th>
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</table>

K=Knowledge, C=Comprehension, AP=Application, AN=Analysis, S=Synthesis, E=Evaluation
# 2011-2012 8th Grade Reading Pacing Guide

<table>
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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Week 7</th>
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### Reading Applications: Literary Text

| D | E | F |

### Acquisition of Vocabulary

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### Reading Applications: Informational

| A |

### Reading Applications: Literary Texts

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### Writing Applications

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### Writing Conventions

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### Communication: Oral/Visual

| E |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| D | X | X |   |   |
| F |   | X | X |   |

---

K=Knowledge, C=Comprehension, AP=Application, AN=Analysis, S=Synthesis, E=Evaluation
### 2011-2012 8th Grade Reading Pacing Guide

#### Strategies/Self-Monitoring
- **A**
  - Week 5: K
  - Week 6: C
  - Week 7: A
  - Week 8: P

#### Reading Process
- **A**
  - Week 5: A
  - Week 6: C
  - Week 7: A
  - Week 8: A

- **C**
  - Week 5: P
  - Week 6: E
  - Week 7: K
  - Week 8: S

#### Writing Processes
- **B**
  - Week 5: B
  - Week 6: C
  - Week 7: B
  - Week 8: B

- **C**
  - Week 5: C
  - Week 6: C
  - Week 7: C
  - Week 8: C

- **D**
  - Week 5: D
  - Week 6: D
  - Week 7: D
  - Week 8: D

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**K=Knowledge, C=Comprehension, AP=Application, AN=Analysis, S=Synthesis, E=Evaluation**
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K=Knowledge, C=Comprehension, AP=Application, AN=Analysis, S=Synthesis, E=Evaluation
## Appendix F: Pacing Guide

### COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS
**READING GRADE 8**
**2011 - 2012 PACING GUIDE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unit/Topics</th>
<th>Periods</th>
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<th>Textbook/Supplemental Materials</th>
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<td>Unit 5</td>
<td><strong>The Big Question:</strong></td>
<td>Week 1 Periods:</td>
<td>Reading Applications:</td>
<td>Textbook (hard copy or e-book)</td>
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<td><em>Is it our differences or our similarities that matter most?</em></td>
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<td>Literary Text</td>
<td>Literature: Language and Literacy <a href="http://www.pearsonsuccessnet.com">www.pearsonsuccessnet.com</a></td>
<td>Literature/Informational Text</td>
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<td>Model Selection:</td>
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<td><em>from &quot;Anne Frank and Me&quot;</em></td>
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<td><em>Introduction: Drama pp. 804-805</em></td>
<td><em>Critical Thinking</em></td>
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<td><em>Learning About Drama pp. 806-807</em></td>
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<td><em>Big Question Lyrics p. vii</em></td>
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<td>*Graphic Organizers: After You Read A &amp; B pp. 148-148</td>
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<td>*Series of Events p. 219</td>
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Professional Development Guidebook
The Big Question:
To be or not to be; that is the question.

Selection:
"The Diary of Anne Frank, Act 1"

Week 1 Period 3:
Acquisition of Vocabulary
A. Apply knowledge of roots and affixes to determine the meaning of new vocabulary.

Week 2 Period 3:
Acquisition of Vocabulary
E. Apply knowledge of roots and affixes to determine the meaning of new vocabulary.

Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text
A. Evaluate how features and characteristics make information accessible and usable and how structures help authors achieve their purposes.

362 Answer literal, inferential, evaluative, and synthesizing questions to demonstrate comprehension of grade-appropriate print text and electronic and visual media.

Reading Applications: Literary Text
F. Identify and analyze how an author uses figurative language, sound devices,

Textbook (hard copy or eBook)
Literature: Language and Literacy
www.peachsonassess.com

- Time and Resource
  - Manager: p. 84-85
  - Before You Read pp. 848-849
  - Cause and Effect Conversations: Chart Dialogue
  - Making Connections p. 852
  - Meet the Author: p. 853
  - "The Diary of Anne Frank, Act 1" pp. 854-912
  - After You Read: p. 913
  - Cause and Effect Dialogue
  - Integrated Language Skills pp. 914-915

Unit 5 Resources pp. 73-80
- Skills Concept Map 2 p. 69
- Vocabulary and Reading Warm-ups pp. 70-73

Reading
- Literature/Informational Text
  - Reading Warm-ups
  - Guided or Independent Reading
  - Dialogue Analysis
  - Cause and Effect
  - Critical Thinking Questions

Writing
- Building
- Write about the Big Question
- Diary Entries

Speaking and Listening
- Class Discussion
- Think Aloud
- Guided Tour

Open-Book Test
Self-Test

Vocabulary: Knowledge Chart p. 33
KWL Chart p. 35

Write Source eEdition
https://secure.poedsource.com/secure/services/admin/gLogin.do
- Dialogue p. 116

Technology
Interactive Digital Pathways
- Big Question Video
- Drama Video
- Get Connected Video
- Vocabulary Central
- Illustrated Vocabulary Words
- Interactive Vocabulary Games
- EQ Tunes
- Meet the Author Video
- Interactive Journals
- Selection Audio
- Self-Test
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<td>- Greek, Latin and Anglo-Saxon roots, prefixes, and suffixes</td>
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<td>- Informal writing</td>
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<td>- Informational presentation</td>
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<td>- and literary techniques to shape plot, set</td>
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<td>- meaning, and develop tone.</td>
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<td>- 508: Explain ways in which the author conveys mood and tone through word choice, figurative language, and syntax.</td>
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<td>- E. Write a persuasive piece that states a clear position, includes relevant information and offers compelling evidence in the form of facts and details.</td>
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<td>- 766: Produce informal writings (e.g., journals, notes and poems) for various purposes.</td>
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<td>- C. Demonstrate understanding of the grammatical conventions in the English language.</td>
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<td>- 160: Use proper placement of modifiers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Communication: Oral and Visual</td>
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<tr>
<td>- E. Give informational presentations that present ideas in a logical sequence, include relevant facts and details from multiple sources and use a consistent organizational structure.</td>
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<td>- 1068: Deliver informational presentations (e.g., expository, research) that:</td>
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<td>- use appropriate visual materials (e.g., diagrams, charts, illustrations) and available technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Writing about the Big Question: p. 74</td>
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<td>- Reading: Using Background Information to Link Historical Causes with Effects: p. 75</td>
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<td>- Literary Analysis: Dialogue: p. 76</td>
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<td>- Vocabulary Builder: p. 77</td>
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<td>- Unictarian: Designing a Memorial: p. 78</td>
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<td>- Grammar: p. 79</td>
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<td>- Support for Writing: p. 80</td>
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<td>- Open-Book Test: p. 82</td>
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<td>- Selection Test A: p. 83</td>
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<td><strong>Graphic Organizers and Fillers:</strong></td>
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<td>- Bellringers: Weeks 27 and 28</td>
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<td>- Before You Read: A &amp; B: pp. 158–159</td>
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<td>- After You Read: A &amp; B: pp. 166–167</td>
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<td>- Series of Events: p. 219</td>
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<td>- Timeline: p. 222</td>
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<td>- Venn Diagram: p. 224</td>
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<td>- Word Web: p. 225</td>
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<td>- Vocabulary Knowledge Chart: p. 33</td>
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<td>- Anticipation Guide: p. 38</td>
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<td>- KWL Chart: pp. 74–75</td>
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<td>- Word Form Chart: p. 42</td>
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**Write Source / eEdition**

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- Diaries: p. 434
- Modifiers: pp. 43, 185, 507, 561, 694.3

**Technology**

**Interactive Digital Pathway**

- Big Question Video
- Get Connected Video
- Background Video
- Vocabulary Central
- Reading Skill
- Literacy Analytics
- Illustrated Vocabulary Words

**Language**

- Vocabulary Warm-Ups
- Word Study
- Dialogue
- Modifiers
- Vocabulary Central
- Vocabulary
- Metac
- Games
- Worksheets

**Assessments**

- Selection Test A
- Selection Test B
- Open-Book Test
- Self-Paced
- Essay Scorer
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<th>Textbook (hard copy or eBook)</th>
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<td>E. Apply knowledge of roots and affixes to determine the meaning of new vocabulary.</td>
<td><strong>Literature: Language and Literary <a href="http://www.penguinacademic.com">www.penguinacademic.com</a></strong></td>
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<td><strong>Writing Text Form:</strong> Persuasive: Script for an Advertisement</td>
<td>286 Use knowledge of Greek, Latin and Anglo-Saxon roots, prefixes, and suffixes to understand complex words and subject-area vocabulary (e.g., unknown words in science, mathematics, and social studies).</td>
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<td><strong>Skills:</strong> Greek, Latin and Anglo-Saxon roots, prefixes, and suffixes</td>
<td>A. Analyze structure and characteristics that make information accessible and usable and how these structures help authors achieve their purposes.</td>
<td>* Guided or Independent Reading</td>
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<td>B. Answer literal, inferential, evaluative, and synthesizing questions to demonstrate comprehension of grade-appropriate print text and visual media.</td>
<td>* Critical Thinking Questions</td>
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<td>Reading Applications: Literary Text</td>
<td>* Character Motivation</td>
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<td>A. Analyze interactions between characters as literary text and how the interactions affect the plot.</td>
<td>* Cause and Effect</td>
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<td>501 Identify and explain various types of characters and how their interactions and conflicts affect the plot.</td>
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<td><strong>Unit 3 Resources pp. 91-111</strong></td>
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<td>E. Write a persuasive piece that states a clear position, includes relevant information and offers compelling evidence in the form of facts and details.</td>
<td>* Vocabulary and Reading Warm-ups p. 91-94</td>
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<td>705 Write persuasive compositions that:</td>
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<td>* Interactive Vocabulary Games</td>
<td>* Writing about the Big Question p. 95</td>
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<td>* EQTunes</td>
<td>* Reading: Ask Questions to Analyze Cause-and-Effect Relationships p. 96</td>
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<td>* Meet the Author Video</td>
<td>* Literary Analysis: Character Motivation p. 97</td>
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<td>* Skill Questions</td>
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<td>* Grammar Practice</td>
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<td>* Selection Audio</td>
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<td>Establish and develop a controlling idea.</td>
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<td>C. Demonstrate understanding of the grammatical conventions of the English language.</td>
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<td>B. Use clauses (e.g., main, subordinate) and phrases (e.g., gerund, infinitive, participial).</td>
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<td>B. Evaluate the usefulness and credibility of sources.</td>
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<td>902 Identify appropriate sources and gather relevant information from multiple sources (e.g., school library catalogs, online databases, electronic resources and Internet-based resources).</td>
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### Selection Test A (p. 106)
- Selection Test B (p. 109)

### Graphic Organizers and Bellringers
- Bellringers Weeks 28 and 29
- Before You Read A & B pp. 162-163
- After You Read A & B pp. 164-165

### Professional Development Guidebook
- Vocabulary Knowledge Chart p. 33
- Anticipation Guide pp. 36-38
- KWL Chart pp. 74 – 75
- Word Form Chart p. 42

### Write Source eEdition
- Dependent Clauses pp. 498, 503, 517, 698.3
- Subordinate Clauses p. 563
- Independent Clauses pp. 498, 503, 515, 536, 517, 594.1, 698.2
- Oral Presentation pp. 422–430
- Cause and Effect p. 548
- Primary vs. Secondary Sources p. 364
- Persuasive Writing pp. 219–221

### Technology

#### Interactive Digital Pathway
- Big Question Video
- Get Connected Video
- Reading Skill
- Literary Analysis
- Vocabulary Central
- Grammar Tutorial
- Grammar Practice
- Illustrated Vocabulary Words
- Interactive Vocabulary Games
- QR Tunes
- Meet the Author Video
- Interactive Journals
- Selection Audio
- Self-Test

**Assessments**
- Selection Test A
- Selection Test B
- Open-Book Test
- Self-Test
| The Big Question: Is it one difference or one similarity that matters most? | Week 4 Periodic 2 | Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text A. Evaluate how features and characteristics make information accessible and usable and how structure help readers achieve their purpose. 402 Identify and use organizational structure of a text, such as chronological, compare-contrast, cause-effect, problem-solution, and characters by using sensory details and concrete language. 403 Compare and contrast the treatment, scope, and organization of ideas from different sources on the same topic. 409 Distinguish the characteristics of consumer materials (e.g., job-related, manuals, instructions) and public documents (e.g., speeches or newspaper editorials). | Textbook (hard copy or eBook) Literature: Language and Literacy www.penguinincsource.com  Informational Texts p. 962  Florida Holocaust Museum pp. 963-964  “Local Holocaust Survivors and Liberators Attend Opening Event for Exhibition” pp. 965-966  Test Practice: Informational Texts p. 967  Comparing Informational Texts Timed Writing  Graphic Organizers and Bellringers  Bellringers Week 30  Professional Development Guidebook:  Word Form Chart p. 42  Write Source /eEdition https://secure.pearsonsource.com/eservicesadmin/eLogin .jhtml  Use Comparison-Contrast Order p. 537  Creating Unity in Writing p. 538  Develop Coherence p. 539  Technology Interactive Digital Pathway:  Web Sites and Press Releases | Reading/Literature/Informational Text  Guided or Independent  Reading  Comparing Informational Texts  Writing  Compare and Contrast Paragraph  Timed Writing  Evaluation  Speaking and Listening  Class Discussion  Think Aloud  Language  Word Forms  Vocabulary Development  Vocabulary Central  Vocabulary  Music  Games  Worksheets  Assessments  Comparing Informational Texts (Teacher Edition)  Timed Writing Guidelines (Teacher Edition) |

| The Big Question: Is it one difference or one similarity that matters most? | Week 4 Periodic 3 | Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text A. Evaluate how features and characteristics make information accessible and usable and how structure | Textbook (hard copy or eBook) Literature: Language and Literacy www.penguinincsource.com  Comparing Literary Works p. 968  Meet the Authors p. 969 | Reading/Literature/Informational Text  Reading Warm-ups  Guided or |

Grade 8  Page 6 of 20  Columbus City Schools — 07/23/2011
help authors achieve their purpose.

403 Compare and contrast the treatment, source and organization of ideas from different sources on the same topic.

Writing Applications

B. Write responses to literature that extend beyond the summary and support references to the text, other works, other authors or personal knowledge.

702 Write responses to literature that organize an insightful interpretation around several clear ideas, premises or images, and support judgments with specific references to the original text, to other texts, authors and to prior knowledge.

Communication: Oral and Visual

E. Give informative presentations.

1088 Deliver informative presentations that:

c. include an effective introduction and conclusion and use a consistent organizational structure.

- from "Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl" pp. 970-971
- from "Anne Frank Remembered" pp. 973-980
- After You Read p. 981
- Comparing Sources with a Dramatization Writing to Compare Literary Works Applying the Big Question pp. 994-995
- Talk About It p. 995
- OAT Practice: Literary Skills pp. 1000-1005

Unit 5 Resources pp. 112-113

- Vocabulary and Reading Warm-up p. 112
- Writing about the Big Question p. 116
- Literary Analysis: Comparing a Primary Source with a Dramatization p. 117
- Vocabulary Builder p. 118
- Support for Writing in Compare Literary Works p. 119
- Open-Book Test p. 120
- Selection Test A p. 123
- Selection Test B p. 126

Graphic Organizers and Bellringers
- Bellringer Week 50
- Comparing Primary and Secondary Sources with a Dramatization A p. 166
- Comparing Primary and Secondary Sources with a Dramatization B p. 167
- After You Read A p. 164
- After You Read B p. 169

Professional Development Guidebook
- Vocabulary Knowledge Chart p. 33
- Word Form Chart p. 42
- KWL Chart pp. 74-75

Write Source eEdition
www.write-source.com/loginacademic/ehands/lls
- Comparison - Content Essay pp. 199-204
- Comparisons - Content Chart p. 667
- Use Comparison - Content Order p. 537

Independent Reading
- Comparing Literary Works
- Comparing Sources
- Critical Thinking Questions

Writing
- Writing about the Big Question
- Writing to Compare Literary Works

Speaking and Listening
- Class Discussion
- Think Aloud
- Pair-Share Interview

Language
- Vocabulary Warm-up

Vocabulary Central
- Vocabulary
- Music
- Games
- Worksheets

Assessments
- Open-Book Test
- Selection Test A
- Selection Test B
- Self-test
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 4</th>
<th>Reading Applications: Literary Text</th>
<th>Textbook (hard copy or eBook)</th>
<th>Reading Literature/Informational Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Big Question: are yesterday’s heroes important today?</td>
<td>D. Identify similar recurring themes across different works.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mcgrawhill.com">www.mcgrawhill.com</a></td>
<td>Reading Warm-ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Selection: “Water Names”</td>
<td>588 Identify and explain universal themes across different works by the same author and different authors.</td>
<td>Introduction: Themes in American Stories pp. 1010–1013</td>
<td>Guided or Independent Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standards: Reading Application: Literary Text</td>
<td>F. Identify and analyze how an author uses figurative language, sound devices, and literary techniques to shape plot, set mood, and develop tone.</td>
<td>Meet the Author p. 1011</td>
<td>Critical Thinking Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills: * Figurative language</td>
<td>G. Explore ways in which the author conveys mood and tone through word choice, figurative language, and syntax.</td>
<td>Learning About Themes in American Stories p. 1012</td>
<td>Storytelling/Oral Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Genre</td>
<td>* Theme</td>
<td>* Model Selection: Author p. 1014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Informal presentation</td>
<td>1008 Deliver informational presentations that:</td>
<td>After You Read p. 1021</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a. include an effective introduction and conclusion and use a consistent organizational structure.</td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
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**Unit 5 Resources**

- BO Times Lyric p. vii
- Big Question Vocabulary pp. 1-3
- Applying the Big Question p. 4
- Concept Map p. 5
- Vocabulary and Reading Warm-ups p. 7
- Listening and Viewing p. 11
- Learning About Themes in American Stories p. 12
- Model Selection p. 13
- Open-Book Test p. 14
- Selection Test A p. 17

**Reading Literature/Informational Text**

- Reading Warm-ups
- Guided or Independent Reading
- Critical Thinking Questions
- Storytelling/Oral Tradition

**Writing**

- Writing About the Big Question
- Writing to Review Themes

**Speaking and Listening**

- Class Discussion
- Think Aloud

**Language**

- Vocabulary Warm-ups
- Vocabulary
<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Big Question: Are yesterday's heroes important today?</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Page 9 of 20</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selections: &quot;Coyote Steals the Sun and Moon&quot; (1780s), OR &quot;Why the Waves Have Whitecaps&quot; (1885).</td>
<td>Winter, Summer, and Spring (1885).</td>
<td>Columbus City Schools – 07/27/2011</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Page 9 of 20</th>
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<tr>
<td>Textbook (hard copy or eBook): Literature: Language and Literacy <a href="http://www.glencoe.com/ccc/courses4">www.glencoe.com/ccc/courses4</a></td>
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<th>Reading</th>
<th>Literature/Informational Text</th>
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<tr>
<td>Time and Resource</td>
<td>Reading Warm-up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager pp. 1022A-1022D</td>
<td>Skills Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before You Read pp. 1022-1023</td>
<td>Guided or Independent Reading</td>
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<td>Mythology</td>
<td>Critical Thinking Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Connections Chart</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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<td>Making Connections p. 1024 OR 1030</td>
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<td>Meet the Authors p. 1025 OR 1031</td>
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<th>Games</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
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<td>Worksheets</td>
<td>Open-Book Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selection Test A</td>
<td>Selection Test B</td>
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<td>Self-test</td>
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### Grade 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies and Self-Monitoring Skills</th>
<th>Reading Applications: Literary Text</th>
<th>Writing Applications: Writing Conventions</th>
<th>Communication: Oral and Visual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative: Myth</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leveled Readers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creative Writing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Oral presentation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Apply reading comprehension strategies to understand grade-appropriate text.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apply reading comprehension strategies to understand grade-appropriate text.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apply reading comprehension strategies to understand grade-appropriate text.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apply reading comprehension strategies to understand grade-appropriate text.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B. Identify and explain universal themes across different works.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify and explain universal themes across different works.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify and explain universal themes across different works.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify and explain universal themes across different works.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C. Demonstrate understanding of the grammatical conventions of the English language.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Demonstrate understanding of the grammatical conventions of the English language.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Demonstrate understanding of the grammatical conventions of the English language.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Demonstrate understanding of the grammatical conventions of the English language.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D. Write narratives that sustain reader interest by using sensory detail and concrete language.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Write narratives that sustain reader interest by using sensory detail and concrete language.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Write narratives that sustain reader interest by using sensory detail and concrete language.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Write narratives that sustain reader interest by using sensory detail and concrete language.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>E. Give informational presentations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Give informational presentations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Give informational presentations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Give informational presentations.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F. Use appropriate visual materials and available technology.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use appropriate visual materials and available technology.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use appropriate visual materials and available technology.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use appropriate visual materials and available technology.</strong></td>
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### Unit 6 Resources pp. 7-27
- **Vocabulary and Reading Warm-ups:** p. 23 OR 41
- **Writing about the Big Question:** p. 27 OR 45
- **Reading: Create a Summary:** p. 28 OR 46
- **Literacy Analysis: Myth:** p. 29 OR 47
- **Vocabulary Builder:** p. 30 OR 48
- **Enrichment: Coyote the Trickster:** p. 31
- **Enrichment:** p. 40
- **Grammar:** p. 50
- **Support for Writing:** p. 51
- **Listening and Speaking:** p. 53
- **Open-Book Test:** p. 32 OR 53
- **Selection Test A:** p. 35 OR 56
- **Selection Test B:** p. 38 OR 58

### Graphic Organizers and Bellringers
- **Bellringers Week 1:** p. 171
- **Before You Read A: Themes:** p. 172
- **Before You Read B: Literary Analysis:** p. 173
- **Before You Read B: Myth:** p. 175
- **After You Read: Summarizing:** p. 176 OR 177
- **After You Read B: Summarizing:** p. 177 OR 179

### Professional Development Guidebook
- **Vocabulary Knowledge Chart:** p. 33
- **Self-Assessment: Short Story:** pp. 226 - 227

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Periods: 5</th>
<th>Acquisition of Vocabulary</th>
<th>Textbook (hard copy or eBook)</th>
<th>Reading/Literature/Informational Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E. Apply knowledge of roots and affixes to determine the meaning of new vocabulary.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.neuroscienceunit.com">www.neuroscienceunit.com</a></td>
<td>Reading Warm-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2B6 Use knowledge of Greek, Latin and Anglo-Saxon roots, prefixes, and suffixes to understand complex words and subject-specific vocabulary (e.g., mathematics, science).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skills Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Process: Concepts of Print, Comprehension Strategies and Self-Monitoring Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guided or Independent Reading</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>A. Apply reading comprehension strategies to understand grade-appropriate text.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Thinking Questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2B1 Apply reading comprehension strategies including making predictions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Figurative Language</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2B2 Pre-Read pp. 1038-1039 Summary.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summarize</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2B3 Before You Read pp. 1040 OR 1050</td>
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<td>Oral Tradition</td>
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<td>2B5 After You Read pp. 1049 OR 1059 Summary</td>
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<td>Oral Tradition</td>
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</table>

**Technology**

- Interactive Digital Pathway
  - Big Question Video
  - Oral Tradition Video
  - Oral Tradition Review
  - Get Connected Video
  - Background Video
  - Vocabulary Central
  - Grammar Tutorial
  - Grammar Practice
  - Reading Skill
  - Library Analysis
  - Illustrated Vocabulary Words
  - Interactive Vocabulary Games
  - IQ Tunes
  - Meet the Authors Video
  - Interactive Journals
  - Selection Audio
  - Self Test

**Selection:**

- “Brer Possum’s Dilemma” (9065) AND “John Henry” OR “Chicane” (10205) AND from “The People, Yes!”

**Writing Text Form:**

- Expository: Write a Critical Analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards: Acquisition of Vocabulary; Reading Process; Reading Applications; Literary Test; Writing Applications; Writing Conventions; Communication: Oral and Visual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills: Suffixes, Analogies, Summarize, Oral tradition, Genre, Critical analysis, Punctuation: commas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comparing and contrasting, recalling and summarizing questions, and making inferences and drawing conclusions. Reading Applications: Literary Text E, Analyze the use of genre to express a theme or topic. 569 Explain how an author’s choice of genre affects the expression of a theme or topic. Writing Conventions D, Use documented textual evidence to justify interpretations of literature or to support a research topic. 704 Write informational essays or reports, including research that: b, provide a clear and accurate perspective on the subject. Writing Conventions B, Use correct punctuation and capitalization. 892 Use correct punctuation and capitalization. Communication: Oral and Visual G, Give presentations using a variety of delivery methods, visual displays and technology. 1009 Deliver formal and informal descriptive presentations that convey relevant information and descriptive details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Traditions: Integrated Language Skills pp. 1060-1061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAT Practice: Summarize pp. 1062-1063 Unit 6 Resources: pp. 60-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary and Reading Warm-ups p. 60 OR 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing about the Big Question p. 64 OR 82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading: Using a Graphic to Summarize Literature p. 63 OR 83</td>
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<td>Literary Analysis: Oral Tradition p. 66 OR 84</td>
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<td>Vocabulary Builder p. 67 OR 85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrichment: John Henry p. 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment: Chillawa p. 66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehension p. 67</td>
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<td>Support for Writing p. 68</td>
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<td>Listening and Speaking p. 69</td>
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<td>Open-Book Test p. 90</td>
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<td>Selection Test A p. 95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selection Test B p. 96</td>
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<td>Graphic Organizers and Bellringers</td>
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<td>Bellringers Week 22</td>
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<td>Before You Read A p. 188 OR 181</td>
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<td>Before You Read B p. 182</td>
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<td>After You Read (B/John Henry) A p. 183</td>
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<tr>
<td>After You Read (B/John Henry) B p. 184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After You Read (Chillawa/Francis) A p. 185</td>
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<tr>
<td>After You Read (Chillawa/Francis) B p. 186</td>
</tr>
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<td>Professional Development Guidelines</td>
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<td>Vocabulary Knowledge Chart p. 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubric for Self-Assessment pp. 248-241</td>
</tr>
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<td>Listening and Speaking Rubrics pp. 267-276</td>
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</table>

**Write Source/eEdition**
https://secure.qmlearn.com/services/login?loginpage=true
- Common pp. 582-590
- Analyzing p. 455

**Technology**

**Assessments**
- Open-Book Test
- Selection Test A
- Selection Test B
- Self-test

**Speaking and Listening**
- Class Discussion
- Think-Aloud
- Storytelling

**Language**
- Vocabulary Warm-ups
- Analogies
- Suffixes
- Cumulus
- Dialect
- Idioms

**Vocabulary-Related**
- Vocabulary
- Music
- Games
- Workbooks

**Grade 8**
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</table>

### Interactive Digital Pathway
- Big Question Video
- Get Connected Video
- Background Video
- Vocabulary Central
- Reading Skill
- Library Analysis
- Grammar Tutorial
- Grammar Practice
- Illustrated Vocabulary Words
- Interactive Vocabulary Games
- Vocabulary Flashcards
- IQ Tunes
- Meet the Author Video
- Interactive Journals
- Selection Audio
- SelfTest

### The Big Question:
*Are yesterday's heroes important today?*

### Selection:
*Vocabulary Workshop: Figurative Language*

### Writing Text Form Message

### Standards
- Acquisition of Vocabulary

### Skills
- Identifying and using figurative language

### Week 7
#### Period 3

**Acquisition of Vocabulary**
C. Recognize the importance and function of figurative language. 28h Infer the literal and figurative meaning of words and phrases and discuss the function of figurative language.

**Textbook (hard copy or eBook)**
*Literature Language and Literacy*
- www.macmillanmh.com
  - Vocabulary Workshop pp. 1166-1167
- `Unit 6 Resources` pp. 66-96
  - Figurative Language pp. 220-221

**Write Source/eEdition**
http://secure.greenstarsource.com/servicemanager/login.jsp
- `Figures of Speech` p. 360

**Technology**
*Interactive Digital Pathway*
- Vocabulary Central

**Reading**
*Literary/Informational Text*
- Guided or Independent Reading

**Writing**
- Writing a Message

**Language**
- Figurative Language

**Vocabulary Central**
- Vocabulary
- Music
- Games
- Worksheets

**Speaking and Listening**
- Think Aloud
- Class Discussions

**Assessment**
- Criteria Listed in Teacher Edition
### The Big Question:
**Are yesterday's heroes important today?**

#### Selection:
- Vocabulary Workshop: Borrowed and Foreign Words

#### Grade 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Periods</th>
<th>Writing Process</th>
<th>Textbook (hard copy or eBook)</th>
<th>Reading Literature/Informational Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Writing Process</td>
<td>B. Determine the usefulness of organizers and apply appropriate pre-writing tasks.</td>
<td>Guided or Independent Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>685 Use organizational strategies (e.g., rough outlines, diagrams, maps, webs and Venn diagrams) to plan writing.</td>
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<td>C. Use revision strategies to improve the style, variety of sentence structure, clarity of controlling ideas, logic, effectiveness of word choice and transitions.</td>
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<td>D. Edit to improve sentence fluency, grammar, and usage.</td>
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<td>E. Proofread writing, edit to improve conventions, and identify and correct errors.</td>
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<td>Writing Applications</td>
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<td>G. Produce letters that follow the conventional style appropriate to the text, including appropriate details and exclude extraneous details and inconsistencies.</td>
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<td>703 Write business letters, letters to the editors and job applications that:</td>
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<td>b. Follow the conventional style appropriate to the text using proper technical terms.</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.accessictionaries.com/encyclopedia/docurin/default.aspx">www.accessictionaries.com/encyclopedia/docurin/default.aspx</a></td>
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<td>Business Letter pp. 273-277, 577</td>
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<td>Name: Capitalization of p. 628.2</td>
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<td>Gerunds p. 485, p. 738.2</td>
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<td>Voice pp. 12, 16, 24, 49</td>
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<td>Technology: Interactive Digital Pathway</td>
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<td>Borrowed and Foreign Words pp. 996-997</td>
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<td>Unit 5 Resources pp. 131 - 133</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Creating Chart</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Standards:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acquisition of Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills:</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Using a dictionary</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Context clues</td>
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</table>

| example |
|---|---|
| D. Explain how different events have influenced and changed the English language. |
| 285 Exercise and discuss the ways that different events (e.g., cultural, political, social, technological, and scientific events) impact and change the English language. |
| F. Use multiple resources to enhance comprehension of vocabulary. |
| 297 Determine the meanings and pronunciations of unknown words by using dictionaries, thesauruses, glossaries, technology and textual features, such as definitional footnotes or sidebars. |

| Writing |
|---|---|
| **Chart** |
| **Word Origins** |
| Vocabulary Central |
|  Vocabulary |
|  Music |
|  Games |
|  Worksheets |
| Speaking and Listening |
|  Think Aloud |
|  Discussion |
| Assessment |
|  Criteria Listed in Teacher Edition |

| The Big Question: |
| Are yesterday’s heroes important today? |

| Selection: |
| **Communication Workshop: “Delivering a Persuasive Speech Using Multimedia”** |

| Writing Text Form |
| Multimedia Outline |

| Standards: |
| Communication: Oral and Visual |
| Skills: |
| * Outlines |
| * Speeches |

| Week B Period: 2 |
|---|---|
| Communication: Oral and Visual |
| D. Demonstrate an understanding of effective speaking strategies. |
| 1007 vary language choices as appropriate to the context of the speech. |
| F. Provide persuasive presentations that use varied speaking techniques and include a clear thesis. |
| 1010 Deliver persuasive presentations that: |
| a. establish and develop a logical and controlled argument; and |
| b. include relevant evidence, differentiating between evidence and opinion to support a position and address counterarguments or listener bias. |

| Textbook (hard copy or eBook) |
| Literature: Language and Literacy |
| www.nystepresources.com |
|  Delivering a Persuasive Speech Using Multimedia p. 1168 |
| Unit 6: Resources p. 222 |
|  Delivering a Persuasive Speech p. 222 |
| Graphic Organizers and Belongings |
|  Outline Graphic Organizer p. 217 |
| Professional Development Guidebook |
|  Speaking: Presenting a Proposal Rubric p. 273 |

| Writing Source / eEdition |
| https://secure.nystepsource.com/servicedelivery/viewer/index.html |
|  Persuasive Writing pp. 219-281 |
|  Multimedia Presentation pp. 411-415 |
|  Outline: Organized List pp. 178, 252 |

| Technology |
| Interactive Digital Pathway |

<p>| Reading |
| Literature/Informational Text |
|  Persuasive Speech |
| Writing |
|  Brainstorming |
|  Outlining |
| Language |
|  Word Choice |
| Speaking and Listening |
|  Oral Presentation |
| Assessment |
|  Rubric for Speaking |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Big Question: Are yesterday’s heroes important today?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selections: “Choice: A Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr.” OR “An Episode of War”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Text Form: Persuasive Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards: Acquisition of Vocabulary, Reading Process, Reading Applications: Library Text, Writing Applications: Writing Conventions, Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills: Vocabulary: root, purpose for reading, author’s influence, theme, persuasive speech, capitalization, newspaper article, quotes and citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9 Periods: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of Vocabulary: E. Apply knowledge of roots and affixes to determine the meaning of new vocabulary. 266 Use knowledge of Greek, Latin and Anglo-Saxon roots, prefixes, and suffixes to understand complex words and subject-area vocabulary (e.g., unknown words in science, mathematics, and social studies). Reading Process: Concepts of Print, Comprehension Strategies and Self-Monitoring Strategies C. Use appropriate self-monitoring strategies for comprehension 203 Monitor own comprehension by inferring speed to fit the purpose, or by skimming, scanning, reading on, looking back, note taking or summarizing what has been read so far in text. Reading Applications: Literary Text D. Identify similar recurring themes across different works. 305 Identify and explain universal themes across different works by the same author and different authors. Writing Applications E. Write a persuasive piece that states a clear position includes relevant information and offers compelling evidence in the form of facts and details. 785 Write persuasive compositions that: b. support arguments with detailed evidence. Writing Conventions B. Use correct punctuation and capitalization. 882 Use correct punctuation and capitalization. Research D. Use style guides to produce oral and written reports that give proper credit for sources. 906 Integrate quotations and citations into Textbooks (Hard copy or eBook): Literature: Language and Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and Resource Manager pp. 1110-1116d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus City Schools - 07/29/2011</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Graphs, Organizers and Bellringers
- Bellringers Week 35
  - Before You Read A: "Choice: A Tribute..."
p. 199
  - Before You Read A: "An Episode of War"
p. 200
  - Before You Read B: "Choice: A Tribute..." / "An Episode of War" p. 301
  - After You Read A: "Choice: A Tribute..."
p. 302
  - After You Read A: "Choice: A Tribute..." p. 303
  - After You Read A: "An Episode of War" p. 204
  - After You Read B: "An Episode of War" p. 205
  - Series of Events Chain p. 219

Professional Development Guidebook
- Vocabulary Knowledge Chart p. 33
- KWL Chart pp. 74-75
- Rubrics for Self-Assessment: Persuasive Essay pp. 230-231

Write Source eEdition
https://source.earnsense.com/escalera/readasian/readasian.html
- Organizing a Persuasive Speech pp. 426-430
- Capitalization pp. 614-626
- Newspapers: Citing p. 392, p. 493

Technology
Interactive Digital Pathway
- Big Question Video
- Get Connected Video
- Background Video
- Vocabulary Central
- Grammar Tutorial
- Grammar Practice
- Reading Skill
- Literary Analysis
- Illustrated Vocabulary Words
- Interactive Vocabulary Games
- IBO Tunes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Periods: 3</th>
<th>The Big Question: does yesterday’s heroes important today?</th>
<th>Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Selections: “National Public Radio” AND “Life Magazine Photo Essay” AND “Life Magazine Political Cartoons”</td>
<td>A. Evaluate how features and characteristics make information accessible and usable and how structures help authors achieve their purposes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Writing Text Form: Compare/Contrast Essay</td>
<td>- Compare and contrast the treatment, scope and organization of ideas from different sources on the same topic.</td>
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<td>Standards: Reading Applications: Informational Text; Writing Applications</td>
<td>- Distinguish the characteristics of consumer materials (e.g., warranties, product information, instructional materials), functional or workplace documents (e.g., job-related materials, memoranda, instructions).</td>
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<td>Skills: * Using text features * Evaluating traditions, scope, and organization * Fact and opinion * Analyze: information in charts, diagrams and graphs * Expository writing</td>
<td>Writing Applications</td>
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<td>E. Write a persuasive piece that states a clear position includes relevant information and offers compelling evidence in the form of facts and details.</td>
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<td>705 Write persuasive compositions that:</td>
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<td>b. Support arguments with detailed evidence.</td>
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<td>Textbook (hard copy or eBook)</td>
<td>Literature: Language and Literacy</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.emc2education.com">www.emc2education.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Informational Text p. 1134</td>
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<td>“National Public Radio” pp. 1135-1138</td>
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<td>“Life Magazine Photo Essay” pp. 1139-1140</td>
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<td>“Life Magazine Political Cartoon” p. 1140</td>
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<td>Text Practice: Informational Text p. 1141</td>
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<td>Writing Source/eEdition</td>
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<td>Venn Diagram p. 224</td>
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<td>Expository Paragraph pp. 157-160</td>
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<td>Evaluating Information p. 457</td>
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<td>Compare/Contrast Diagram p. 203</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
<td>Interactive Digital Pathway</td>
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<td>Vocabulary Central from Unit 6</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Periods: 3</th>
<th>The Big Question: does yesterday’s heroes important today?</th>
<th>Reading Applications: Literary Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>D. Identify similar recurring themes across different works.</td>
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<td>Textbook (hard copy or eBook)</td>
<td>Literature: Language and Literacy</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.emc2education.com">www.emc2education.com</a></td>
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<td>Reading</td>
<td>Literature: Informational Text</td>
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<td>Skills: Introduction * Guided or Independent Reading * Evaluate the Treatment, Scope, and Organization of Ideas * Questioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
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<td>Timed Essay: Comparing Effectiveness of Sources</td>
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<td>Speaking and Listening</td>
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<td>Discussion * Think Aloud</td>
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<td>Language</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<td>Vocabulary Central</td>
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<td>Music</td>
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<td>Games</td>
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<td>Workbooks</td>
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<td>Assessments</td>
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<td>Timed Writing Guidelines in Teacher Edition</td>
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</table>
Selection:
"Poem:" AND
"My Own True Name" (60L) AND
"Word to Sit in, Like Chairs" (70L)

Writing Text Form:
Expository: Compare and Contrast

Standards:
Acquisition of
Vocabulary; Reading
Applications: Literary Text; Writing Applications

Skills:
• Compare and contrast
• Theme
• Expository writing

Skills:
• Identify and explain universal themes across different works by the same author and different authors.
• Analyze the use of genre to express a theme or topic.
• Explain how an author’s choice of genre affects the expression of a theme or topic.

Writing Applications
B. Write responses to literature that extend beyond the summary and support references to the text, other works, and other authors or to personal knowledge.

782 Write responses to literature that organize an insightful interpretation around several clear ideas, premises or images, and support judgments with specific references to the original text, to other texts, authors and to prior knowledge.

Unit 6 Resources pp. 210-217
• Vocabulary and Reading Warm-ups pp. 201
• Writing about the Big Question p. 205
• Literary Analysis: Comparing Works on a Similar Theme p. 206
• Vocabulary Builder p. 207
• Support for Writing to Compare Literary Works p. 208
• Open-Book Test p. 209
• Selection Test A p. 213
• Selection Test B p. 215

Graphic Organizers and Bellringers
• Bellringers Week 36
• WCB Graphic Organizer p. 225

Professional Development Guidebook
• Vocabulary Knowledge Chart p. 33
• Word Form Chart p. 42
• KWL Chart pp. 74-75

Write Source eEdition
https://secure.greatsource.com/engagestudents/engagen
• Comparison-Contrast Essay pp. 199-204
• Using a Comparison-Contrast Chart p. 467
• Comparison-Contrast Order p. 537

Technology
Interactive Digital Pathway
• Big Question Video
• Get Connected Video
• Reading Skill
• Literary Analysis
• Vocabulary Central
• Illustrated Vocabulary Words

• Reading Warm-ups
• Guided or Independent Reading
• Skills Introduction
• Critical Thinking Questions
• Comparing Works on Similar Themes

Writing
• Bellringers Warm-ups
• Writing About the Big Question
• Writing to Compare Approaches to Theme

Speaking and Listening
• Class Discussion
• Think Aloud

Language
• Vocabulary Warm-ups
• Vocabulary Development
• Vocabulary Central
• Vocabulary
• Music
• Games
• Workbooks

Assessments
• Open-Book Test
• Selection Test A
• Selection Test B
• Self-Test