Dissertation

entitled

An Exploratory Study of Teacher Education Students’ Experiences with an Innovative Literacy Assessment and Remediation Course

by

Joanna C. Weaver

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Curriculum and Instruction

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The University of Toledo
December 2014
An Abstract of

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Young adult illiteracy is an epidemic in our country, and the traditional model of literacy education will not serve the needs of struggling readers. The purpose of this study was to discover if utilizing my pedagogical provided an impactful experience on our teacher candidates. Can a literacy program provide a transactional learning experience and what is that experience? My study is a qualitative, exploratory study that looks at the experiences of teacher candidates and how they experienced the process of this literacy model. The participants had the opportunity to directly apply the instructional, literacy strategies learned and discussed in class to working with a young adult struggling reader. Through collaboration and dialogue, teacher candidates created connections and literacy materials that applied directly to their students’ lives, creating and experiencing an authentic, transactional literacy experience. Candidates documented their tutoring event through case studies, emails, reflections, and interviews and then discussed with me their understanding of the process and what they took away from the experience. This helped me evaluate if the pedagogical model implemented in the teacher preparation class was a success.
Acknowledgements

The encouragement and support I received from the professors in the College of Education, specifically in the department of Curriculum and Instruction made this dissertation possible. From the moment I came to the university as a faculty member, Dr. Leigh Chiarelott pushed me to complete my Ph.D. Initially I laughed thinking it was an insurmountable task, but he challenged me and encouraged me to jump in. I cannot express my appreciation to Dr. Chiarelott, Dr. Denyer, Dr. Templin, and Dr. Snauwaert for their constant encouragement. I could not have selected a stronger committee to oversee my research. I also want to express my sincerest gratitude to the Career Center for allowing me to collect my data and conduct my research with their students.

In addition to my committee, my children and parents have been so patient with me. I would sit with Mckenzie, Lindsay, and Austin to discuss my continuance in the Ph. D. program. The summer of 2013, we had a family meeting on top of a mountain in Vermont. Without hesitation, each one of my children said, “Mom, don’t stop now! You’ve got this.” I have received incredible inspiration and support from each and every one of them. My parents and dear friends stepped in whenever needed to help with the transportation and the financial burden that sometimes accrued. Without them I would be lost. Their unfailing love and total support has made this all happen. This Ph.D. is not only mine, but also theirs.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Education, therefore, must begin with psychological insight into the child’s capacities, interests, and habits…” (Dewey, 1897, p. 78)

Approximately eight million students in grades 4-12 read below grade level (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007, as cited by Ness, 2009). “Of those struggling secondary readers, nearly 70% struggle with reading comprehension” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, as cited by Ness, 2009). These statistics trigger many questions that need to be answered. The first is the most obvious to me: Are teacher candidates prepared to teach students who are struggling readers? This question led me to reflect on our teacher education programs. As an educator of teacher candidates, am I providing university students with instructional learning experiences that can change their thinking about teaching literacy in the classroom, and will it help them conceptualize their future experiences in a classroom with struggling readers? How does my literacy assessment and remediation class provide university students with experiences that will help them to reconstruct their ideas about teaching struggling readers?
As my reflection on my literacy class continued to fester in my mind, another question, a bigger question emerged: Have I constructed a whole experience that benefits my teacher candidates and will the candidates see the benefit to the struggling readers? This question led to other possible questions: Utilizing the pedagogical model I developed for my teacher education literacy class, what will be the impact of this experience on our teacher candidates? Can a literacy program led by teacher candidates provide a transactional learning experience?

In order to enact this pedagogical literacy model and analyze the experiences of teacher candidates, one of my challenges was finding a school that our university students could tutor in weekly. I was able to connect with a career center that was more than willing to allow our students to tutor their struggling readers. The career center’s administrators’ support of the pedagogical literacy model helped them encourage their tenth grade students to participate.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover if the pedagogical model created in my literacy assessment remediation class was effective in creating a positive, learning experience for university teacher education students. Throughout the years, we have had university students teaching in the field in their specific content areas. We know that these experiences are effective and help prepare them for their classroom teaching experience. The pedagogical model implemented in my class allowed literacy assessment remediation students to work directly with struggling readers in a career center, utilizing interest surveys and informal reading inventories to create high-interest, weekly tutoring
plans that will be taught each week with struggling readers and then reflected upon to guide the following week’s tutoring plan. I wanted to look into the experience of this educational process from the eyes of the university students and the impact of the experience on the struggling readers. A partnership with a career center was a perfect opportunity and environment for university students to work with struggling readers who were not successful in the traditional school setting.

Students often attend career technical centers when the traditional school setting is not engaging or their academic performance is suffering. Career technical centers offer opportunities for students’ to learn the trades and skills needed to immediately pursue career options upon graduation. Real-world learning--authentic learning--is key so these students can build their skills, grow, and become productive citizens. To be completely successful, these students need to be able to read successfully in order to understand technical manuals and the skills needed in the area of interest to be productive citizens, yet they are often found struggling in reading. Giving university students the opportunity to uncover the interests and experiences of the career technical students and to develop high-interest literacy plans to use directly with the struggling readers not only will enhance our university students’ learning and development, but also it will create a positive literacy experience for the struggling readers.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to university teacher education programs as well as literacy preparation for all teachers. This pedagogical model can alter the teacher education program of literacy by preparing teacher candidates to connect content
materials with their students’ lives and experiences using comprehension strategies that will strengthen reading skills and also by providing university students with their own hands-on, purposeful learning and developmental experience in the teaching field with struggling readers. This literacy model is significant to our field due to the core curriculum which now emphasizes literacy across all content areas. Often teachers outside of reading and language arts don’t think they have to teach reading in science, mathematics, or social studies, or they don’t feel confident in teaching literacy in their content area. This model provides university students a cross-curricular, literacy opportunity to use the comprehension strategies learned in class immediately with struggling readers in their area of interest.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. Not perfection as the final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living.

(Dewey, 1920, p. 177)

Educational models need to be continuously revisited in order to meet the needs of our learners—it is an ongoing process, not one that will reach an end-point and be complete. If we continue with our educational models as we always have, the educational programs become routine, passive, and mundane. “To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it” (Dewey, 1934, p. 53). In order to “plunge into” the educational model and create an authentic experience for our teacher candidates, we need to explore the experiences from the learners’ point of view and discover how the
experience affected them. Understanding and reflecting on experiences help not only learners, but also curriculum developers to develop and grow in their own thinking.

Educators must look at the learner as a whole person examining their histories, learning experiences, attitudes, and values in order to help them have aesthetic transactional experiences. This is not only useful when working with students K-12 but also when developing a program for university teacher education students. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey states, “experience is rendered conscious by means of that fusion of old meanings and new situations…” (1934, p. 275). An educators’ charge is to look at the whole learner and take into account previous experiences and current interests in order to create continuity and a curriculum that promotes growth and a restructuring of students’ belief systems. Utilizing relevant, practical, purposeful, and immediately applicable information allows students to fuse the old with the new and reconstruct their learning experiences—when instructing all students, this connection is vital to their learning, engagement, motivation, and knowledge. “There should be a natural connection of the everyday life of the child” (Dewey, 1900, p. 91).

Allowing university students to have an educational experience that is hands-on and interactive in the teaching field where they can reflect upon the experience with other peers will help them develop and grow as future educators. This tutoring experience with struggling readers will provide this connection to our teacher candidates’ future educational endeavors. Not only will university students be provided with the tutoring experience, but also, they will have an avenue to discuss field issues, past and current perceptions, and experiences on a weekly basis in the social community of the literacy assessment remediation class which will help them to reconstruct their thinking. Creating
a social community that connects students’ experience and interests is interactive and engaging and promotes educative growth. Struggling readers will also have this opportunity to discuss their thoughts and perceptions on a weekly basis with their tutor. These discussions and connections can lead to struggling readers’ literacy and intellectual growth as well.

For struggling readers, the high-interest literacy materials and instruction are integral to readers’ success in literacy programs because young adults learn literacy skills from their own daily literacy experiences (Rogers, 2004). Understanding the whole learner and asking about previous literacy experiences and perceptions will help in providing a more authentic base of literacy instruction and will engage and motivate learners while building students’ confidence and comfort with the content. Teacher candidates have to learn how to look into their student’s interests and experiences in order to guide instruction. This psychological insight will allow them to employ relevant material that students can relate to that will be culturally relevant and authentic. If readers have little interest in the material they are reading, it will be difficult for them to draw meaning from the text to their own lives. “The adolescent reader needs to encounter literature for which he possesses emotional and experiential ‘readiness.’ …that world must be fitted into the context of his own understanding and interests” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 65).

To create an experience both for the university student and the struggling reader, we must connect the content we teach to students’ interests and experiences to help them find meaning and purpose in their learning. The university students are teacher candidates; therefore they will use the classroom text to practice utilizing various
comprehension strategies with different genres of literature (i.e. narratives, informational text, and poetry), and they will carry those classroom learning experiences into the field to meet the needs of their struggling readers, making the classroom learning experience purposeful and meaningful. Throughout the duration of the semester, university students will reconstruct their experiences through inquiry and communication in order to continue building their students’ comprehension skills as well as further understanding the teaching field, but they, too, have to know how to understand their struggling reader. According to Rosenblatt, the teacher is “a catalyst of discussion encouraging a democracy of voices expressing preliminary responses to the text and building group and individual understandings” (Roen & Karolides, 2005, p. 60).

Rosenblatt’s theory of transaction dovetails Dewey’s theoretical framework of the reconstruction of experience. Combining Rosenblatt’s transactional framework with the data we obtain when investigating struggling readers’ sociocultural backgrounds will help educators in providing literacy materials that will create “thoughtful, investigative, and evaluative” (Roen & Karolides, p. 60) responses to ideas. It is the teacher’s responsibility to help students have literary experiences that evoke meaningful transactions with literature, content, and the world around them.

Youth seeks to understand itself and its world, to feel from within what it means to be different kinds of personalities, to discover the possibilities in human relationships, to develop a usable image of adult aims and rolls. Such are the deep-seated interests that can be brought into play to nourish a vital interest in literature. (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 66)
Career Center students come from a demographically diverse population due to the students coming from 18 different school districts; therefore, a cookie cutter regimen of instruction for them is not possible, nor should it be possible for any other students, but in the current educational system, “Everything is arranged for handling as large numbers of children as possible; for dealing with children en masse, as an aggregate of units; involving, again, that they be treated passively” (Dewey, 1900, p. 49). That is not what education is about. Education is about using students’ experiences and interests and helping them make connections to what they already know in order that they can restructure and reformulate their new knowledge. We, as educators, are to create an educative experience that “arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense” (Dewey, 1938, Ch. 3). It is our responsibility as educators to provide students with these authentic, connective, educative experiences that engage and motivate students to continue the process of growing in knowledge.

By creating the connections to the students’ lives by talking and working directly with the career technical students, the struggling readers will have ownership in their learning. Through effective questioning and dialogue, students will be capable of reconstructing their experiences through purposeful thinking and reflection which is the essence of growth, and this will build comprehension skills. Bridging the gap between education and social life helps children to interpret and control experiences and find meaning in those experiences. The conception of education is the reconstruction of experience. It adds meaning to experience and capacity for further experiences. Reconstruction of thought is a continual process, and in order for students to experience growth—the connection and continuity is imperative.
Schools are to “educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility” (Dewey, 1920, p. 186), and we can do this through building connections with students’ experiences. “Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices associated with different domains of life that are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices” (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002, p.70). According to Dewey (1900), if education is to be meaningful for life, it must go through a transformation. We must put the students’ interests and experiences at the center of our curriculum. We have to engage and motivate all learners. Education should not be a passive process. It should be an active process. “The introduction of more active, expressive, and self-directing factors—all these are not mere accidents, they are necessities of the larger social evolution” (p.44). The pedagogical model provided, allows for this transformation of our literacy programs, and as a result, benefits our teacher candidates and the struggling readers.

1.4 Research Question

The research question being explored is: What were the teacher candidates’ lived experiences within the pedagogical model of the literacy course?

1.5 Research Design

A pedagogical model was designed to create an experience for teacher candidates to work one-on-one with struggling readers at a career technical center. This is a unique experience that allows university students eight weeks to practice various comprehension strategies with different content materials and to practice the administration of interest surveys and informal reading inventories. They learned to interpret the data obtained that
eventually provided them with the information needed to develop high-interest tutoring plans at the appropriate reading level that would directly connect their struggling readers with their own lives while building their reading skills.

Before meeting their struggling readers, candidates worked together to create engaging plans based on materials provided for them in class. They also administered the interest surveys and IRI on other classmates and decided what materials would be fitting for their classmates based on the answers to the interest surveys and results on the IRI. Through discussion and collaboration, teacher candidates had a social environment that was conducive to intellectual thinking that helped them begin to reconstruct their own thinking and perceptions they may have had previously about teaching literacy. The classroom experience gave teacher candidates more confidence before they began the tutoring experience.

The teacher candidates in the literacy assessment remediation class would not be language arts specific—they could be science, social studies, mathematics, and/or language arts. This was important because many students feel that if they are not language arts teachers they don’t have to teach reading. They forget that literacy crosses all content areas and must be addressed in all classes because there are struggling readers in all content area classes. In a class discussion, one student said, “I feel like I’m teaching English…I am a science teacher. How does this apply to me?” (Field notes from class discussion, Sept. 27, 2013)

Through this pedagogical design, I looked at the educational process through the lenses of teacher candidates. This was not just the university coming in and imposing a model on the career technical school, but the program would also benefit the struggling
readers at the career center. The process of teacher preparation and their experiences using this model would be examined as teacher candidates utilized high-interest literacy materials while tutoring struggling readers.

As stated, after the university students had attended class for eight weeks, they were then paired with a career center student and developed tutoring lesson plans over a five-week period that use high-interest reading materials at the tutees’ instructional reading level that focused on their tutors’ interests, and reading strengths and weaknesses. Teacher education students wrote weekly lesson plans and weekly reflections describing each week’s teaching experience and the students’ response to the lessons as well as a rationale for the following week’s tutoring lesson. University students wrote two Case Studies based on their student’s survey and assessment results and would also include their lessons, reflections of their lessons, transcriptions of their interest surveys, and the IRI results and assessment data. The first case study would include information obtained through the pre-interest survey and IRI assessment, including the tutor’s goals and objectives for instruction based on the results of the interest survey and IRI. The class would continue to be held one and a half hours a week directly before the tutoring sessions each Friday. Class time would be reserved for discussing experiences, asking questions, and working together on different issues they had encountered during their tutoring sessions or during the assessments.

As discussed earlier, participants were from the university literacy assessment remediation class as well as the career technical center. The career technical center is a school that is made up of students from 18 school districts in Ohio. In this study the sample participants were tenth-graders selected by their reading performance on the
Pearson Reading Skill Assessment which was administered when they were at the end of ninth grade-- the students’ invited into the reading program will show instructional reading levels that were below grade level and independent reading levels as low as 4.2. As previously stated, the tutors were senior teacher education students registered in Literacy Assessment Remediation class.

Following the selection of career center students, an interest inventory and informal reading inventory was administered by the teacher candidates to determine the 10th graders’ interests in and out of school, their previous literacy experiences, their perceptions of reading, their attitude and confidence in their own reading ability, the reading strategies they use, and their interests and goals after graduating. The interest inventory was administered verbally by the tutors to the participants in a conversational manner to deter from a formal question-answer type experience that may create a stilted conversation between the two. This conversation was recorded and transcribed by the tutors. The IRI measured the career center students’ reading levels, and reading strengths and weaknesses. This assessment provided the tutor with an instrument that can assess “skills, abilities, and needs of the individual in order to plan a program of reading instruction” (Invernizzi et al., 2005, p. 611). This assessment was designed to offer tutors a variety of information to help guide their tutoring sessions to make the sessions authentic—connecting the literacy materials to the students’ lives. During the final session, the tutors administered the post-interest inventory and post-IRI and then wrote a final case study that focused on the results of the post-IRI, and most importantly, the impact of the authentic learning experience on the struggling readers from the students’ perspective as well as the
tutor's perspective. Following the completion of the course, a post-follow-up interview of the teacher candidates took place. The focus of these interviews were on the teacher candidates’ experience throughout the educational process and how this authentic experience resulted in learning and development. What also was explored is how teacher candidates would understand the process in the present moment, standing away from the experience.

The data would be collected over a semester by tutors; discussions of their experiences would take place in class and in writing; and then interviews of the teacher candidates would take place after the coursework was complete in which they discussed their experiences and the impact it made on their current teaching experiences in the classroom. A natural limitation was the fact that university students would be working with teenagers. It is a limitation because of teenagers’ willingness to share their true feelings, experiences, and interests. Sometimes teenagers omit information during discussions and don’t want to admit to changes in attitude, motivation, or engagement or their experiences as a whole. The experiences of the struggling readers was filtered through the conceptual lenses of the university students. The experiences shared were perceived by the university student based on the conversation with the struggling reader. A delimitation is that I chose not to interview the struggling readers directly because I felt they would be more comfortable and more open with their tutor whom they had worked with over the five weeks.
Chapter 2

Theoretical and Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

To utilize my pedagogical model in the literacy assessment remediation course, Dewey’s theoretical framework of experience and Rosenblatt’s theoretical framework of transaction must interlock to provide the groundwork for my research. It is important to uncover the components of the experience if we are to examine if a transaction took place.

In an experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself. The enduring whole is diversified by successive phases that are emphases of its varied colors. (Dewey, 1934, p. 36)

Experience is continuous; although there may be pauses and hesitations, and different episodes, events, and occurrences, they all meld together to provide unity while keeping their separate parts.
Transaction is a part of the educative experience. Just like a human body. It is one body with different moving parts. The legs, the arms, and the head all remain distinct, yet they are all a part of the whole body...for the body to function properly, all the parts must work together and do their job. An experience is like the body with separate occurrences and events within it that are all connected together yet all still distinct. “An experience has a unity that gives it its name...the existence of this unity is constituted by a single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts” (Dewey, 1934, p. 36).

Students will be asked about their prior experiences—their lived experience—and perceptions at the beginning of the literacy assessment remediation class, and then they will be asked about how their thinking changed throughout the process. According to Dewey, “They are phases, emotionally and practically distinguished, of a developing underlying quality; they are its moving variations, not separate and independent...but are subtle shadings of a pervading and developing hue” (Dewey, 1934, p. 36). When a student considers this movement of thought, and how they understand the process currently, it’s a completion of movement versus being an independent event. To reach completion, there will be waves within the experience that move participants toward the completion of the experience which will open them up to further experiences. This movement that takes place has an emotional quality. “Hence an experience of thinking has its own esthetic quality...the experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement.” (Dewey, 1934, p. 38). In order for my pedagogical process to be an intellectual experience, there must be an esthetic or emotional quality to the experience. There has to be movement between self to experience and experience to self
which mirrors Rosenblatt’s theory of transaction of self to text and text to self—learner’s engagement with the text or experience. This is one phase of the whole experience.

The phases within the experiences that occur must connect to the whole experience through participants’ reflection. In other words, the occurrences cannot just occur without thought, or they are just “practical” (Dewey, 1934, p. 39). In order for these events to be a part of the experience, these occurrences must be esthetic, leading the participant down a desired path, being conscious of the things that occur or people met along the way, obstacles that must be overcome and being aware of their impact on the final experience. Participants must also be aware that “the final coming to rest is related to all that went before as the culmination of a continuous movement” (p. 39). Then, and only then, will the participant have an experience with an esthetic quality. For every integrated experience, there has to be some sort of cognitive processing that occurs that connects the occurrences to the final outcome. In every experience, there has to be a reflection upon the events of the experiences as they occur “otherwise there would be no taking in of what preceded. For ‘taking in’ in any vital experience is something more than placing something on top of consciousness over what was previously known. It involves reconstruction which may be painful” (Dewey, 1934, p. 41). The unity is esthetic; it is emotional. Emotions create experiences that move and change us, and this is the key to reconstruction. Emotions are not separate events, but they are attached to events by the participant who desires the experience and is concerned with the events and their connections within the experience. Because I chose to look at the participants’ experiences rather than my own, “the word ‘esthetic’…denotes the consumer’s rather
than the producer’s standpoint” (p. 47). I created the pedagogical model, but the participants enjoy, perceive, and appreciate the model.

Not only are experiences to have an esthetic quality, but also experiences are “the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives” (Dewey, 1934, p. 44). In my pedagogical model, participants will do something, and as a consequence, they will undergo something that will “determine further doing” (p. 44). According to Dewey, this process is true of all experiences. The relationship between the two is the key to the experience. “The action and its consequence must be joined in perception. This relationship is what gives meaning; to grasp it is the objective of all intelligence” (p. 44).

Participants will be asked to reflect on the actions, events, or occurrences weekly during the process considering the consequences of the actions, always looking forward to how the actions impact the end result. The participants will join the two in their perceptions—as a result, they will give meaning to the experience. Through reflection, students will look at the consequences of past actions and the event that is to come, and they will look at how the two are connected. “This anticipation is the connecting link between the next doing and its outcome for sense. What is done and what is undergone are thus reciprocally, cumulatively, and continuously instrumental to each other” (Dewey, 1934, p. 50). The doing and the undergoing must relate to one another if perception is to be fully esthetic. There are limitations to the experience if there is interference in the formation of the perceptive relationship between the action and consequence of the experience, but if we know the limitations exist, we can supply “the needed antecedents for an effect…or we may eliminate some of the superfluous causes
and economize effort” (Dewey, 1916, p. 82-83). A reflective experience is comprised of thinking.

Thinking is the intentional endeavor to discover specific connections between something which we do and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous. Their isolation, and consequently their purely arbitrary going together, is canceled; a unified developing situation takes its place. The occurrence is now understood; it is explained; it is reasonable, as we say, that the thing should happen as it does. (Dewey, 1916, p. 83)

In order to have a reflective experience, every step, every phase must be connected to the whole. The participant “must at each point retain and sum up what has gone before as a whole and with reference to a whole to come” (Dewey, 1934, p. 56). If participants move too quickly, without thought and reflection, the actions lose their meaning; otherwise the actions become mere routines and arrest development, movement, and growth, and there is no consistency. A reflective experience forces us to “analyze to see just what lies between so as to bind together cause and effect, activity and consequence” (Dewey, 1916, p. 82).

Rosenblatt’s theory of transaction directly ties into Dewey’s theory of experience. Rosenblatt says that

Dewey and Bentley (1949, p. 69) suggested that the term ‘transaction’ be used to designate relationships in which each element conditions and is conditioned by the other in a mutually-constituted situations…such relationships take place in a context that also enters into the event. Human activities and relationships are seen
as transactions in which the individual and the social, cultural, and natural elements interfuse” (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 2).

According to Dewey (1934), an experience is an esthetic and intellectual movement of thought that takes place over time and the phases within the experiences are reflected upon to create relationships between the action and the undergoings in order to move toward completion. A reflective experience “is the discernment of the relation between what we try to do and what happens in the consequence” (Dewey, 1916, p. 82).

Rosenblatt would refer to this as a transactional experience. Transaction take place when there is a “coming-together” of the reader and a text—or the participant and the experience. In order to have a reflective experience, we must understand how certain consequences are connected to a way of acting. If “we do not see the details of the connection; the links are missing” (Dewey, 1916, p. 82). The transaction allows the reader the freedom to interact with the text, just as the participant has the freedom to interact with the experience.

A story or a poem or play is merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols. When these symbols lead us to live through some moment of feeling, to enter into some human personality, or to participate imaginatively in some situation or event, we have evoked a work of literary art” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 62-63).

Students are not only thinking about the text, but also they should be living through the text. In other words, the experience with literature is not only efferent—for a practical purpose—to carry away information, but also it is aesthetic—“the reader’s attention is
centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text” (Roen & Karolides, 2005, p. 60). Rosenblatt’s “living through” is parallel to Dewey’s phases of the experience—the process being lived through and the importance of the connections between these phases as one moves forward to find meaning in the experience. Rosenblatt says we must be emotionally connected to the literature in order to draw out meaning from the text. The participants are living through the experience within the program and within the texts, and they must create connections with their own lives as they enter different phases in order to obtain meaning of the whole experience.

When developing the tutoring plans, teacher candidates must remember that if readers have little interest in the material they are reading, it will be difficult for them to draw meaning from the text to their own lives. “The adolescent reader needs to encounter literature for which he possesses emotional and experiential ‘readiness.’ …that world must be fitted into the context of his own understanding and interests” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 65). Knowing their struggling readers, their sociocultural backgrounds, and their interests will help teacher candidates in providing literacy materials that will create “thoughtful, investigative, and evaluative” (Roen & Karolides, p. 60) responses to ideas. It is an educator’s responsibility to help students have literary experiences that evoke meaningful transactions with literature. Within the literacy assessment remediation class, teacher candidates create connections to their own lives and that will make the classes meaningful and purposeful, and then it will directly connect to the field experience and the experience as a whole.

What the teacher candidates need to remember is that the traditional classroom was not effectively received by the struggling readers whether they had negative
experiences prior to attending the career school or struggled to connect to the content presented in the traditional school. The current curriculum is standardized and systematized, and “negates the reality of our school situation” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 65). This obstructs literary experiences and the transactions between the readers and the books. Understanding struggling readers’ prior experiences is important to creating tutoring plans that are of high interest to the struggling readers that they can be emotionally connected to, and teacher candidates need to encourage students to have a personal response to reading, and to accomplish this, there must be emotional readiness with the content. “The beginning reader, then, should bring to the printed symbols a certain fund of experience with life and language. And the reading materials offered to the youngster should bring him verbal symbols that can be linked with that experience” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 64).

Not just beginning readers, but struggling readers can draw on past experiences to attain meaning. The printed word helps readers to organize and interpret past experience in order to gain new insights and reconstruct knowledge. Too often, we only ask students for the superficial meaning of a passage—Rosenblatt describes this as the efferent stance—“The kind of reading in which attention is centered predominantly on what is to be carried away or retained after the reading event” (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 5). The meaning is derived from the ideas of the passage or the conclusions drawn from what the author stated. As a result, students get in the habit of only looking at the general meaning versus living through the work and linking it to experience. Reading should be “related to the ongoing stream of his own life” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 64). What the reader lives through during reading is the aesthetic stance, and the reader gains meaning through the power of
memory or imagination, and “this evocation is the object of the reader’s ‘response’ and ‘interpretation’ both during and after the reading event” (1988, p. 5).

In order to create both efferent and aesthetic responses, finding stories that are personally relevant and connect with struggling readers’ lives that will engage them and help them reflect and respond to the text, linking the ideas to their own, personal lives is that much more important. These stories will generate the opportunity to lead readers into richer and more challenging literary experiences. The transactional response is key to the “personal nourishment that literature can give” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 68). Only looking at the author’s point of view or the information about the literature such as the facts of the story, the author’s background, or the literary elements ignores the students’ responses and interaction with the literature. Literature should not only be an object to be described or manipulated, but also it should be a “live circuit between readers and books” (p. 66).

2.2 Literature Review

This literature review explores research that helped me conceptualize and support the content of my course that would provide teacher candidates with a whole literacy experience. As I studied the research, I pulled from it the strategies researchers and/or teachers used to understand struggling readers, the types of assessments that were used to evaluate them, strategies instructors could use to engage and motivate as well as the way the educators prepared others to work with struggling readers. I wanted to be sure to include all of the different ideas within my pedagogical model. As I continued to research, the focus on the authenticity of literacy materials consistently emerged, and this component of my pedagogical model dominates the bulk of my model. Demonstrating
the importance of learning about the background, experiences, and interests of the learners helped shape the literacy instruction within much of this research and it shapes much of my model. I looked at how the instructors obtained data from learners, and I analyzed the appropriateness or effectiveness of those methods for my pedagogical model.

My pedagogical model was to provide a literacy experience that helped teacher candidates identify struggling readers through the use of assessments while exploring the struggling readers’ backgrounds and experiences to create high-interest tutoring plans that could be immediately implemented into a field experience. In order for teacher candidates to have a transactional literacy experience, they will have to invest themselves in this model and reflect on their own experiences while simultaneously creating a literacy experience for the struggling readers. The studies focused on the way instructors used sociocultural backgrounds, interests, and experiences of the students to engage and motivate struggling readers, altering their perceptions and attitudes about reading while building their literacy skills. The educator’s role in the studies helped me develop my own pedagogical model and create a program that would benefit my teacher candidates as they work with struggling readers directly. Just as the materials need to be authentic, purposeful, and meaningful to the teacher candidates, the tutoring plans they develop also need to be authentic and of high interest to the students at the career center, so the struggling readers can draw meaning from the texts and the whole experience.

According to Dewey (1900), utilizing relevant, practical, purposeful, and immediately applicable information allows students to fuse the old with the new and reconstruct their learning experiences—when instructing all students, this connection is
vital to their learning, engagement, motivation, and knowledge. “There should be a natural connection of the everyday life of the child” (p. 91). With this connection, learners will also have a transactional response.

2.3 Teacher Preparation

Some teachers lack the skill-base and confidence to teach literacy and reading skills. They feel that teaching these skills should be left to the language arts, reading, or English teachers. Teacher candidates need to have the confidence in teaching comprehension strategies across all content areas. Building self-efficacy—a belief in one’s ability—and confidence in teaching reading is another component I want to draw into my pedagogical model. In order to do that, the professional education students need to engage in conversation with other future educators that will push and extend their thinking and open their minds up to the importance of teaching literacy across all content areas. The dialogue they practice in class with their peers could then be utilized with their struggling readers.

True conversations with our learners need to take place because it encourages meaningful thought. Discussion is a “free-flowing, open-ended, ungoverned, often chaotic exchange of whatever passes for thought in the minds of the participants” (Beers, Probst, & Rief, 2007, p.47). Dialogue compels us to face difficult issues or controversies, exploring possible solutions by examining evidence and reasoning, yet true dialogue rarely takes place in a learning environment, and some teachers fear the “chaos” of conversation because it can be intimidating to a teacher due to its unpredictability;
therefore dialogue is often avoided. During these times of dialogue, reflection takes place as well as growth in the comprehension of others’ perspectives and vocabulary.

Teacher preparation that demonstrates, models, and allows teachers to practice dialogue and the instruction of vocabulary and comprehension using a variety of pedagogy to build students’ reading skills in all content areas is imperative.

The ability to read, write, and think effectively—belongs at the very top of the reform agenda. There is every reason to believe that these capacities, if acquired across the disciplines, will change lives by the millions and will redefine the possibilities of public education. (Schmoker, 2007, p. 488)

Persuading teachers of the value of literacy instruction in all content areas and the importance vocabulary and comprehension strategies is vital to literacy success. Professional development and preparation for future teachers are the keys to changing the attitudes of instructors. Educators must see the value in teaching literacy skills whether they teach science, social studies, math, or language arts. It is not just a “language arts thing.” It’s an “all content area thing.” When teachers learn how to assess and recognize struggling readers in their classes, they will realize that piling on more content heavy material is not going to help their students. Teaching the students strategies will build reading skills (Lovett et al., 2012), but teachers need to have the strategies modeled for them and need to believe in their own capabilities of teaching the strategies in their content areas. Unrealistic beliefs about personal capabilities, “only invite failures that would discredit the persuaders and further undermine the recipients” beliefs in their capabilities (Bandura, 1997, p.101).
The more practice teachers have using literacy strategies (i.e. vocabulary and comprehension strategies), the more comfortable they will be utilizing this instruction in the classroom. Using authentic pedagogy to strengthen reading skills and creating opportunities for effective dialogue, educators can create occasions for students to connect the content material to their own lives and maintain engagement throughout instruction. This will develop the literacy of all students across all content areas. The more authentic the classroom, the greater the change in literacy practices (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). It is every teachers’ responsibility to develop functioning, literate young adults. Through professional development and preparation, all educators, can meet this challenge and engage our struggling, adolescent readers. “It is a mistake to suppose that acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute preparation for their right and effective use under conditions very unlike those in which they were acquired” (Dewey, 1938, Ch. 3); therefore bridging the gap between education and social life helps children to interpret and control experiences and find meaning in those experiences.

Just as teachers have to build up students’ self-confidence and belief in their ability to learn, teachers’ self-efficacy can either help or hinder their teaching instruction. To change a teacher’s self-efficacy requires more than just completion of a professional development experience. After completing the teacher preparation and professional experience, teachers must reflect, self-monitor, and evaluate its implications.

Critical reflection, as educators, is just as important to practice as it is for students. As a form of metacognition, critical reflection occurs when learners construct their own narratives based on learning experiences and professional practice (Ellis,
As teachers learn and practice new literacy strategies, it is crucial they reflect on their training. Schön’s (1983) seminal work on professional reflective practice paved the way to address critical reflection in teacher education. An examination of beliefs that emerged from these practices promoted the development of more flexible and intentional approaches to effective teaching and learning (Sockman & Sharma, 2008; Schoffner, 2009). Due to teachers’ resistant and preexisting beliefs, positive impact and improved self-efficacy took time. This confirmed Desimone’s (2009) assessment that teacher professional development must occur over a period of time and avoid quick workshop configurations. Mastery is a slow, intentional, and reflective process.

This reflection allowed teachers, as it did students, to examine the consequences through purposeful thinking and the results changed their own belief system. According to the capabilities theory, consequences have to be known and responded to. Teachers must pay attention to the consequences of actions in order to transform their own thinking to create meaningful experiences. Teachers need to compare what they already know from prior experiences to their new experience (Dewey, 1938). At this point, teachers’ ability to restructure, reorganize, and modify their belief systems based upon the reflection of the experience is critical because this is the time that growth takes place and the capacity for further experience exists.

2.4 Teaching Strategies to Teachers

Just as modeling literacy strategies over time is effective in students’ adoption of the strategies in practice, modeling is the primary means through which a teacher may engage in a vicarious experience and is an effective tool for promoting self-efficacy.
Vicarious experiences are activities in which a person witnesses others executing challenging tasks without adverse consequences. Vicarious experiences have more influence when the observer can identify and connect with the struggles the mentor has overcome. For example, when an 8th grade teacher can witness another 8th grade teacher successfully teach a math or social studies lesson using literacy strategies, it provides believability thus providing evidence that the observers can also improve if they expend more energy and persist in their efforts (Bandura, 1977).

Instead of a vicarious experience, using my pedagogical model, teacher candidates will take the comprehension strategies practiced in class and be able to work directly with struggling readers in the field and then come back together in class to discuss the struggles and issues that arose during the tutoring sessions. They will also be able to discuss with their peers successful strategies and positive experiences that took place. My pedagogical model will allow students to use varying strategies depending on the needs of their individual students. According to Bandura (1977), in order to be most effective, modeling should occur in diverse settings where different people demonstrate success using multiple strategies. As a teacher observes numerous examples of successful teaching, they stand a better chance of improving their own confidence.

According to Bandura (1997),

[i]t is difficult to acquire cognitive skills through modeling when covert thought processes are not adequately reflected in modeled actions. The problem of observability is overcome simply by having models verbalize their thought processes and strategies aloud as they engage in problem-solving activities. The
covert thought guiding the actions are thus made observable through overt representation. (p. 93)

The goal of the qualitative study done by Molly K. Ness (2008) was to investigate how secondary teachers support struggling readers if the teachers are not providing reading comprehension instruction. This study is a non-example of teachers not having the necessary strategies to teach reading skills. It confirms my stance that teachers need to have professional development to learn reading strategies that can be implemented in their classrooms. In the study by Ness (2008), evidence demonstrated that explicit comprehension instruction could benefit all students at all levels (e.g. Block & Pressley, 2002, cited by Ness 2008, p. 81), but secondary teachers did not or could not provide the necessary explicit reading strategies that would help students. Teachers were aware of their struggling readers in their classrooms (Ness, 2008), but instead of building reading skills, the teachers provided more content using didactic instruction, multiple presentations of information utilizing alternate learning modalities and various sources of texts as well as heterogeneous grouping, but the teachers did not focus on the root of the problem—the reading difficulties. By investigating the reading strategies teachers used, we could possibly improve teacher’s presentation of content material (Ness, 2008).

The methodology of this study focused on the reading comprehension instruction in secondary content-area classrooms. There were two phases to the study. The first phase looked at the degree or frequency teachers incorporate reading comprehension strategies into the instruction of their science and social studies classrooms. The second phase measured the teachers’ attitudes toward the need and usefulness of reading comprehension instruction in content-area classrooms (Ness, 2008, p. 83). The data
collected consisted of 2,400 minutes of observation and open-ended teacher interviews. The sample included ten teachers willing to be interviewed and observed. When comprehension strategies were observed, the strategy was noted as well as if collaboration took place. It was noted if the strategy was modeled to the students and whether or not there was guided practice leading to independence (Ness, 2008, p. 86). The interviews followed the observation and reflected on the teachers’ perception of the strategies they used in class in regards to content-area literacy, reading comprehension, and the struggling readers within their classroom. Teachers’ beliefs regarding reading and literacy instruction in their classrooms were also addressed.

The results concluded that eight of the ten teachers did not use comprehension instruction in their classes because the teachers felt pressured to cover the content due to state testing. Teachers also said they lacked the training in literacy integration; therefore they did not feeling comfortable teaching comprehension strategies (Ness, 2008). Teaching comprehension strategies was not a method utilized by the teachers, but they did present content in multiple contexts and modalities, incorporating “visual displays, internet representation, films, pictures, and tactile resources to convey information” (p. 89). Based on the results of Ness’ study, professional development needed to take place in order to have secondary teachers understand the importance of teaching reading comprehension skills as well as building their own confidence in teaching the strategies.

Teaching reading strategies is important for the growth of literacy practices, but teachers need to know what strategies they can use in their classrooms. Plucker (2006), explicitly taught reading comprehension strategies to teachers and encouraged all teachers to teach these strategies in order to see literacy growth in students. Teachers
must be taught how to teach comprehension strategies and how to engage and motivate with authentic materials. Not only must teachers be taught strategies, but also they must be persuaded that comprehension strategies do not merely belong in the reading/language arts classroom but in all content area classrooms. All teachers, no matter their content, can hook struggling, adolescent readers.

Another study by Molly Ness (2009) measured the frequency of reading comprehension instruction in middle and high school classrooms. Again, she focused on the teachers’ beliefs of the necessity of teaching these skills in their content-area classrooms in addition to the frequency of comprehension instruction. The results were very similar to her prior study. “Teachers did not feel qualified or responsible for providing explicit instruction on reading comprehension” (p. 143). This study included four middle school (2 science, 2 social studies) and four high school teachers (2 science, 2 social studies) in public schools. Data was collected over a three-month period from two sources: direct classroom observation and interviews (Ness, 2009). The results of this study supported her previous study.

Middle and secondary teachers are equally unlikely to utilize their instructional time to explain, model, and coach students through reading strategies. Unless avenues of teacher training and professional development convince teachers of the value of reading comprehension instruction, content coverage may trump the explicit strategy instruction which promotes students’ understandings of text. (Ness, 2009, p. 161)

Working with middle grades teacher candidates, the studies of Molly Ness’ and Plucker impacted me greatly and made me realize the necessity of my pedagogical model
and the importance of professional development for middle grades teaching candidates in comprehension strategies in all across all content areas utilizing various genres of literature in order for my candidates to implement reading instruction in the field with confidence.

2.5 Teacher Encouragement of Students

In Alisa Belzer’s study (2006, *Influences*) the teachers did very little to encourage the students to read outside the classroom or to read for pleasure. The result of her study showed that without the encouragement of the teachers, the learners did not even consider or think to read for pleasure. The impact of teacher encouragement and how this has the potential to increase adult literacy practices in their day-to-day lives was uncovered in Belzer’s study. Instructors can “help adult learners understand the importance of reading more each day, reading widely from a range of text, and reading for a range of purposes (Belzer, 2006), and this will improve learner engagement. Providing future educators with authentic opportunities to tutor struggling readers using high interest, authentic reading materials while engaging their students in dialogue had a two-fold purpose: this opportunity encouraged struggling readers to critically think and build their comprehension skills and was also a perfect situation for teacher candidates to guide, model, and practice effective, comprehension strategies and create a skillset that will be needed when they enter their own classrooms and encounter struggling readers. These strategies needed to be modeled and practiced, and this is a component of my pedagogical model that needs to be implemented. The discussions and reflections will also be integral to my model emphasizing the importance of teaching reading skills in all
content areas and allowing my teacher candidates to see first-hand the impact on struggling readers.

A qualitative study by Dixie Massey and Jan Lewis (2011) was created centering around 16 middle and high school preservice teachers who were studied over a two-year period in order to look at their literacy learning in a teaching environment. This study was included in this review because a hole exists surrounding professional development and its necessity. Although this study was centered around middle and high school preservice teachers, it can be transferred to the professional development of current teachers. Previous studies proved that teachers are uncomfortable teaching literacy strategies and this study showed how professional development can benefit teachers to improve their attitude toward literacy instruction and awareness of the necessity to teach literacy practices within the classroom.

Data were collected regarding assessment, attitude, and motivation. Each of the preservice teachers learned about teaching literacy when they had not thought of literacy instruction and what it entailed prior to the teaching experience (Massey & Lewis, 2011). The tutors learned how to use literacy assessments and how to interpret data from literacy tests. They learned about the range of reading ability levels among students from the same grade and the importance of selecting the right book for the right student based upon reading levels. This was an effective representation of what I am hoping my pedagogical model will do for my teacher candidates.

The tutors in Massey and Lewis’ study (2011) also learned about the attitudes and motivation of struggling readers. When one tutor was interviewed, he expressed how his student cried whenever he had to read. The student’s prior experience with reading
currently frightened him; therefore causing a learning screen or filter preventing information to flow through and process. Tutors also realized the importance of having access to books and resources. They wanted their students to have choices, but the resources were lacking. Due to the training the tutors received, these middle and high school tutors recognized the power of knowing their learner (Massey & Lewis, 2011).

The results of this study were supportive of prior studies. Knowing the whole learner is integral to creating appropriate instruction. Having middle and high school students teach literacy strategies helped the tutors learn the importance of literacy methods such as teaching vocabulary before reading, using prior knowledge to improve comprehension as well as teaching explicit comprehension strategies through the use of authentic texts that students can connect with in their day-to-day lives. Just as these tutors connected theory and practice from their tutoring experience, so should teacher candidates. Teacher candidates need to make connections with student needs, interests and motivational factors, and they need to model fluent reading and teach comprehension strategies in order to build literacy within their content area (Massey & Lewis, 2011). Literacy instruction cannot be ignored.

As Massey and Lewis’ (2011) study suggested, high interest, authentic materials engage and motivate young adult, adolescent tutors who are going to work with struggling readers. The model used by Massey and Lewis in training the high school tutors could also be a component of my pedagogical model, preparing my teacher candidates to implement reading strategies in the field when they begin tutoring.

As stated throughout this review, often instructors do not model comprehension strategies and show students how to use them because many teachers are not comfortable
or do not know the strategies themselves. According to these studies, teachers did not have the skills, desire, or the confidence to teach reading skills and many thought that instruction belonged in the elementary or in language arts/reading classes (Ness, 2009; Lovett et al., 2012). Teachers had to be convinced of the value of teaching explicit comprehension skills within their own content, but they did not know how to teach these skills nor did they see the value in doing so. The new, common core has literacy plastered across every content area, but these teachers had not received the instruction themselves, so how were they expected to teach these skills?

Professional development was the key to changing the attitudes of instructors. Educators must see the value in teaching literacy skills whether they teach science, social studies, math, or language arts. It was not just a “language arts thing.” It was an “all content area thing.” When teachers were made aware of the struggling readers in their classes, piling on more content heavy material was not going to help their students. Teaching the students strategies would (Lovett et al., 2012).

Teacher training and professional development seminars that demonstrated, modeled, and allowed teachers to practice the instruction of comprehension strategies which would build their students’ reading skills in all content areas was imperative.

The ability to read, write, and think effectively—belongs at the very top of the reform agenda. There is every reason to believe that these capacities, if acquired across the disciplines, will change lives by the millions and will redefine the possibilities of public education. (Schmoker, 2007, p. 488)
Convincing teachers the value of literacy instruction and the importance of comprehension strategies in addition to knowing the whole learner is vital to literacy success. Educators must help students connect the content material to their own lives to maintain a high interest engagement. This will help us develop appropriate curriculum which will motivate literacy learners and increase the frequency they engage in reading practices and utilize comprehension strategies when reading. This will develop literacy of all students across all content areas. The more authentic the classroom, the greater the change in literacy practices (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). It is every teachers’ responsibility to develop functioning, literate young adults. Through professional development and training, we, as educators, can meet this challenge and hook our struggling, adolescent readers.

2.6 Teacher’s Understanding of the Whole Learner

As Dewey suggests throughout his writings, knowing a students’ past experiences is integral to their learning because it influences students’ reception of educational experiences both positively and negatively; therefore an instructor’s exploration of students’ experiences and interests will aid in the effective development of literacy materials that will be authentic and meaningful for the students. “But man lives in a world where each occurrence is charged with echoes and reminiscences of what has gone before, where each event is a reminder of other things” (Dewey, 1920, p. 2); therefore educators need to understand these past experiences in order to connect readers to the current literacy experience.

Discussions are a large component of my pedagogical model, both in my classroom environment and in the tutoring situation. Learning to have effective
conversations will help teacher candidates elicit responses and help students to critically think. Conversing with students about their goals and examining their individual characteristics not only assists instructors in creating a whole picture of the individual learner, but also helps teachers design materials that will engage the learner. Knowing the reading practices learners utilize outside of the classroom and their reasoning for engaging in these literacy practices also helps guide instruction (Plucker, 2006).

Students’ cultures are an integral part to their understanding of the world around them, and in one classroom, there are multiple cultures represented, including the instructors. Looking through the students’ cultural lens, educators can provide students with the resources they need to make meaning and connect the content to their own prior experiences and cultural surroundings. In this literacy experience, the teacher candidates will be looking through the cultural lens of just one student, rather than an entire class. It is a perfect opportunity to practice before entering a full classroom.

One example that I found that represented the one-on-one tutoring process my students would be engaged in is the study done by Victoria Purcell-Gates and recorded in Other People’s Words (1995). She tutored her struggling readers for two years; whereas my candidates will be tutoring only for five weeks, but the process Purcell-Gates went through to understand her students was representative of what I would like to see my students do. I saw a large number of components in her study that supported my field component of my pedagogical model. Purcell-Gates tutored Jenny and Donny, and understanding their culture, experiences, and interests was important in her development of appropriate, high-interest reading materials and literacy strategies that would be most engaging, promoting the most literacy growth.
Purcell-Gates explained that societal perceptions could influence a student’s literacy development. In her study of Jenny and Donny, who were illiterate, she uncovered the sociocultural background of their family in order to guide her reading instruction. She had to understand that society’s misconceptions of the poor and minority created educative obstacles to those students who believe “society’s perception” of their abilities before she began tutoring Jenny and Donny.

The sociocultural theory of learning states:

all communities have appropriate cognitive abilities, albeit different ones to fit varied life situations. Similarly, language variation between groups reflects community use and norms, resulting in dialects and registers that must be judged not relative to some ‘perfect’ language but rather to their effectiveness in varying contexts. (p. 4)

Jenny believed society’s perception of her which hindered her learning because Jenny lacked confidence. Purcell-Gates emphasized the need of educators to know the whole learner and to understand the learners’ “cultural contexts within which they have developed, learned to interpret who they are in relation to others, and learned how to process, interpret, or decode, their world” (p. 5). In Other People’s Words, Purcell-Gates studied an illiterate family who came from Appalachia to the city. Before beginning any instruction with Jenny, the mother, or Donny, the son, Purcell-Gates had to understand their experiences and interactions with the world around them.

Purcell-Gates also had to understand the reason Jenny wanted to learn to read. This, too, helped Purcell-Gates interpret Jenny’s goals and purpose for her goals. Part of my pedagogical model encourages the teacher candidates to uncover their struggling
readers’ goals which will help candidates formulate their readers’ motivation to read. This information will help guide their instruction. Jenny’s purpose to learning to read was that she was “concerned about the effect of her nonliteracy on Donny’s ability to learn to read and write in school” (Purcell-Gates, 1995, p. 14). Jenny was driven and determined to read to help her kids.

As the meetings with Jenny and Donny continued, Purcell-Gates delved deeply into Jenny’s sociocultural background and Jenny’s experiences. During my teacher candidates’ field experience, they are to continue uncovering the experiences of the students by being observant and listening to the comments of the students while they converse and interact with the literature. Purcell-Gates found out that Jenny grew up in a family where her father had difficulty keeping a job and was a heavy drinker, and her mother had two jobs and was a heavy smoker. Although Jenny had obstacles in her family, Jenny’s family meant the world to her. The investigation into their backgrounds supported Purcell-Gates sociocultural framework and how those experiences impacted Jenny and Donny’s current mindset. Teacher candidates have to understand the mindset of their struggling readers and their perceptions and interactions with the world around them.

As Purcell-Gates researched Jenny and Donny, she also had to look at her own experiences with struggling readers and what she previously knew of people’s connection with literature. The circumstances of Jenny and Donny were not what she had encountered with other students. Normally, when children are born, they were exposed to reading and writing in their homes and community from birth until their entrance into school. Print, of some sort, generally had a place in most homes. Young children would
“pretend” to read and write because they had been exposed to reading and writing in their homes and environment—this exposure was their sociocultural influences that impacted literacy. This was not the current situation, so Purcell-Gates’ awareness of her own mindset to the present situation had to be connected for her to understand Jenny and Donny’s situation. Purcell-Gates said, “Everything they learn about written language before schooling is constrained by what they learn about its functions and the values placed on its various forms within their particular sociolinguistic communities and cultures” (Purcell-Gates, 1995, p. 46). As educators, we need to understand our students’ cultural experiences may negatively affect their acquisition of literacy. Literacy acquisition depends upon children’s interaction with text. Jenny’s family did not have interaction with written text. Purcell-Gates stated, “We are able to learn only what we can experience. Language learning, in particular, requires both the existence of language in the environment and the opportunity to interact with language users.” (p. 41). Jenny and Donny’s interaction was limited beyond what Purcell-Gates had experienced in her past instructional experiences.

As teacher candidates enter the field, they will have to realize that learning about the students will be on-going. It will continue throughout the sessions as discussions with their struggling reader ensue. As tutoring proceeded for Purcell-Gates, she demonstrated her constant discovery of new information such as another purpose to Jenny’s wanting to read. Jenny wanted to be self-sufficient in addition to helping her children read—she had a purpose to reading and was self-motivated; therefore she chose to enroll in a community college. Throughout instruction, Purcell-Gates continued to delve deeply into the literacy and school experiences of Jenny and her family in order to understand
strategies they used to understand and function in the world around them without the use of print. She discovered that they used codes and symbols to read their worlds. Purcell-Gates realized through these investigations that skill-based learning was not an effective strategy to build the literacy skills of Jenny and Donny; therefore Purcell-Gates wanted to discover the instruction that would benefit them the most. As Purcell-Gates continued through the process with the family, she would pause to make connections with the past occurrences in order to connect them to the future events and the direction she wanted to go to help them become literate.

Based on this theoretical framework, Purcell-Gates created her instruction for Donny using “authentic functions of print” (1995, p. 71) that connected the instruction and materials to real purposes. The goal was that Donny connect and make meaning of print to his world by learning to code—making sense of the print—decoding and encoding what was read. Because this link of phonics to meaningful text was created, literacy growth was seen. After the first year of instruction at the Literacy Center, Victoria Purcell-Gates started utilizing different genres of text since schools tend to use more expository texts than narratives. She felt the exposure to different genres would help Donny function and “catch up” more quickly with his classmates. All the texts that were used were of high interest to Donny which kept him engaged in the material, and Purcell-Gates read orally, so he could “hear” and have fluent reading modeled.

Throughout instruction, Purcell-Gates continued to listen to Donny to tweak instruction and channel it toward his interests. Dewey’s theoretical model stated, “It is an active process of transforming the existent situation” (1920, p. 177). My teacher candidates will need to revisit their plans and reconstruct them based upon the needs and
interests of the students that they continue to learn about just as Purcell-Gates did with Jenny and Donny.

“Literacy is a cultural activity” (Purcell-Gates, 1995, p. 96); therefore Purcell-Gates stated, “My stance as a teacher was thus that of a guide into the world of literate activity” (p.97). Bringing culture into instruction and linking them versus isolating the two is imperative to literacy growth and finding meaning. As Purcell-Gates created the curriculum for Donny, she stated,

I intentionally worked to move print in its various functions and forms into his life so that he, as a language learner, could acquire written language concepts from which he could productively interpret reading and writing instruction. (p. 98)

Throughout the two-years of tutoring Jenny and Donny, Purcell-Gates looked for literacy obstacles. An obstacle Jenny had to overcome is her low self-confidence. Purcell-Gates solution was to use a journal, so Jenny learned to read her own writing. Because Jenny could not write, Purcell-Gates transcribed the writing for Jenny, but Jenny learned to read the text, being familiar with it since it was her original writing. Providing Jenny with her own text built confidence and pride. These writings were then utilized as a mode of communication with Jenny which helped Jenny think of her audience as she wrote.

Purcell-Gates would change genres of texts and strategies when she thought it was appropriate and would connect with their experiences and enhance their learning. It was important for Purcell-Gates to have this background knowledge to discover what literacy strategies were the most effective for Jenny. As the years progressed, Jenny read books for specific purposes. “She reported that relatives had warned her of the poisonous
snakes in the woods and hollers, and Jenny wanted to prepare the boys for the time they moved permanently to the area” (Purcell-Gates, 1995, p. 113)—purposeful, meaningful, authentic reading.

As a result of two years of instruction, Purcell-Gates noted the growth of Donny and Jenny. “Jenny’s confidence in herself as a reader grew and she began to decipher more and more of the print around her” (1995, p. 139). New opportunities opened up for the entire family because they now knew events were occurring; whereas before they couldn’t read the print on the notices; therefore they did not know what activities were taking place in town or at school. She stated that initially, “I concluded that print did not signify for Donny…; it did not code their world; it did not mediate their lives” (p. 133), but after Purcell-Gates worked with the family for two years, she saw functional literacy having a place in their lives. Purcell-Gates continued: “Print had entered Jenny’s home…print was being used by relevant members of the home and this use was a social one, by virtue of the social nature of families” (p. 134).

Victoria Purcell-Gates worked with Jenny and Donny for two years; whereas my students will be working with their students for five or six weeks. During this time, they can follow the strategies Purcell-Gates used: continual conversations to uncover students’ sociocultural background, literacy experiences, and interests to look for affective filters that may emerge that hinder reception of literacy practices; observation and listening during the sessions to continue guiding weekly lesson plans; functional high-interest literacy materials; readers’ purpose to improving their literacy skills, and any additional connections that can be made in order to make reading functional and authentic. As an instructor, Purcell-Gates had to continually revisit her plan as events
occurred throughout the experience. She had to connect the different phases of the experience together in order to create a relationship between them to guide her instruction to bring the experience to completion. Jenny volunteered to be in the reading program just as the struggling readers in our program did. This showed Purcell-Gates her motivation and a desire to learn and improve.

2.6.1 Individual Characteristics and Reading Practices

The study by Daryl Mellard, Margaret Becker, and Sara Prewett (2007) was also important to my pedagogical model because they, too, looked at individual characteristics of individuals who volunteered to be in adult education literacy classes and related those characteristics to their literacy practices in their qualitative study. I was also drawn to this study because the researchers used a structured interview questionnaire to gather data about the reading practices of the participants. As I look to structure my pedagogical model, I will be having my students practice using structured interviews to gather data as well; although my students will only be gathering data on one student versus a large sample as Mellard, Becker, and Prewett did. They surveyed 213 individuals in order to examine individual characteristics that included race, gender, education level, reading level, learning disability status, and employment status (Mellard et al., 2007, p. 189). A structured interview questionnaire was given to collect data regarding demographic and reading practice information. Then a reading practice score was calculated to represent the reading practices. The reading practice score included the frequency individuals engaged in written material such as books, newspapers, magazines, technical materials, and work document.
One result the researchers found was that adults attending education classes tend to be under the age of 25 and had low levels of education (Mellard et al., 2007). Age and education seemed to be an indicator of learner outcomes as well. When reading practices were assessed, it was found that as the age group was older, more participants read newspapers, books and reference materials. Younger learners tended to read magazines. Participants between the ages of 16-18 read newspapers, magazines, letters, notes, and emails most often. 19-24 year olds read newspapers, letters, notes, or emails most often, while those 25-60 tended to read books, work memos, letters, notes, and emails (Mellard et al., 2007, p. 199). These categorical tendencies were important to my research as my teacher candidates begin to develop high interest literacy curricula to meet the needs of their struggling literacy learners. Knowing the tendencies of 16-18 year olds and their reading practices directly relates to what my teacher candidates will be engaged in within my class. They will need to begin collecting high interest reading materials, and this study broke down the tendencies of 16-18 year olds and what they generally read—the literacy materials used were for functional purposes.

Just as Mellard, Becker, and Prewett looked at the individual characteristics and reading practices of the learners in order to create a broader scope of the learner to meet their literacy needs, Victoria Purcell-Gates, Sophie Degener, Erik Jacobson, and Marta Soler (2002) conducted a study that looked at the reading practices exercised outside the classroom, but also explored the relationship between the sociocultural practices of adult literacy instruction and the inclusion of high-interest texts and materials and examined the idea that specific types of literacy instruction would positively change literacy practices of learners outside of school (Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, & Soler, 2002).
As I looked at this study, I found myself wanting to know the specific types of literacy instruction that would positively change literacy practices in order that I could possibly incorporate those into my pedagogical model. The quantitative study focused on the type of text and frequency with which learners engaged in reading and writing activities. “Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices associated with different domains of life that are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices” (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002, p.70). The study investigated the importance of skills being practiced and learners having automaticity of skills. Automaticity was integral to the growth in reading comprehension. Just because automaticity was reached in one genre didn’t mean that automaticity in another content area was reached. This study examined the different types of textual contexts and what was inherent in literacy practices when altering the genre (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). The study also explored the frequency of reading and writing and improved literacy skills.

The theoretical framework surrounding this study was the sociocultural theory of literacy development that looked at the contexts and sociocultural communities and how they use print, practice literacy, and engage in literacy practices (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). Literacy practices are those practices that learners utilize and draw into their lives.

This study was motivated by the interest in the cognitive and linguistic effects of reading and writing different types of written texts (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). Literacy practices for this study referred to the text for socially situated purposes and the reading and writing of those texts. It focused on literacy instruction and how it changed literacy practices. Texts and activities that were used were authentic or “real-life” (p. 74).
Materials ranged from life skills to problem solving to phonics and word family drills. To make sure activities were sincerely real-life, the individual needs of the students had to be considered, so activities were student-generated or student-requested.

The sample for this study include 159 adults ages 18-68 (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). These adults had to be working on their literacy skills and attended classes in 22 different states: Adult Basic Education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and classes focused on helping adults pass their Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED) (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). A questionnaire was again used to uncover the literacy practices being used outside of school and the relationship between the adoption of new types of literacy practices and the increase in frequency of using these practices outside of school (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). The questionnaire clarified the literacy activities that were used, the involvement of the students, and the degree to which the students helped in instructional decisions and use of materials. The questionnaire also had items regarding the extent to which the materials reflected real-life experiences (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002). In addition to the questionnaire, there was an interview conducted to find out what participants thought about the activities and texts as well as the degree to which real-life materials and activities are used (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002).

This study helped me see the amount of information my students could gather through the use of interest surveys; although the surveys used by the teacher candidates would be verbally administered rather than written. They would need to be well-versed in the interview practices, probing for further information, and interpretation of data to understand relationships or emerging themes about literacy practices of their struggling readers and the prior literacy experiences encountered. The researchers in this study by
Purcell-Gates et al. had to examine the change of instruction from inauthentic to authentic and the propensity of students to change literacy practices. The conclusion was that students did change their literacy practices more often when instructed in a class rated highly authentic. The more authentic the classroom, the greater the change in literacy practices (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002).

No change was found between the literacy practices and the students sharing power in the decision making of the instruction. This was interesting because the logic that “students will engage in literacy more in their lives if they can truly influence what they learn to read and write in school” (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002, p. 88) made sense, but the results from this study did not show a change in practices. The results of the study did provide some insight into factors that change literacy practices. One of the greatest findings was that the level of literacy of students influenced the change. “The degree to which a student can read would naturally affect the types of things he or she will read or the frequency of reading and writing events in that student’s life” (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002, p. 88). Those students with lower literacy levels changed literacy practices to a greater degree than those with higher literacy levels, regardless of instructional factors. If we could make school more attractive and engaging to students, after previous school failures and low self-esteem due to those failures, the greater the growth we can expect (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002).

The final result was simple and straightforward and related directly to my own research since my students will be working with young adults. Literacy practices of adults can change in nature of the practices and in frequency as a result of real-life literacy practices. The results also showed that “involving students in real-life or
authentic literacy activities in the classroom is statistically significantly more related to
growth and development of literacy practices than decontextualized skill work” (Purcell-
Gates et al., 2002, p. 90). In addition, those students who did not have the transference
of reading and writing to their out-of-school lives would be more greatly impacted by the
authentic reading and writing in the class.

It is indeed beneficial…to incorporate materials and literacy activities in the
instructional program that reflect real-life texts and purposes for reading and
writing them to the greatest degree possible. Reading newspapers to learn the
news relevant to the students’ lives and interests, writing letters that get sent to
real people in the lives of the students, reading books and discussing them as
readers who respond, writing notices and accounts for a newsletter that gets
printed and read by real people…all of these types of activities can, according to
the findings of this study, lead to substantive changes in the ways that students
create literate lives outside of the classroom. (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002, p. 91)

2.6.2 Learner’s Experiences and Interests

Just as Purcell-Gates et al. stressed the importance of instructors looking at the
real-life interest of learners, Wesley Houp’s (2009) qualitative study followed Lana and
her instructor and focused on the importance of a learner’s experiences and interests and
how these can provide us with material, themes, and issues to create an effective, timely
curriculum. This does not mean that instructors should not use the current and traditional
curricula, but the interests and experiences would be in addition to the current curricula—as
a supplement (Houp, 2009). This was pertinent information as my teacher candidates
enter the teaching field. The current curriculum cannot be ignored, but high-interest materials could supplement the curriculum.

This is another study that emphasized the importance of instructors understanding the learners’ experiences in their literate lives outside the classroom. Lana (pseudonym) was an adult learner who brought a considerable amount of experiences with her to the classroom. Her mother died when she was seven; her father left Lana to be raised by her aunt; Lana was pregnant and dropped out of school when she was 16 (Houp, 2009). Lana voluntarily enrolled in adult education classes. Although her previous experiences in school were not positive, she wanted more for herself. She thoroughly enjoyed writing, so Susan, Lana’s instructor, created literacy curriculum that emphasized Lana’s strength in writing. Lana’s writing reflected her family situations and relationships while using metaphors, similes, sarcasm, humor, and rhyme. The instructor created a literacy plan for Lana that focused on her strengths. As my teacher candidates work with their struggling readers and administer the IRI, the key is to work with the struggling readers’ strengths and build from there using high-interest, purposeful materials.

The result of this study was simple: learner-centered approach to literacy. Educators need to know their learners. Instructors need to know students’ interests and experiences inside and outside the classroom and utilize these experiences to give the learners purpose to the literacy experience. As I construct my pedagogical model, realizing I only have a short amount of time, I need to structure class so my students can learn how to draw from the surveys and assessments the information they need to provide instruction utilizing the struggling reader’s literacy strengths and experiences.
Our worlds--past, present, and future—are constructed (and reconstructed) through language; literacy (written, spoken, read, or heard language) can be conceived of as a process of orientation to our worlds. (Houp, 2009, p. 702)

As the previous studies have suggested, instructors need to understand the learners’ world from their point of view in order to provide them with literacy experiences that can be transactional and meaningful. Alisa Belzer’s (2004) qualitative study investigated how prior learning contexts influence learning in new contexts. This study was important to my pedagogical model because the interviews were one-on-one versus using questionnaires. As a part of my pedagogical model, allowing students the opportunity to conduct one-on-one interviews to extract important literacy data to guide their instruction will be advantageous for the teacher candidates and in the end, for the struggling readers who will benefit through tutoring.

The purpose of the study was to understand learners’ formal educational experiences as well as their beliefs about teaching and learning and reading and writing. The participants were five African American women who were attending literacy classes through the Women’s Community Education Program (WCEP) that met twice a week for 3.5 hours per session (Belzer, 2004). Each participant was interviewed between four and eight times. As the interviews progressed over time, themes developed which included: teachers, structures and activities, emotional support and roles and responsibilities.

The categories that emerged were based on the women’s past educational experiences and were compared to their current experiences (Belzer, 2004). The results of the study concluded that prior experiences act as screens which can hinder new learning from occurring. If the WCEP classes did not parallel prior experiences,
sometimes learning stopped because the women felt uncomfortable, yet the opposite was also true. If prior experiences in school were negative, that, too, could hinder learning, so the women were encouraged to be open-minded to new literacy practices and learning opportunities (Belzer, 2004).

Like the previous studies, Belzer’s study demonstrated the importance of knowing the learners. By understanding the learners’ past experiences, instructors can avoid certain practices in the classroom that make the learners uncomfortable, but on the flip side, through collaboration, instructors and students can work together to create a curriculum that the learner can grow in literacy practices. Past experiences do shape learners’ capacity to build new knowledge, and educators need to be aware of the learners’ past in order to build their future (Belzer, 2004).

In the study by Maurice Taylor (2006), the major questions to be answered were: what informal learning activities do adults with low literacy skills engage in and how do these activities relate to their literacy practices? The minor question was whether or not there was also an issue of access problems associated with formal literacy programs and how adults with little formal education learn. This study was based on the situated cognition theory. This theory argues that knowledge resides not only in individual minds but also is distributed across all social practices (Taylor, 2006). “Sociolinguistic perspective asserts that literacy practices are drawn from the everyday experience of people lives” (p. 501).

My interest in the study had to do with how the literacy coordinators who were prepared through training because the preparation of my teacher candidates before they enter the field is key to understanding my participants’ whole literacy experience while
gathering data, developing lesson plans, building reading skills, and learning and developing as future educators of struggling readers. In Taylor’s study (2006), five literacy coordinators across Canada who represented different regions and literacy program models (family, workplace, and community) were trained in ethnographic research in a two-day workshop. They were trained in observation, field-notetaking, building trust with the learner, literacy learning events, conducting interviews and write ups, and rudiments of content analysis. These were categories that I found to be important in implementing into my pedagogical model because teacher candidates would need to gather data in the field that would influence their tutoring content. Taylor’s study, trained six male and four female adults with less than nine years of formal education were included in the study.

The result of the study was that learning could take place when there was need, motivation, and an opportunity for learning. It could happen anywhere. Taylor stated that “types of learning activities outside of formal and nonformal adult education…can take place through their everyday lives at home, at work, and in the community” (Taylor, 2006, p. 501). In order to engage adults in literacy activities and create more positive attitudes toward reading, they must find reading useful. They have to see a need or a purpose for reading that can connect with their everyday lives whether they are at home, at work, or in the community. If they see the usefulness in reading, reading will become self-directed, incidental, and tacit. An additional conclusion of this study was that the learning process entailed several components including learning strategies, life experiences, agency, or lack of agency, and the role of emotions (Taylor, 2006.) Informal learning was considered an important means of acquiring and maintaining
knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Informal reading opportunities were being practiced in homes, communities, and workplace environments and needed to be enhanced with learning and educational intervention. The informal reading opportunities did not have the confines or presence of an externally imposed curriculum of formal and nonformal educational institutional programs or constructs (Taylor, 2006); therefore making it more appealing. In order for these data to be gathered, the literacy coordinators needed the proper training.

2.7 Teacher’s Impact on Student Engagement and Motivation

Attitude of the teacher and learner are important elements when looking at student engagement in reading materials. Jennifer McCarty Plucker (2006) taught 9th grade struggling readers. She had seen disdain from these students in regard to reading, so she decided to implement high interest reading materials to engage and motivate her students. The preparation for reading instruction was key to Plucker’s success and will be key for my teacher candidates’ success as well. Her desire to provide professional development to other teachers was also a reason I found her study fascinating. Her method for accomplishing her task of engagement was threefold. She kept her enrollment numbers down, so students could receive more one-on-one instruction; students read for 25 of the 50-minute class silently reading for enjoyment every day to increase the frequency of their reading, and finally she worked with her students to set goals for reading outside of school (Plucker, 2006).

In order for the students to read for enjoyment and be engaged, Plucker (2006) had to make sure her room was stocked with high interest young adult novels while creating a comfortable environment for reading. She also wanted to provide professional
development for other teachers, so she took meticulous notes. “Daily access to engaging books is imperative for the success of growing readers” (p. 60). Finding the right books at the right level for the students was also important because the books could not be too difficult, but they could not be too easy for the students either. When reading silently, the students needed to understand what they were reading, so as the program began the teachers helped the students choose the books that were right for them, and then by mid-year, students were able to choose books independently of the teachers. In order to improve adolescent engagement, Plucker stated that it was important to offer students choice and collaboration, but as the material became more difficult, the choices became slightly more limited, but the students still had choices (Plucker, 2006).

The other piece to Plucker’s (2006) study utilized the sociocultural framework as she uncovered the literacy practices that students engage in outside of school, creating a link between the two. Plucker used “online discussion forums, videos, digital posters, podcasts, texting, and classroom social networking sites to engage students and allows them to use skills they already have for academic purposes” (p. 62). All of these literacy practices and explicit instruction using high interest materials engaged the students. When reading aloud to work on fluency, Plucker had the students read into a microphone. They made the fluency activities into games and the kids had a ball while learning. She had them read at the beginning and at the end of the week and compared their readings, reflecting on the differences. They prepared to read stories to first graders which gave the students purpose in reading and practicing reading aloud (2006). Because the literacy activities were of high interest and engaging, students were excited and motivated to read.
As a result of this study, Plucker (2006) said the mean and median scores of students showed accelerated growth, and their enthusiasm was evident. The students improved reading scores on the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress by 10 points and this was compared to the on-grade level peers who only gained between 3.6-4 points on the same test. The participating students also saw academic success in other classes as well which illustrated transference of the literacy practices (Plucker, 2006). The enthusiasm and engagement of Plucker’s students demonstrated a change in their attitude which initially was an attitude of disdain toward reading. The explicit comprehension strategies taught by Plucker will be examined later in this review.

Plucker was not the only educator who believed having access to books is important. Padak and Bardine (2004) believed using real books that are readily available at public libraries was integral to engagement and reading improvement. They discovered that adult learners who were attending Adult Basic Education classes (ABE) could not only be engaged in reading, but also according to Padak and Bardine’s qualitative study, interest, motivation, frequency of reading, and reading achievement could all improve. In their study they stated, “When students have both interest in what is being taught and access to interesting materials, learning, motivation, effort, and attitudes improve” (Hidi, 1991; Schiefele, 1991 as cited by Padak & Bardine, 2004, p. 127). Karen Baker was an adult literacy teacher who provided her students with authentic and engaging instruction (Padak & Bardine, 2004). She implemented comprehension strategies to high interest reading material, and she saw instant results. Nonreaders became active participants, reading, vocabulary, and comprehension skills improved, and students began writing outside the classroom more frequently (2004).
Hal Beder also addressed student engagement in his study (2006). He conducted a 5-year qualitative study within 6 classrooms. His study looked at contextual factors that affected engagement rather than exploring cognitive engagement. He wanted this study to answer the question: What contextual factors affect adult literacy engagement (Plucker, 2006)?

Beder (2006) used grounded theory which means researchers gathered information and looked for themes and categories as they were seen in a given context. Grounded theory was efficient when analyzing behavior and contextual factors. Beder’s data were collected by analyzing videos of classroom behavior, ethnographic observations, and interviews (p. 7). He used individual group instruction (IGI) in five of the classrooms and small group in the sixth. In the IGI classrooms, learners worked on their own with the material chosen for them.

According to the data, three factors influenced engagement of the learners: the instructional system, teachers’ behaviors, and classroom norms (Beder, 2006, p. 9). In the IGI classrooms, learners’ literacy skills were measured, and then the learners worked at their own pace with the materials that were provided. Teacher’s assisted the learners when they struggled and gave the learners more difficult materials when success was observed. With IGI, learners had a tremendous amount of control over learning and their own engagement. The parts of IGI of the instructional system that drove engagement were: giving appropriate materials to the learners, keeping learners engaged while waiting for help, and giving help to the learners effectively in a one-on-one teaching environment (Beder, 2006).
Engagement was measured by observing eye movement, pencil movement, and pages turning. This piece of the study drew my attention because my teacher candidates will need to observe behaviors as they interpret data. Careful observation is another component that can be included in the pedagogical model along with what actually engaged the learners. In Beder’s study, learners who were interviewed said they were highly engaged because they were focused on accomplishing their learning goals. The learners were motivated to improve their literacy skills because they had short-term and long-term career goals that they wanted to meet. These people attended classes voluntarily which also contributed to the degree of motivation (Beder, 2006). In other words, they were engaged because they had a purpose in what they are doing. The results were conclusive--the learners were highly engaged, and the context of the adult literacy education classroom shaped learners’ engagement in instruction (Beder, 2006).

In the qualitative study done by John Guthrie, Solomon Alao, and Jennifer Rinehart (1997), the engagement in reading for young adolescents was also being measured, and frameworks were being developed to motivate learners to read. “Reading engagement is defined here as the motivated use of strategies for reading” (Guthrie, 1996 as cited by Guthrie et al., 1997 p. 439). Engaged readers “have deep-seated motivational goals, which include being committed to the subject matter, wanting to learn the content, believing in one’s own ability, and wanting to share understandings from learner” (Guthrie et al., 1997, p. 439). Engaged readers desire to learn and read more. This study linked reading engagement and motivation. The researchers worked at National Reading Research Center (NRCC), and the importance of motivation to maintain reading engagement of children was of the greatest concern. Less motivated students did not
necessarily know how to critically think, so if educators could motivate students, they would try to connect new information and its application to their everyday lives. They would learn to discriminate information and monitor their own comprehension (Guthrie et al., 1997). Instructional frameworks and programs were being created to enhance literacy engagement.

Mary Ryan asked the question in her qualitative study (2008): How do I engage students and improve their literacy skills at the same time? Her study was based on multiliteracy pedagogic framework, and her goal was to use authentic projects as vehicles for learning key skills and knowledge processes. “We can successfully plan authentic literacy projects that have basic skills as integral to the practices required for the success of the authentic outcomes” (Ryan, 2008, p. 191).

According to Ryan (2008), authentic learning experiences should be community-based, cross-curricular and connected to students’ complex textual lives in order to engage the learner and build their comprehension skills. Not all students achieve the same outcomes in the same way because of the diverse needs of students. Using authentic projects help students build on their strengths and achieve outcomes by teaching learners key academic skills. All of these conditions matter if we are to engage students…as successful and motivated learners.

Another goal of Ryan’s (2008) was helping learners take responsibility of their learning. Middle grade students experienced change from day to day, and they were becoming aware of the world around them; therefore these students needed to “be engaged through connectedness to the world, intellectual stimulation” (p. 191). Social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors could influence their performances at
school...”so how we engage middle years students so that they feel involved, are stimulated intellectually, and are also supported academically to develop the skills and knowledge they need” (p. 191) is integral to their literacy growth.

In Ryan’s study (2008), a teacher implemented a multiliteracy, authentic project. As a result, standardized test scores improved dramatically because students were engaged more often and for longer periods of time in sustained literacy tasks. We could still teach basics, but “they must be part of the new “basics” of multimodal texts, multiliteracies, technologies, collaboration, new ways of knowing, innovation, problem solving, and creativity (Ryan, 2008).

Engagement and motivation go hand-in-hand as we have seen throughout these studies. Knowing what interests students, how they feel about themselves as readers and the value they put on reading are important questions to be answered by students because this will give teachers insight into their motivation (Caldwell, 2008). Alisa Belzer (2006) who has done research in adult literacy asked the question in Learners of Learning to Read: What contributes to adult literacy learners’ success in reading development? Four factors were key to the development of literacy skills: learners’ motivation and determination, program characteristics, including instructional strategies and relationships with the instructor; reading practice; and learner support system.

Belzer discovered that motivation of learners had to be somewhat intrinsic. They had to have their own willingness and drive to push themselves to improve their reading skills. The learners had to have a desire to read. “The program can only present it to you. You’ve got to take it the rest of the way...The student has to be thirsty for this” (Belzer, 2006, Learners, p. 24). Also important to the success of students was the
relationship they had with the instructors. “The emphasis that the students placed on personal relationships with their instructors suggest the importance of a commitment to the individual above and beyond the content and technique of instruction” (Belzer, 2006, *Learners*, p. 24).

Motivation in the program also came from the instructional strategies utilized in the program. As stated earlier, there was a sociocultural connection to motivation. Students were motivated and engaged when there was a use of technology and the use of spending one-on-one time with the students, and making connections with the learners’ daily lives. The materials needed to be interesting and relevant to the learners (Belzer, 2006, *Learners*). The learners had to see purpose in what they were learning and reading.

Students also mentioned that they learned certain reading strategies that helped more than others. They said that learning how to chunk words in order to decode was incredibly helpful. Other students mentioned gaining a greater sight vocabulary and learning to skip certain words and then go back to them using context clues was a strategy that helped them tremendously. Some gained a great deal through reading aloud while others gained even more through silent reading. These reports demonstrated that direct skill-based instruction and offering specific strategies was integral to reading success, but it also showed that not every strategy was effective for every learner.

“Instructors should use every tool at their disposal to make explicit the importance of outside reading as a way of maximizing development and to assist learners in working around technical difficulties and personal obstacles (Belzer, 2006, *Learners*). Learners also mentioned the importance of family support for their success. The family support helped keep them motivated. Instructors could also encourage, support, and heed the
importance of building informal support. Knowing what helped struggling readers could help future instructors when considering instructional practices.

2.8 Authentic materials

Most of the studies already discussed in this review, emphasized the importance of instructors connecting literacy materials with students’ lives in order for learners to build reading skills and draw meaning from the content which is the principal component in my pedagogical model. When reading the studies, the value and strength of authentic materials in helping students engage in new literacy practices within their day-to-day lives seemed obvious (Jacobson, Degener, Gates, 2003). Nancy Padak and Bryan Bardine (2004) stated that instructors should give adult learners choice and relevance. They want to be comfortable with what they are reading and writing; therefore they need to have instructional materials that are familiar and connect with their experiences (2004). “Authentic material to read and reasons to write can add an essential dimension to adult literacy programs” (pg. 136).

What better way to connect with struggling readers day-to-day lives than humor? How much more functional could laughing be? Using books that foster laughter could be incredibly engaging for students. While laughing, students could learn comprehension strategies that would help with their fluency and understanding. A qualitative study by Molly Ness (2009) focused on one student, Emma. The purpose of the study was to discover if joke books would build fluency. When telling jokes, the “jokester” had to use prosody. Inflection, intonation, and phrasing were vital to the delivery of the joke. At any time, prosody and fluency go hand-in-hand, but especially when telling jokes. Fluency is the ability to read with accuracy, speed, and proper expression. With fluency
comes automaticity in decoding and word recognition, and it is strongly connected with reading comprehension. “Poor prosody can lead readers ‘to confusion through inappropriate or meaningless grouping of words or through inappropriate application of expression’” (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005, p. 703, as cited by Ness, 2009, “Laughing”, p. 691). This connection to humor made connections with Emma that built her fluency skills.

Emma and Molly Ness worked together for six weeks. Emma struggled with intonation, inflection and where to apply stress. She had difficulty expressing the meaning of the text. Her fluency was lacking and her flow and pace were disjointed (Ness, 2009, “Laughing”). Initially, Ness read with Emma through echo and choral reading of familiar texts until one day Emma brought in her own joke book. Through discussion, Ness had Emma think aloud about the way in which comedians deliver their jokes. “Pacing, stressing the right words, and reading in a smooth, fluid manner” were the characteristics of a good comedian (Ness, 2009, “Laughing”).

Jokes were a perfect source for discussing prosody because Emma knew how bad a joke could be if delivered poorly, and meaning could be lost. Practice was essential as well as evaluation. Recording examples and evaluating what was heard was also essential (Ness, 2009, “Laughing”). Ness discussed the humor in the jokes with Emma—the thinking component. What was meant by the joke? How did the delivery impact the meaning of the joke?

As a result of this study, Ness concluded that Emma’s fluency and reading comprehension improved dramatically. She started recognizing punctuation while changing her inflection and intonation, pausing appropriately. Her comprehension and
think aloud strategies also showed tremendous growth (Ness, 2009, “Laughing”). Joke books were an excellent authentic tool to use when working on reading comprehension.

Humor is relevant to learners, and so is technology, their experiences, and other issues educators need to uncover. Clarena Larotta and Arlene Serrano (2011) conducted a qualitative study that stated that educators need to build funds of knowledge in their learners. To do this, instructors should use opportunities to inquire about the learner, utilize technology in instruction, and address issues that are relevant to the learners. For example, “We read three chapters on financial freedom which sparked student interest to participate and ask questions about vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar” (p. 317). The key to this study is the importance of socioculture: learners need to make connections with their personal lives to create meaning.

In this study, assessment was based on the quality of work, in-class participation, personal glossaries and storybooks. Emphasis was on students’ ability to communicate meaning of what they were able to do with language. In order to collect data, researchers took field notes, conducted interviews, and measured student products. The first interview addressed personal stories of learners, learner motivation, learning goals, extracurricular activities, learning and communication strategies, their points of view, attitudes, values, and inquiries about language. The second interview focused on students’ perceptions and responses to the activities and projects in the session. The data were collected over a 10-week period meeting once a week for two hours (Larotta & Serrano, 2011).

The sample included 35 Spanish-speaking parents from Mexico, Colombia, and Panama in central Texas. The schooling or education of the sample of individuals varied
from elementary to some high school with a wide-range of English proficiency. The sessions included reading comprehension, mini-lessons, creating personal glossaries and writing storybooks. The vocabulary words accompanied reading (Larotta & Serrano, 2011). The study focused on four of the students who attended between 60-100 percent of the classes. Each was motivated to take the classes for a different reason, but all wanted to have a better grasp of the English language in order to function more productively in the United States. The results of the study supported the need for relevant, familiar topics as instructional materials. Using every day materials such as mass media helped students because they used this in their day-to-day lives. “We built bridges between the classroom and the students’ real-world lives” (Larotta & Serrano, 2011, p. 322). The students also took ownership of their learning which helped them to find purpose in their learning and reading. Students transferred vocabulary and concepts to other areas in their lives.

This study showed the importance of promoting self-awareness, so students could identify their strengths and weaknesses. It demonstrated the importance of creating learning goals and what the students wanted to learn, and overall, the students became aware of the importance of their learning when they used the materials outside the classroom and that persistence in reading was essential to their learning (Larotta & Sarrano, 2011, p. 324).

Amy Springer and Kathryn Yelinek (2011) wanted to discover a means of engaging adolescent students effectively during library instruction. The goal of the study was to examine whether or not the use of pop culture materials would increase engagement. Springer had used several unsuccessful materials that did not interest nor
engage the students during library instruction before deciding that using pop culture would increase engagement and participation of students. She used excerpts from *Jersey Shore* to teach gender issues and management. She then asked students to locate articles dealing with the issues shown in the excerpt. Because she used the clips from the show, students had an audible reaction to the show as well as the topics to be researched (Springer & Yelinek, 2011).

Springer observed the students to evaluate engagement and interest, but also she gave students a questionnaire to fill out at the end of the session assessing the effectiveness of the pop culture materials. Thirty-eight students complete the survey: “94.7 percent of the students felt more engaged during the instruction session…73.7 percent of the students thought they were now better able to recall and retain the information because of the integration of popular culture” (Springer & Yelinek, 2011, p. 85).

Yelinek did a similar experiment with her library students. They revealed a lack of engagement often being observed with “glassy stares” (Springer & Yelinek, 2011, p. 80). Yelinek initially incorporated *True Blood* into her instruction, but she noticed many students could not relate because they did not have HBO, so she decided to use clips from *Twilight*. Immediately she elicited responses from the students, but even those responses dwindled, so she, too, uses *Jersey Shore*-themed instruction. She followed Springer’s template and instructional module. When students began doing research, she found that they were enthusiastic (Springer & Yelinek, 2011).

The results were conclusive that there was an increase engagement and motivation among young adults when materials of high interest were used during
instruction. Using pop culture materials that were mainstream enough that most students were familiar with the material tapped into the emotions of the readers. It also increased engagement and participation (Springer & Yelinek, 2011). The majority of the students who responded to the surveys also mentioned that there was an increase in confidence in their ability to recall information. Springer and Yelinek realized the importance of incorporating current, pop culture into their curriculum. In addition, they were aware that the pop culture was always changing, so Jersey Shore would not always be able to be used, but pop culture material was also always available, and Springer and Yelinek encouraged all instructors to be willing to utilize pop culture into their instructional materials for literacy engagement of adolescent students in order to improve literacy skills of students (2011).

Just as Springer and Yelinek wanted to investigate the change of engagement of their students as well as a growth in literacy skills when using authentic literature and materials, specifically popular culture, Nell Duke, Victoria Purcell-Gates, Leigh Hall, and Cathy Tower (2006) explored what was meant by “authentic” literacy and how authentic literacy could spark reading and writing across all content areas.

The two-year study involved 26 second- and third-grade teachers and their students. The goal of the study was to improve comprehension skills in science while using authentic materials with informational and procedural texts. The reason it was important for them to incorporate the use of authentic literacy was that they believe in situated learning. In other words, “learning occurs best when the learning context matches the real functional context” (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006, p. 345). It was important again to reiterate the definition of authentic literacy. It is to “reflect
reading and writing activities that occur in the lives of people outside of a learning-to-read-and-write context and purpose” (Duke et al., 2006, p. 346). The purpose of an informational text being written or read in the classroom was compared to the actual purpose of an informational text using a 3-point rating scale. The authenticity of the text being used was also measured using the scale.

The teachers participated in workshops focused on building and constructing authentic literacy. Teachers were also coached once a week for a year (Duke et al., 2006). They figured out techniques to find information that students desired to know. They created situations to generate questions: hands on demonstrations, teachable moments, topic announcements and discrepant events which reflected reality that conflicted with what students might expect to see (Duke et al., 2006). Authentic reading of procedural text took place in three situations or lenses: literacy in response to community needs, problem solving, and audience. Teachers were focused on finding authentic situations for learning as often as possible. They wanted students writing for authentic audiences, writing for “real-life” situations that would help their community, but they also wanted the community to be their audience for the purpose of informational reading and writing.

The results regarding second- and third- graders can be extended or transferred into adolescent and adult learning. “Researchers found that adults in programs with more authentic literacy activities reported (a) reading and writing more often in their out-of-school lives, and (b) reading and writing more complex texts” (Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, & Soler, 2002, as cited in Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006, p. 345). In addition to the students reading and writing more in their outside lives with more
complex texts, students came alive when they realized they were reading authentic, real-life texts for their own purposes. The use of authentic literacy activities was related to the growth of reading ability across all content areas and genres.

This next qualitative study continued to support the idea that authentic literacy materials are related to literacy growth. The study first explained the components of authentic literacy. Authenticity includes five elements: purpose, choice, audience, resources, and relevance (Bergeron & Rudenga, 1996). If an activity was perceived as inauthentic, engagement of learners declined. Choice also contributed to authenticity. Choice allowed students to have some control over the materials. Students interacted with the instructor to determine instructional needs. The instructor acted more as a facilitator, modeling and demonstrating authentic, literacy strategies (1996), and the audience made the purpose authentic and so did the resources. The resources were found in the libraries and environment (trade books, bus schedules, maps, newspapers). Relevancy reflected the learner’s need and went back to knowing the whole learner and sociocultural background; therefore, finding appropriate texts that met the learner’s needs as well as the curricular needs was pertinent (Bergeron & Rudenga, 1996).

This study conducted by Bette Bergeron and Elizabeth Rudenga (1996) looked at two examples of how an authentic literacy framework was used effectively in a classroom; although they did not meet each element of authenticity. The students in the classrooms read *Number of the Stars* to explore World War II. While language arts class read the book, the social studies class studied World War II. This study demonstrated how authentic, literacy learning could take place through the use of themes. The teachers used shared reading, vocabulary, writing, mapping, creative arts, and home connections.
The two classrooms observed in this study proved that schools could provide experiences that closely resemble and connect with students’ lives. The teachers and students developed the purposes for learning collaboratively. Authentic “real” activities gave students purpose which helped them become fully engaged as learners. Choice, audience, and resources also contributed to authenticity because they helped empower students by providing collaboration and decision making with the teacher. The resources closely related and connected to students’ lives (Bergeron & Rudenga, 1996).

In Erik Jacobson, Sophie Degener, and Victoria Purcell-Gates qualitative study (2003) authentic materials were analyzed and the ability of students to transfer their reading and writing skills to their out-of-school lives was observed. They also looked at the change in frequency of literacy practices. The collection of data began by analyzing information from inside and outside of the school. 173 students from 22 states participated in this study (Jacobson, Degener, Purcell-Gates, 2003). Questionnaires about past and present literacy activities were examined (again reiterating the point about the importance of knowing your learner and socioculture). Participants filled out questionnaires every three months. Follow-up interviews were also conducted, and the results were conclusive. Students participating in classes using authentic materials found themselves using their new literacy practices outside the classroom in their day-to-day lives. This was true even when the researchers accounted for the amount of time learners attended class. The findings were important to educators because they emphasized the need to bring in the learners interests, needs, and lives into instruction (Jacobson et al., 2003).
2.9 Conclusion

Teacher candidates need professional development to develop their confidence in teaching reading strategies across the curriculum using authentic, high-interest texts, and they also need to learn how to uncover students’ sociocultural backgrounds in order to develop appropriate curriculum for their students that engage and motivate. Not only will this help teacher candidates prepare for the classroom experience, but also it will help build the necessary reading skills students need to function and comprehend other reading in their lives. They need to understand students’ past experiences in school, their experiences outside of school, and any affective filters that may hinder their learning (Belzer, 2004). By doing this, teaching materials can be more authentic for the students and help reconstruct their thinking and attitudes about reading. The more authentic the classroom, the greater the possibility to hook the struggling reader and see a positive change in literacy practices; therefore, teachers need to prepared with a toolbox of skills that will include being able to administer, assess, and interpret data from interest surveys, inventories, and classroom observations that will help guide their instruction.

In order for struggling readers to have a transactional literacy experience, educators need to know the learners and develop authentic curriculum that supports the learning and literacy needs of the students, but teachers need to know *how* to do this effectively. This will not only help students engage in the material, but also it will motivate them to continue reading outside the classroom to create further literacy experiences.

Uncovering students’ sociocultural backgrounds will not only help teachers develop appropriate curriculum for their students that engage and motivate, but also it
will help build the necessary reading skills students need to function and comprehend other reading in their lives. Teachers need to understand students’ past experiences in school, their experiences outside of school, and any affective filters that may hinder their learning (Belzer, 2004). By doing this, teaching materials can be more authentic for the students and help reconstruct their thinking and attitudes about reading. The more authentic the classroom, the greater the possibility to hook the struggling reader and see a positive change in literacy practices.

The studies provided in this review support my the pedagogical model I would like to develop and provide literacy components that will be integral to the teacher candidates’ experience as a whole while developing the literacy skills of struggling readers.
Chapter 3

The Measurement of Success

3.1 Methodology

Two sets of participants will be involved in this study. One set will be teacher candidates enrolled in literacy assessment remediation, and the other set will be struggling readers who were recruited from an Ohio career technical school that is made up of students from 18 school districts in Ohio. Although the sample will include 18 teacher candidates from the university who will be tutoring 18-10th graders who will be selected based on their reading performance on the Pearson Reading Skill Assessment that will have been administered when the students were in 9th grade, only 6 of each set will be included in this research based on their consistency in the reading program.

As researcher, I will be taking the role of participant-observer as will the teacher candidates as they engage in the tutoring process and begin assessing and observing their struggling reader. I will be instructing students, modeling the administration of reading
assessments and interest inventories, having teacher candidates practice within the confines of the classroom before they begin tutoring as well as conducting follow-up interviews with the candidates. In addition, different comprehension strategies will be modeled and practiced with various genres of stories and reading materials that teacher candidates will use to develop lesson plans of high interest that will engage and motivate struggling readers. As the in-class modeling and practicing take place, I will be taking descriptive and analytic notes regarding teacher candidates responses to strategies, their questions, their frustrations, and issues that arise as we practice the administration of the inventories, surveys, and comprehension strategies. When out in the field, I will be strictly an observer. Watching for the interactions of the struggling readers and the teacher candidates. I will be taking note of proximity, nonverbal behaviors, and struggling readers’ responses as the students meet each other and continue through the tutoring process. I will be available for questions if needed, but overall, the teacher candidates will become the participant-observer, taking notes on the sessions which will be given to me at the end of each session. I will follow up my observational notes with the weekly classroom discussions where again, I will be a participant-observer, facilitating discussions, answering questions teacher candidates have. Teacher candidates will collaborate with other members of the class to discuss issues that arise, and I will always be following up the class with field notes that help identify possible themes that will arise as I look into weekly events that will create the overall experience of the teacher candidates as well as the struggling readers.

Before tutoring begins, teacher candidates will have literacy assessment and remediation class once a week for eight weeks to practice using a variety comprehension
strategies based on reading selections from different genres and content areas. Teacher preparation that demonstrates, models, and allows teacher candidates to practice dialogue and the instruction of vocabulary and comprehension which will build their students’ reading skills in all content areas is imperative. The strategies provided in *Building Reading Comprehension Habits in Grades 6-12: A Toolkit of Classroom Activities* by Jeff Zwiers (2010) will provide a resource of comprehension strategies candidates will practice and utilize within the classroom and then with their struggling readers. This book not only provides the strategies, but also it will provide the theory behind the strategies--the rationale for the strategies that are provided. The six strategies: organizing text, connecting to background knowledge, making inferences and predictions, generating and answering questions, understanding and remembering word meanings, and monitoring one’s own comprehension all support and strengthen a students’ comprehension needs and develops reading habits that can be transferred to other reading materials inside and outside the classroom.

These six strategies are ideal for taking both an efferent as well as an aesthetic stance to reading. This is important as teacher candidates take struggling readers’ experiences into account when developing tutoring plans. Initially the stance or expectation the struggling readers may have of reading may be more efferent if that was primarily the responses expected in their past literacy experiences in school. Rosenblatt states, “the reader's attention is primarily focused on what will remain as a residue after the reading -- the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out” (1978, p.23), and she continues, “In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship
with that particular text” (p. 25). As struggling readers connect with their background knowledge while making inferences and predictions and as they draw meaning from the texts, their responses will be more aesthetic, creating a transactional literacy experience.

By preparing teacher candidates to implement and teach comprehension strategies, they will be modeled and practiced across all content areas which will prepare teacher candidates to utilize these strategies with their tutees while utilizing high interest materials that struggling readers can connect to. The teacher preparation will help them to build self-efficacy and understand how literacy fits into all content areas. It is not just a “language arts thing.” As stated, the tutors will not be language arts specific. Their areas of concentration will span the content areas. This will be an important facet because all content area teachers need to learn instructional, comprehension strategies to build their own self-efficacy and confidence in teaching reading skills in their own content.

Teachers need to have the skills, desire, and the confidence to teach literacy skills no matter their content area (Ness, 2009; Lovett et al., 2012). The literacy skill preparation of future teachers is vital to the literacy success of struggling readers. This groundwork for future teachers is the key to building confidence, so they see the value in teaching literacy skills whether they teach science, social studies, math, or language arts. The more practice teachers will have using literacy strategies, the more comfortable they will be utilizing this instruction in the classroom.

While teaching comprehension strategies, teacher candidates will use authentic materials that will help students connect the material to their own lives in order to maintain a high interest engagement and provide a purpose for reading the material that
will connect to the students’ lives. This will help motivate literacy learners and increase the frequency they engage in reading practices and utilize comprehension strategies when reading. The more authentic the classroom, the greater the change in literacy practices (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002).

Teacher candidates will work together to develop high-interest plans based on the reading materials they choose to bring in as well as samples provided. Collaboration with other teacher candidates will open discussions and stretch their thinking and perceptions of teaching reading in all content areas. Teacher preparation will ensue for 3 hours a week. In addition to comprehension strategies, the teacher candidates will practice administering interest inventories and the Informal Reading Inventory with their peers before they administer the assessments to their career center student. The Informal Reading Inventory: Preprimer to Twelfth Grade by Betty D. Roe and Paul C. Burns (2011) will be the IRI administered to students. The material used in this text will come from materials that students will be asked to read in school. Roe and Burns (2011) state:

Informal reading inventories provide students with more connected text to read, and facility with individual skills can be determined from the analysis of the students’ performance when connected text. (p. 10)

Based on the results from their peers, teacher candidates will practice developing high-interest tutoring plans. They will discuss the plans and strategies, working with one another to conceptualize what it means to teach literacy across all content areas, helping one another to develop additional transactional literacy experiences.
After preparing teacher candidates, they will be able to connect the interest inventories and IRI results to create authentic instructional material for their students at the appropriate reading level. The reading materials will help improve literacy skills of struggling, young adult readers because students will demonstrate a greater motivation and engagement in what they are reading as they connect the material to their own lives and interests. Tutors will analyze the results from the inventory and survey and develop a case study based on their student, including the results and comprehension, instructional strategies and high interest materials they will use during the tutoring sessions. Also included will be their weekly reflections as those pieces from week-to-week guide their future tutoring sessions. Those reflections will include the students’ reaction to the materials and the literacy growth observed as the students engage with the text. A second case study will be developed at the end of the semester by the tutor to compare the results with the pre-assessments and to discuss the growth and improvement and the overall literacy experience of both the career technical student and the teacher candidate. I will examine all case studies, and use these case studies and assessments as a basis for my data collection.

After university students have been prepared for their tutoring experience by learning how to administer, assess, and interpret data as well as practice utilizing comprehension strategies using genres of interest, they will be paired with a struggling reader from the career center who was selected based on the Pearson Reading Skill Assessment. The standardized tests results from the Pearson Reading Skill Assessment are norm referenced; therefore providing a means to measure reading levels. Using these results, the career students’ who will be invited into the reading program will show
instructional reading levels below grade level and independent reading levels as low as 4.2. After receiving an invitation to the tutoring program based on the Pearson results, the career technical students will choose whether or not to participate in the program, demonstrating motivation to improve their reading skills, and if they do choose to participate, an interest inventory and an Informal Reading Inventory will be administered before beginning remediation. I will only be focusing on the experiences of six career center students and their tutors. These six were chosen due to their consistent attendance to the tutoring sessions during the 6 weeks of the program.

Parents and participants will receive a letter explaining the research. A form will be sent home to be signed by the parents and participants giving the researcher permission to collect reading skill data from the tutor and giving the tutor permission to tape and collect data during the individual sessions. The times, location, and frequency of tutoring sessions will also be included in the letter, and the parents and participants will be told that the names of students will be coded with numbers to protect their identity.

Once career technical students agree to participate in the tutoring program, an interest survey and an informal reading inventory will be administered. The interest survey will be orally administered by the teacher candidates to determine career center students’ past literacy experiences, interests, and their attitudes and perceptions of reading. The inventories will be audio recorded and will be administered orally to reduce anxiety that may be created due to the recording, so the oral survey will make the conversation informal and less stressful for the students. This less formal atmosphere will help to reduce a stilted dialogue since the tutor and student will have just met. Although the inventory is prescribed, the tutor can feel free to be guided and led by the
conversation of the student which will also reduce anxiety the student may feel. In the end, it is important that the topics on the inventory are covered, but the order in which they are covered is not vital. The freedom of questioning will help the tutor further determine authentic, high-interest instructional reading materials for the following sessions, and it will also help build rapport. The tutor will then transcribe the discussion.

After completing the interest inventory, the tutor will administer an informal reading inventory (IRI) to the students pre- and post- tutoring that will also be recorded. The IRI will be the second criteria used to determine a student’s reading ability and need to be in the program. Selection to participate in this study will be based on the fact that some students’ performance on standardized tests may be lower due to other variables not related to the content of the test (i.e. test anxiety, lack of sleep, hunger, illness, extraneous distractions, etc.); therefore the performance on the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) will help control for the outside variables that may have been present during the administration of the standardized test.

The IRI is a criterion-referenced test. In other words, the results are based on established criteria. The IRI is both qualitative and quantitative which is useful in diagnosing the students’ specific reading problems. It must be made clear that the results of the IRIs do not match standardized normed scores which will be used as the initial selection of students. Although students will be selected for tutoring based on normed scores, the IRIs emphasis is not on comparing individuals to others, but “on learning about skills, abilities, and needs of the individual in order to plan a program of reading instruction that will allow a maximum rate of progress” (Johnson, Kress, & Pikulski, 1987, p. 2). If the tutor determines that after analyzing the IRI pre-test results the student
is reading above grade level, another student will be selected for tutoring. This result may 
demonstrate that the student’s performance on the Pearson test may have been due other 
factors not related to reading ability. The collection of data will include both males and 
females from the surrounding schools regardless of race.

The IRI will give the tutor an instrument that will assess the current level of 
reading skills. It will provide tutors with individual, student information that will provide 
a guide for instructional activities. According to Roe and Burns (2011) IRIs provide the 
information needed to diagnose the instructional needs of students based on students’ oral 
reading, silent reading, repetitive reading and the answering of comprehension questions 
beginning at a low reading level and moving to a higher reading level based on the 
students’ ability to answer questions and their reading fluency. When the reading 
passages have been determined by the tutor, based on pre-established criteria, to have 
become too difficult, the assessment will end and be assessed by the tutor. Another 
strength of the IRIs is that it “provides varying topics and types of text, both fiction and 
nonfiction, that are typical of ones the students might encounter in classroom instruction, 
to facilitate decisions about students’ ability to handle them” (p. 10). Providing different 
genres is advantageous for the tutors because they will see strengths and weaknesses 
based on genres as well as reading skills.

IRIs are not timed tests; therefore there will not be unnatural time constraints put 
on the students. Due to the untimed test, students will feel free to use a variety of 
strategies to answer the questions given--strategies that are more difficult to use when 
being timed. Noting the reading behaviors of the participants is an important aspect of the 
data being collected. Looking at these observable behaviors will help the tutor develop
the reading strategy instruction needed to help the student achieve reading goals and improve comprehension skills. In order to completely assess students’ comprehension, the IRI has literal based questions and higher-order questions mixed with open-ended questions. These questions will help the tutor determine strengths and weaknesses in the students’ reading processes focusing on their abilities to find the main idea, make inferences, make predictions, and recall basic facts. Students will read passages aloud while the tutor makes observational notes based on the students’ oral reading. The passages used will begin at a reading level below the predetermined reading level assessed by Pearson.

Once the pre-interest survey and IRI have been administered, assessed, and interpreted, the teacher candidates will develop tutoring plans for five-weeks that utilize authentic reading materials at their struggling readers’ instructional reading level, so the tutor will be able to guide their tutee to their full potential using high-interest reading materials, focusing on their student’s reading strengths and interests to build and extract meaning from the texts. All students will be using the Fry readability formula to measure the reading level of the materials to ensure reading level appropriateness for their student. The tutoring plans will be unique to each struggling reader because they will all have varying interests and reading levels. Each week the tutors will assess the session and make decisions for the following week based upon the struggling readers’ engagement or reading skills needing to be strengthened. If the tutor observes another need, that, too, may alter the tutoring plans. The tutors will be making connections from week-to-week in order to continue growth and moving forward. They will not be able to move forward without making connections to the past instruction and connecting it to the future goals of
their own as well as the students. Tutors must keep the struggling readers and their experiences, interests, and reading needs at the center of their instructional decisions, so the struggling readers’ have a positive transactional experience. The authenticity of literacy materials and instruction is integral to the success of young adult, literacy programs because young adults learn literacy skills from their own daily literacy experiences (Rogers, 2004).

During the final session, the tutor will administer the post-interest inventory and post-IRI which also will be recorded and transcribed, and the teacher candidate will analyze the IRI data and compare it to the pre-IRI. Also the tutor will note the student’s description of the literacy experience as well as any changes the student observed during the entire process. In addition, the teacher candidates will write about the changes that they observed in their students throughout the literacy process and what they think engaged or motivated their students. A final interview with the teacher candidates will take place in order to understand their literacy experience and how they conceptualized the entire process.

3.2 Coding

The coding of the data will uncover themes that emerge from the case studies of the six career technical students, observations, field notes, emails, and follow-up interviews. I’m looking for perceived consequences of the pedagogical model and the teacher candidates’ interaction with the teaching of reading to their struggling reader. Also to be observed is the struggling readers’ reaction to the experience which will be communicated through the teacher candidates in the case studies. The case studies are supported by the transcriptions of the teacher candidates from recorded discussions with
the struggling readers. The transcriptions will also be analyzed to see any further developing themes. In addition, the follow-up interviews and emails of the teacher candidates will be coded, looking for themes that describe their experiences while interacting with the pedagogical model and whether or not the process helped them reconstruct their thinking, perceptions, or knowledge about teaching literacy.

3.3 Validity and Trustworthiness

A peer review and debriefing will help provide me with any other themes or codes that I did not see while analyzing data. Also it will provide me with outside input and an external reflection on my work which will establish the trustworthiness of the interpretations I made. In addition to the peer review, I will share the interview transcripts, emails, and my analytic thoughts with the research participants to determine if the interpretation and representation in my chapter was accurately stated. Member checking will open my eyes to other points of view that might have been overlooked.

3.4 Benefits

The benefits of this pedagogical model far outweigh the risks. University teacher candidates will have a unique experience to work one-on-one with struggling readers in the field while developing tutoring plans that focus on the career center students’ sociocultural background, interests and reading levels. They will learn how to administer and assess both interest surveys and Informal Reading Inventories and learn how to use the data collected to develop high-interest lesson plans. The university students will have the opportunity to engage in conversations with this student to collaborate and develop the materials that will engage and motivate the struggling reader and have the opportunity to engage in conversations with other teacher candidates and me to immediately reflect
and receive feedback on the weekly occurrences in order to flesh out issues or obstacles in the field and to bounce ideas off one another to continue creating the optimal literacy experience for their student. Teacher candidates will strengthen their observational and listening skills as they continue through the tutoring process. Their student may say or do something during a session that changes the direction of the tutoring plans for the following week. The students will always have the student and the student interests at the forefront of their minds. This pedagogical model is 100% student-centered. This experience will only serve to benefit teacher candidates in the future as they continue in their teacher education experience. Teacher candidates’ participation and their representation of their experience using this model will also benefit teacher education and our understanding of successful teacher education programming.

Not only will this pedagogical model benefit university teacher candidates and the teacher education program, but also it will benefit the struggling readers at the career technical center. The struggling readers will be receiving individual one-on-one tutoring to strengthen their reading skills, using literacy materials that will be of high-interest to them. Although assessments will occur throughout the sessions determining students’ interests and reading levels, these assessments will help tutors determine the appropriate reading material to use with their students. Although the assessments may initially cause the students anxiety, the tutors will be prepared to create a safe environment and to reduce student stress by telling their students that they are going to just talk about their interests inside and outside of school and there are no right or wrong answers. The students will already be aware that some sessions will be taped. Initially the idea of being taped may make the student uncomfortable and self-conscious, but when they are
told that it will be kept private, the students will relax and forget that it is recording.  
When taking the IRI, teacher candidates will encourage their student to do their best and tell the students that the passages will begin very simply and will end when the material gets too frustrating. Although these assessment sessions may get frustrating for the students, the tutors will remind them that the assessments are to help them determine what material the students will enjoy and the student can help them to determine the material.

Not only will the struggling readers be receiving tutoring with high-interest materials, but also the benefits include an increased self-confidence as students build reading skills as they connect with the materials being used. This confidence will be transferred into other areas of their life including their ability to function more successfully in the classroom. Struggling readers will benefit from having an authentic transactional literacy experience which will open up other opportunities to have more positive literacy experiences.
This chapter will help uncover whether or not the pedagogical model used in my literacy assessment remediation class was successful in creating a transactional response that helped candidates interpret past experience in order to gain new insights and reconstruct knowledge. As discussed previously, these data were collected from case studies the teacher candidates turned in, reflections, email correspondences, and face-to-face interviews. The data were analyzed to discover emerging themes that arose from the information. The coding scheme was developed as the themes materialized from the documents. An examination of the codes were analyzed by a peer debriefer who confirmed and revised some of the codes, making the codes more specific. The frequency of patterns as they occurred in the data were studied and compared to other similar themes to compare the experiences of the different candidates’ experiences that were being analyzed. The codes that were uncovered helped me to build theoretical explanations that tied into my overall research question: What were the teacher candidates’ lived experiences within the pedagogical model of the literacy course?
Sections 4.1-4.6 are the candidates’ analyses of their individual students that they tutored, and sections 4.7-4.11 contain the themes that emerged from the teacher candidates’ case studies, reflections, email correspondence, and face-to-face interviews. The themes reflected demonstrate the thinking and reflection that helped teacher candidates create and reconstruct previous knowledge to the new knowledge they were receiving and how they altered their thinking about literacy as a whole and within their content areas.

The case studies were relayed through the eyes of the teacher candidates and were examined to find any patterns that emerged as a result of the tutoring experience using the pedagogical model. The categories began to emerge as the interest surveys included in the case studies were analyzed and the conversations between the candidates and students were transcribed and reviewed. What I wanted to understand and chose to focus on was the authentic learning experience the candidates had within the tutoring situation as well as the connection the teacher candidates made from the tutoring experience to their prior knowledge and the literacy class as a whole as they also connected to their future in the teaching field; therefore I relayed their individual tutoring experiences and then began making connections to their reflections, emails, and interviews as connections emerged.

For example, after teacher candidates studied and practiced the administration of the IRI and interest surveys in class, the candidates had the opportunity to administer the reading assessments as well as analyze the scores of both the pre- and post-IRI and interest surveys with their struggling readers. The results of the reading inventories were reviewed and discussed in class for accuracy. The teacher candidates’ interpretation of
these reading scores was important because the candidates had to develop the reading materials based on the results, using the appropriate level reading materials and focusing on areas of reading that needed to be strengthened as well as the student’s interests. As the tutoring sessions continued, candidates not only had to revisit the assessments to recall areas of weaknesses, but also they had to look at the reading growth in their students currently. In addition, candidates had to measure their students’ engagement and interest as the candidates continued making instructional decisions. This continual reflection might mean the candidate had to alter plans and go in a new direction based on observations, conversations, and assessments made throughout the sessions.

This exercise benefitted the candidates in order for them to see how data collected and instruction were connected, but their continual reflection and revisiting of their instructional goals in the process of decision-making was a major component of this transactional, authentic experience. For the candidates to see the impact or influence of their instruction on their career technical student’s motivation, engagement, immediate reading skills, and attitude helped candidates to connect the concepts and skills learned in class directly to instruction, see the impact during instructional time with their student, and then transfer and connect this to their current tutoring situation and their futures as educators. This directly ties into Dewey’s theory of reflective experience as well as Rosenblatt’s theory of transaction.

Candidates looked at the interest inventories and the literacy experiences and interests of their students, interpreted the results of the IRI, created lesson plans and found reading materials that infuse both the students’ interests at the reading levels of their struggling reader, strengthening the areas that need improvement while observing
the impact of the instruction on their students’ reception of the materials and tutoring sessions. In other words, through reflection, students continually reflected upon what they had learned in class to the current tutoring experience and the candidates’ futures as teachers. There was a constant ebb and flow of thinking as reflection took place. “This anticipation is the connecting link between the next doing and its outcome for sense. What is done and what is undergone are thus reciprocally, cumulatively, and continuously instrumental to each other” (Dewey, 1934, p. 50).

The next sections (4.7-4.11), following the data analysis of the struggling readers, entirely focuses on the teacher candidates’ overall conceptualization of the process of the literacy experience using this pedagogical model. I divided the candidates’ statements into different themes that I saw emerge which then became the coding schemes. I was hoping to draw connections between the themes, the candidates’ prior knowledge and experiences, and the candidates’ reconstruction of knowledge and thinking based on this authentic literacy experience. These data were collected from weekly reflections written by candidates as well as classroom discussions that I recorded in my notes as candidates made connections from readings and discussions. In addition, there were emails and interviews that took place six months after the experience that were transcribed to record candidates’ reconstruction of thinking and knowledge. Using these data-gathering techniques, I explored each candidate’s perception of the experience. The delay in the interviews and follow-up emails allowed for time to pass in order that the teacher candidates could reflect upon the experience and discern how the experience using the pedagogical model connected to their futures and reconstructed their belief systems. The purpose of the research was also to discover if the pedagogical model is effective in
creating a positive learning experience for university teacher education students and to
discover if the model builds confidence and if candidates see the value in teaching
literacy skills across all content areas.

Being removed from the experience allowed candidates to have that insight. The
teacher candidates’ perception of the authentic experience was important to gather
because it reflected on the teacher preparation program. The case studies, reflections,
emails, classroom discussions, and follow-up interviews demonstrated whether this
pedagogical model resulted in teacher candidates’ learning and development. Was there
an effective blend of teacher education with literacy preparation?

The data collected were divided into themes that emerged throughout the analysis.
These data were reviewed by a peer debriefer and classroom participants who also
analyzed the themes that emerged, and their analysis and interpretation of themes closely
reflected those of the researcher with very little variation.

4.1 Candidate #1 analysis of Student #1

Student #1 was a tenth grader with reading scores on the Pearson Reading Skill
Assessment were independent at grade five and instructional at 9.5. After being given the
Informal Reading Inventory by his tutor, the results showed that he scored at a 5th grade
independent word recognition level and instructionally at grade 6 at 98% recognition. His
independent comprehension level was grade 6 answering 100% of the questions
accurately. Both scores from the Pearson Reading Skill Test and IRI exhibited a need for
Student #1 to be in the reading program. His instructional level of comprehension was
grade 7 with 80% accuracy, missing cause and effect and inference questions. Errors in
main idea and cause and effect were the greatest comprehension errors at this level (Student #1, Case Study #1).

Based on the interest survey administered by Candidate #1, Student #1 had an interest in reading only when the reading was about topics he was interested in. He owns *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and would like the book *Bones*, and he recently read *Of Mice and Men*. Student #1 was interested in history, humor, mysteries, detective stories, car stories, supernatural, adventure, war stories, astrology, and westerns but said he reads nothing. He did read some magazines such as *Bowhunter, North American Whitetail*, and he enjoyed watching *Walking Dead*. The candidate noticed the contradiction between the student saying he read nothing, yet in the next breath, the student said he read magazines. Also, he said he spent no time reading, yet had an attitude of seven toward reading on a Leichardt scale of 1-10, 10 being the most positive. This was an important observation that the candidate made which he said impacted instruction positively because he knew the student did engage in some reading for enjoyment in the past. Student #1’s hobbies included hunting and restoring cars, and he was restoring a Camero with his father. Student #1 had goals of working in construction, masonry, or as an electrician (Student #1, Case Study #1).

In the first tutoring session, Candidate #1 used the articles from *Field and Stream* because Student #1 said he was interested in hunting, and the tutor felt this piece would be of high interest to his student. The story was read orally because the tutor wanted to work on the student’s fluency, specifically on accuracy of word identification. The reading level, using Fry readability formula was grade 9 which was higher than the student’s independent and instructional level, but with the student’s interest, the
candidate felt he could guide Student #1 along. The candidate used repeated reading, modeling the proper reading behaviors. The candidate read a few sentences, pausing at punctuation and using prosody, and then the student repeated those sentences using the same expression and pauses. By working on fluency, the candidate hoped student #1 would be able to pick out details and the main ideas of the passages. The candidate asked the student what the passages were about after the repeated reading session, and the tutor could accurately tell the main ideas of the passages providing details. Working with the details of the stories and pulling out the main idea is an efferent stance; whereas the use of high interest material will encourage the aesthetic response to the reading.

After the first tutoring session, the tutor found the student’s fluency improved, being able to read more accurately while identifying words in the article with greater automaticity, so the following week he worked on prediction and inference to strengthen these skills using humorous stories and the prediction path strategy for comprehension. These were the strategies that were practiced in class, and the tutor thought they would be effective to use with his student. The tutor used *My French Teacher Tried to Kill Me* by Anthony Horowitz. The tutor said, “It is a comedic story that my student will find interesting and entertaining. He has a love for comedy shows and comedy movies. I believe this humorous story will intrigue him and keep him engaged in the prediction path organizer” (Student #1, Case Study #2). *My French Teacher Tried to Kill Me* is written at the grade 7 readability level. As the story was read orally, the tutor had the student pause in 3 different areas to make predictions on the chart. Then the final fill-in was completed that states the main idea for the story at the end of the prediction path. The student had to provide reasons for his predictions based on the details of the story.
that support his prediction. At the end, he looked at his predictions and figured out what
details he didn’t know that would have made his prediction more accurate.

The next week, the candidate used *Brothers* with a readability of grade 8 to make
predictions based on the events in the story, using the same prediction path from the
previous week. Throughout the process, the candidate used reading materials at or above
the student’s instructional level. Just in the first four weeks of tutoring, the candidate
observed immense growth in the student’s fluency, reading words accurately with
automaticity, and comprehension, answering questions before, during, and after reading,
including being able to answer higher level questions demonstrating critical thinking and
a connection with the readings. Due to these results, the candidate chose to use higher
level reading materials that were of high interest to the student. The candidate stated,
“We have covered prediction/inference work the past two weeks. He demonstrated
excellent ability in this area. We have also done some work with characterization and
detailing of the story in some extra time we had before leaving for the day. He struggled
with this concept of describing a character in the story…due to this reason, I am focusing
this next week or two on characterization and using a character trait chart of characters in
the story” (Student #1, Case Study #2)

Candidate #1 used *The Perfect Crime* during another session of tutoring. This
story was used because Student #1 said he was interested in mysteries. The main
characters are strong characters who “have definite characterization traits that [Student
#1] will be able to pick up on and describe” (Student #1, Case Study #2). The readability
of this piece is grade 6/7 based on Fry Readability. During this session, Student #1 read
orally, working on prosody and fluency. Also, he was told that he would be looking for
specific details pertaining to the characters. After reading the story, the student filled out a character trait chart on Eve Nelson, Sergeant Flannigan, and the clerk, Julia. The student then had to describe how the traits of these three characters led to the perfect crime. After creating the character chart, the student wrote a paragraph using words from the character trait word bank to create an additional character who could fit into the story. This activity extended the student’s thinking beyond the characters who were in the story and connected him to his own life as he created the new character.

The following week, the candidate worked on visualization because he found that his student struggled with connecting his own background knowledge with what was going on in the story because he was getting lost in the text. The story Even Doves Have Pride was used because

It is a funny short story that my student will relate to. It is about a new driver who is getting a new car. My student is getting his license in about 3 weeks and recently got a new truck from his dad. He will be able to relate to this story as well as engage in it through the comedy side of the story as well. The story is also about war time which my student is very interested in. He enjoys reading about comedy and history (wars), so this story will really engage him as well as relate to his everyday life. (Student #1, Case Study #2)

This comment by Candidate #1 demonstrates his understanding of the importance of making connections with students in order that they can have a transaction with the reading—self to text as Rosenblatt explains in her theory. By having the student create a comic strip of the story, it “will aid the student in crafting a “big picture” of the story as
well as characterize the people and events in the story. This comic strip will exhibit the student’s ability to visualize the events in the story” (Student #1, Case Study #2).

The post-IRI results of Student #1 demonstrated a two grade level improvement. His graded word passage independent level is now grade 8. Miscues were self-corrected and were structural and visual. The one comprehension error was vocabulary related. The candidate’s opinion was that if Student #1 had been asked to go back to the story and use contextual clues, he would’ve been able to figure out the meaning of the word. Student #1’s miscue analysis result was also independent with 100% accuracy at grade 9. The errors in comprehension had to do with specific details versus the main idea of the story. His comprehension at grade 9 was at the instructional level, yet student #1’s comprehension was at the independent level at the grade 10 reading. His miscue analysis was at 99%, self-correcting errors and not changing meanings with omissions or insertions. He also answered all the questions accurately. Grade 11 miscue analysis was scored at the independent level of 99%, but Student #1’s comprehension dropped considerably. He struggled developing the main idea and answering vocabulary, inference and cause and effect questions (Student #1, Case Study #2). Student #1’s growth from the pre- to post-IRI from grade 6 to grade 8 independent level with instructional levels to grade 10 which was noteworthy according to Candidate #1 who was impressed by the growth in such a short period of time, and he believed that further tutoring with high interest materials would continue to develop his reading skills as they have in 5 weeks of tutoring instruction.

The growth was not only seen in the pre- and post-IRI scores, but also seen by the candidate and student in the tutoring sessions as he made connections with the readings.
as he successfully completed the character analysis, prediction path, and graphic organizers. He was able to discuss his answers and how they related to his own life and previous experiences. According to Candidate #1, Student #1 saw that he would use background knowledge to connect to the stories and would use prediction before reading as they did in the *Brothers* story. The candidate also noticed this change: “he was able to make predictions and inferences before reading the stories on his own. He enjoyed this part of reading and claimed he would use this as a reading strategy in his own learning and reading” (Student #1, Case Study #2). Although student #1 said that generally his attitude hadn’t changed toward reading, he said that he “would read more about the robbery story, due to the twist in the plot” (Student #1, Case Study #2). Unlike Student #1, the candidate did notice differences in the student’s reading attitude. He said,

Before these reading sessions, my tutee did absolutely no reading on his own or in school. He now claims to enjoy reading a little more, even though it is still not something he will do in his free time. He says he has learned strategies he will actually use though. He likes the prediction before reading strategy to apply some of what he already knows to what he will be reading about. His attitude towards reading is now a little more positive even though he may not do it in his free time or over video games and hanging out with friends (Student #1, Case Study #2).

The candidate also stated that Student #1 “also excelled in detailing and main idea questions of the IRI. This is also evidence of working with him on character analysis and main idea topics during our time together” (Student #1, Case Study #2). Student #1 struggled with cause and effect and vocabulary, but the candidate found this was due to a lack of prosody and inflection when he read, so the candidate found a “quieter area so
[Student #1] could focus on how he was reading to me rather than the words themselves. This seemed to help his reading inflection as he began to read more fluently and with more prosody” (Student #1, Case Study #2). This strategy not only helped the student’s reading fluency but also his comprehension.

According to Candidate #1, Student #1 recognized that his confidence improved. “He has noticed himself reading more in class and volunteering more to read in class due to his newfound improvement and confidence in reading orally” (Student #1, Case Study #2).

In Candidate #1’s case studies, reflection was occurring throughout the tutoring sessions. He was listening to the comments made by the student during discussions they had and used that information to guide instruction. For example, “The candidate noticed the contradiction between the student saying he read nothing, yet in the next breath, the student said he read magazines.” He was listening to the student and realizing that the student possibly was not saying what he meant—he was sending mixed messages. The candidate also noticed that the student said his attitude toward reading was low yet gave a number of 7 on the Leichardt scale, and the candidate chose to look at this as a positive instead of a negative, and he also drew in the student’s interests when choosing materials which made the reading more aesthetic as Rosenblatt (1988) discusses for the struggling reader rather than only efferent. What these data demonstrate is the continual thinking, reflection, and analysis of new information the candidate was evaluating from the student and how this information guided the candidate’s instruction as the sessions continued. Candidate #1 also connected instructional skills learned in class which demonstrates Rosenblatt’s efferent stance she discusses and brought those strategies into the sessions.
with his student. Although the skills were a demonstration of efference, the connection from the learner to the text and text to the learner was the transaction, becoming aesthetic as it was related to the candidate’s life in the classroom. “It related to the ongoing stream of his own life” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 64). The candidate shifted his plans based upon the reading growth and mastery the student presented in the sessions, and continued to move forward always reflecting on the actions of the past and how they would influence his future instructional methods as Dewey discusses within his theory of the reflective experience. This continual looking back and forward helped the candidate continue to keep the goals in focus while making connections from the past to the future.

In addition, the candidate observed the positive results that the student was achieving in his reading skills and observed Student #1 building his own confidence in his reading which Candidate #1 attributed to the high interest reading material that connected with the student as he worked on his reading skills.

4. 2 Candidate #2 analysis of Student #2

Student #2 is a tenth grader whose reading scores on the Pearson Reading Skill Assessment were independent at 4.6 grade level and instructional at 7.8. After Student #2 was invited to the reading program, he was given the Informal Reading Inventory. Student #2’s results on the pre-IRI were independent word recognition at 7th grade with 100% accuracy, and he was at the instructional level with 98% accuracy at the 8th and 9th grade reading level. Student #2’s comprehension did not match his word recognition results which told the teacher candidate that he could recognize words but wasn’t reading for meaning. His comprehension was independent at the 3rd grade level, and instructional
at the 4th grade reading level. At grade 5, he struggled making inferences, sequencing, and recalling details. Grade 5 was Student #2’s frustration level of comprehension. The scoring of the IRI was challenging for Candidate #2 because of the discrepancy between word recognition and comprehension. The difference in comprehension between the fourth and fifth grade level was significant, dropping to 45% with the 5th grade reading passage (Student #2, Case Study #1).

After administering the interest inventory, Candidate #2 discovered that Student #2 was interested in sports and construction. He was also interested in detective and car stories, as well as plays and comic strips. He said that he enjoyed watching sports on television. He did not have books at home, didn’t go to the library, and didn’t ever remember being read to as a child. He only read when he was doing school work. He didn’t mind reading shorter stories but didn’t like to read longer ones. Student #2 had a negative attitude toward reading because “he cannot make connections to why reading is important to everyday life...he thinks of reading as a waste of time” (Student #2, Case Study #1).

During tutoring sessions, the candidate worked on the book TY COBB with Student #2. The story is about one of the most famous baseball players in history, Tyrus Raymond Cobb. Due to Student #2’s strong interest in baseball, he chose to read this book independently outside of the tutoring sessions to be discussed each week when he returned. Student #2 and the teacher candidate discussed the main ideas and the details of each chapter at the beginning of each session and how this story could relate to his life. The books read during the sessions were Sports Illustrated Baseball’s Greatest and Baseball’s Hometown Teams. According to Fry Readability both of these books were
written at the 7th grade reading level. These books were of high interest to Student #2 because he loved baseball; therefore, Candidate #2 thought his student would be engaged and enjoy reading the books and comprehend the books with the tutor’s guidance. The first book was used to develop predictions and visualization to state the main idea of the text. Initially the student showed great interest in the reading material, but as the student began to struggle, even with guidance, his effort reduced due to frustration. “His effort held him back from achieving his potential.” The candidate said that he learned that he needed to reduce the amount of reading and to choose books that were not at his student’s frustration level, but rather at his instructional level. This was a learning moment for the teacher candidate. Although Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development encourages instructors to use materials at higher level than their independent level, if instructors push too high, this can cause frustration. The instructional level is the effective level of instruction and this was discussed in class. After this experience and the continued discussion in class due to his students’ response to the materials, the candidate realized the importance of utilizing the interest inventory for instruction and making sure the reading levels were appropriate for the students.

During the following sessions, Candidate #2 worked with Student #2 to provide him with strategies to find the main idea. “We worked with a sequence of events chart in order to have him take notes while reading. Once he finished the reading, he could use the chart to develop the main idea. Another way we worked to find the main idea was to have the student read, fill out a semantic map with as many details as he could remember and create a main idea. Then would look back at the story to see if the main idea he created matched the main idea presented in the story.” These were all strategies that were
practiced in class before tutoring began. The strategies then were directly applied in the tutoring session, and the strategies helped Student #2.

The post reading IRI for Student #2 demonstrated growth in comprehension according to Candidate #2. His comprehension reading level went up to an independent level of grade 6, answering all the questions correctly and demonstrating fluency and accuracy while reading. After his five weeks of tutoring, Student #2’s reading comprehension improved by two grade levels. His reading fluency was his strength. According to Candidate #2, “[Student #2] rarely made a mistake when reading; both during the IRIs and when reading high interest material. He paused when they were expected, changed his tone of voice when necessary, and could pronounce every word he came across.” His word recognition was at the independent level grade 8 through grade 10. He missed one word at the 8th and 9th grade level and two words at the 10th grade level. “He understood most words and showed a high vocabulary level;” (Student #2, Case Study #2) although his comprehension was still lower.

Because of the tutoring, Student #2 noticed “that he was able to focus on one main focal point of the reading rather than losing focus with supporting details. The candidate stated, “I found that through semantic mapping and using a sequence chart that the tutee was able to use the details in the story and the sequence of events to create a main idea. He didn’t see the main idea right away while he was reading, but he was starting to be able to find the main idea while reading.” According to the candidate, the high interest material helped with his attitude because Student #2 stated that if he had to read something, he would enjoy reading about baseball (Student #2, Case Study #2).
Candidate#2 also used reflection to guide his instruction with Student #2, but the reading instructional challenge was different than Candidate #1 because the word recognition scores and comprehension scores did not align. This challenge was discussed in class, and the students worked together as a community of learners to work on the solution. Student #2 did not have reading materials at home and saw no worth in reading, so Candidate #2 was fighting an uphill battle. Using high interest reading materials relating to baseball helped engage Student #2, and an attitude shift was observed. It was not the shift we saw in Student #1 who began volunteering in class, but Student #2 was open to reading other books about baseball when he had no interest reading initially.

Candidate #2’s tutoring experience was different from Candidate #1 because he pushed Student #2 too hard after reading about Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development. Candidate #2 had his student read high interest material but at too difficult a reading level for the struggling reader causing Student #2 to be at his frustration level. Candidate #1 had the assumption that because the book was of high interest, the student would have no problem reading it, but that wasn’t the case. Candidate #2’s initial assumptions and perceptions were reconstructed as a result of this occurrence during instruction. He realized the importance of using the results from the IRI to help guide instruction and levels of reading materials. He had to choose new reading materials and redesign his lessons to allow for this. It was an unexpected challenge, but one the candidate learned from. He immediately altered his instruction in order to do what was in the best interest of his student. He had to entirely change his way of thinking to allow for this change in instruction which demonstrates his knowledge reconstruction, reflection, and growth that is supported by Dewey’s theory.
4.3 Candidate #3 analysis of Student #3

Student #3’s reading scores on the Pearson Reading Skill Assessment were independent at 4.6 grade level and instructional at 7.8. After Student #3 was invited to the reading program, he was given the Informal Reading Inventory. Student #3’s comprehension level based on the IRI was independent at grade 4, missing only the inference question, and he only had one error in word recognition. Grade 5 material was between the instruction and frustration level in comprehension at 75%, missing four of the comprehension questions, including details and cause effect/inference questions. His word recognition at the 5th grade level was instructional with 95% accuracy. He was not reading for meaning. Grade 6 material, Student #3 read the passage with 98% accuracy, and his errors generally did not change meaning, so it was at his instructional level, but Student #3 missed six comprehension questions; therefore his comprehension at grade 6 was at his frustration level (Student #3, Case Study #1).

Student #3’s main interest was baseball—he was a catcher. He had checked books out of a library but didn’t have much time for reading, “but he does do it.” Referring to the assigned reading from school, Student #3 said, “those are often boring and pointless” and he does not read what is assigned (Student #3, Case Study #1).

Student #3 enjoyed reading orally; although Candidate #3 noticed that he was not a fluent reader. His “reading is choppy, the reading does not flow together well. He has little inflection and the whole story sounds the same. He does stop for most commas and periods…but he also stops where there are not any, changing the flow of the story” (Student #3, Case Study #1). Not only does Student #3 struggle with fluency, but also he
struggles recalling specific details, sequencing, and making inferences and predictions. Due to the results of the IRI, the candidate worked on these areas specifically.

During the tutoring sessions, the candidate worked on creating well-developed questions to elicit responses from the student specifically aiming to strengthen his ability to find specific details and making inferences based on the clues given in the story. The first week, the candidate focused the lesson on fluency using a joke book. To understand a joke, the joke has to be told with the right inflection. Candidate #3 read the different jokes aloud changing inflection to show the importance of prosody and expression and how a monotone joke loses its meaning. They read the book *Race to the Plate* by Ryan Smith. This book is full of baseball jokes, and Student #3 loves baseball, so the jokes were of high interest. According to Fry Readability, this book is at 5.2 readability level (Student #3, Case Study #2).

After working on fluency and comprehension, the tutor brought in the book *The Life and Times of Babe Ruth* by Leigh Montville. The readability was 6.2, but with guidance from the candidate, the student wasn’t frustrated even though according to the IRI, grade 6 books were at his frustration level. Continuing to read *The Life and Times of Babe Ruth*, Candidate #3 worked with Student #3 on finding the main idea and details of the story that support the main idea. They also continued to work on fluency as they partner read the book, alternating readers. The candidate used prosody and pacing while reading, demonstrating to the student that reading was not a race and also showing him inflection and expression while reading. Student #3 was to use prosody as well when reading. Because this book was at Student #3’s frustration level, Candidate #3 would stop after each paragraph to check comprehension. After finishing the reading, Student #3
filled out a semantic map. He was to “state the importance of each major piece” that was read. The semantic map was completed at the end of the session to demonstrate his ability to recall details because according to the IRI results, this was an area of difficulty.

After all the tutoring sessions, Student #3’s “favorite part of the reading sessions was reading the book about Babe Ruth…the most influential components were student interest…given the most unwilling tutee if a tutor was able to tap into the tutee’s interests, there was a chance that they could start enjoying the sessions” (Student #3, Case Study #2). According to the teacher candidate, although the student’s attitude did not seem to change, as the sessions progressed and they read stories about baseball, “he was more alert as to what was happening and did better at the reading activities that followed the reading.” He did admit that he was willing to read “a sports book, article, or magazine than anything else,” and this was a change since the beginning of the sessions. Student #3 said about his own attitude, “Reading is still boring. At least most is still boring.” By Candidate #3’s interpretation, this quote demonstrates that a small window had been opened due to these sessions.

Making connections to the stories was key for Student #3.

We read some short stories about baseball; he seemed to enjoy those and even related to a few of them. There was one where the catcher made the game changing play, and I asked how he would feel if that was him. He said he was able to do that before, so he knew what the catcher was going through. The short story was also where we focused on the sequences. There were a lot of plays happening, and he was able to tell me what happened. I think because he knows
how baseball operates, inside and out, it helped him to remember the plays that were made and who would normally make the plays” (Student #3, Case Study #2).

As the tutoring sessions progressed, Student #3’s fluency improved because he slowed down his pacing. When he read quickly, he skipped over words or switched them around. By practicing oral reading, he slowed down and began showing prosody when reading and was able to self-correct because he was reading for meaning. He was also able to recall more explicit details from the readings. Student #3 noticed the difference in his oral reading. “I learned how to better read with emotion and reading out loud” (Student #3, Case Study #2).

By the end of the tutoring sessions, Student #3’s comprehension reading level was independent at grade 5. His instructional level was now grade 6. He did miss a vocabulary and inference question. His fluency also improved and was reading grade 6 material independently with only two miscues that did not change the meaning of the passage. Administering a miscue analysis, Student #3 scored at the instructional level at Grade 7 and at the frustration level with comprehension. Candidate #3 said he was impressed with the short-term improvements, and he hoped the student would continue his growth.

The topic of the high interest materials of the first three struggling readers was similar—baseball. Each student enjoyed reading about baseball, but their reading challenges varied. The candidates could not use common plans even though the students loved stories about baseball because the students were at different reading levels and had
different strengths and weaknesses in reading. Although the candidates could consult with each other in class about their planning and ideas for instruction, they had to treat each student differently to work on specific skills that needed strengthening, and the candidates had to analyze and reflect on the needs of their particular student. Candidate #3 realized he needed to work on fluency with his student in order to build comprehension. The choppiness of his reading was impeding his understanding of the story. Candidate #3 thought that his student would strengthen all of his skills if his reading flowed and was not as disjointed. While working on fluency, Candidate #3 noticed his student beginning to make connections because he was beginning to read for meaning. Student #3 underwent a transaction with the reading material as he acquired understanding as he related the stories to his own life. As Rosenblatt stated Candidate #3 created “a live circuit between readers and books” (1988, p. 6). Candidate #3 saw the importance of this connection, and it helped to guide him in the materials he sought for his student.

4.4 Candidate #4 analysis of Student #4

Student #4 is a career technical student whose reading scores on the Pearson Reading Skill Assessment were independent at 4.6 grade level and instructional at 7.8. After Student #4 was invited to the reading program, she was given the Informal Reading Inventory. With these results, her independent level for word recognition was grade 4 at 99% accuracy. Reading grade 5 through grade 10, word recognition was at her instructional level with 95% to 97% accuracy. Student #4’s comprehension reading level was instructional at grade 5. She struggled putting the main idea into a sentence even
when she could supply the details of the passage. “While she grasped the details and sequence, she still could not put all of those components together to formulate a main idea;” although she knew the passage topic was about seals (Student #4, Case Study #1). She also struggled with vocabulary and sequencing at grade 5. Grade 6 reading comprehension was also at Student #4’s instructional level. She stumbled on questions regarding the main idea, detail, cause and effect and inference questions. Her frustration level was at grade 7 missing detail, vocabulary, and the sequence questions.

Student #4 created a bit of a quandary for her teacher candidate because her grade 8 comprehension was 100% accurate. Student #4 said that she liked elephants, so she liked the story because it was about elephants. Candidate #4 immediately wrote down her interest in elephants because that could possibly be used later in instruction. When she was reading the grade 10 passage, she said, “I do not even know what that was about” (Student #4, Case Study #1). She lost confidence in her ability because she knew that she didn’t understand it.

Candidate #4 stated that her student’s greatest strength was reading fluency. She paused at the appropriate points and changed her tone if there was dialogue. “As the passages became more difficult for her to read and comprehend, she lost a lot of the great traits that she exhibited in the lower level passages” (Student #4, Case Study #1). As a result of the data collected from the IRI, Candidate #4 worked on finding the main idea, sequencing, vocabulary, and cause and effect (Student #4, Case Study #1).

From the interest inventory, Candidate #4 discovered that Student #4 was interested in mysteries and rock music, and she liked elephants. She also enjoyed
anything involving investigation. She would like to be a police officer or a detective. “I can use her goal of law enforcement as a topic of interest when selecting reading material” (Student #4, Case Study #1). Student #4 has a very poor attitude toward reading, giving it a 2 on a scale from one to ten.

The biggest influence on this negative attitude is the material that her schooling has provided her to read. She expressed that the materials that school has required her to read did not interest her and made her see reading in a negative light. (Student #4, Case Study #1)

Student #4 did have strength in her fluency. She paused “at the correct areas and changed her tone when reading dialogue…the student really excels at the prosody of a text. She knows where to pause, take breaths, and how to keep rhythm. She does well with intonation and inflection as well. Her accuracy with reading is where she really seems to struggle” (Student #4, Case Study #1). Student #4 was able to recall some details and was able to inference at her independent and instructional level. Comprehension strategies that were utilized during tutoring sessions were story maps “to strengthen her understanding of main idea, sequencing, and cause and effect” (Student #4, Case Study #2). Semantic webbing was also used “to understand how a main idea branches off into different details and concepts in a piece of writing” (Student #4, Case Study #2).

The first session consisted of reading the story Hobnail by Crystal Arbogast. This story touched on Student #4’s interest in science fiction, mystery, and Halloween. The story was used to observe the student’s ability to analyze text and answer questions and
identify main characters and the events of the story, main idea, and climax. For each of these areas, the student had to go back into the text and find evidence (Student #4, Case Study #2).

The story *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant was used because Student #4 expressed a great interest in mysteries in the detective genre. Sequencing strategies and cause and effect were emphasized using this story. The candidate used this story because she “felt that *The Necklace* really touched on the mystery aspect and that the ending would come as a surprise to the student which would really engage her” (Student #4, Case Study #2). *The Necklace* was Student #4’s favorite story during the tutoring sessions saying, “it was interesting and entertaining” (Student #4, Case Study #2). The comprehension strategy used in this story was CATAPULT which Student #4 enjoyed and could see being applied in other classes, so the strategies were purposeful and meaningful.

CATAPULT “will aid her in reading no matter what the context” (Student #4, Case Study #2). CATAPULT stands for: Covers, Author, Title, Audience, Page 1, Underlying message or purpose, Look at visuals, maps, or sketches in the text; Time, place, characters (Zwiers, 2010). It will help to make her reading skills transferrable and to use these reading strategies in other areas of her life. As they read *The Necklace*, each of them took a different part of the story. According to the candidate “Reading different parts and having me participate as well modeled good reading technique, fluency, and allowed her to then try to use those same techniques.
After the reading of *The Necklace*, we did the story map. The title and the setting were both easy for her to find. Student #4 knew them right away without going back through the text. When asked what the main conflict was, she said that the necklace was stolen. “This is not something that was said in the story,” so Student #4 had to make the inference (Student #4, Case Study #2). When sequencing the story, Student #4 “kept giving small details of the story rather than main events,” so the candidate knew this was something else that needed work. “She was able to identify the solution, and how the solution affected the main character. The theme, moral, or message was something that she struggled with. Eventually after referring back to the text and with some additional help from me, she came to the moral, ‘honesty is the best always’” (Student #4, Case Study #2). After this tutoring session, the candidate knew she needed to work on sequencing and main idea further. Candidate #4 thought that helping the student make connections with her own life in order to connect with the story would also be advantageous and make it more meaningful for the student.

*The Purloined Letter* by Edgar Allan Poe was used by Candidate #4 in the next session to continue working on sequencing and main ideas. The story was at her instructional level and challenged her a bit. Again the strategy CATAPULT was implemented during the tutoring session as well as *Writing in the Snow*. Because Student #4 was interested in mysteries and detective stories, Candidate #4 thought this story would interest her. “It is important for me to connect all material to her in some way shape or form so that she recognizes its importance” (Student #4, Case Study #1) and has purpose to her own life. While discussing this story, Candidate #4 saw a lot of comprehension growth in her student.
After the tutoring sessions, Student #4 stated, “I am better at [reading], and I know what to look for when I am reading” (Student #4, Case Study #2). The high interest reading material improved her attitude toward reading. In the prior reading sessions, Student #4 said her attitude of reading was a 2 on a scale from 1-10, 10 being the highest rating. After the tutoring sessions, using high interest materials and applicable strategies, she gave reading a 4 or 5. “I think that seeing a strategy used in material that she enjoyed can be used in other material as well made her realize that all reading can be interesting depending on what you get from it. She seemed to really enjoy the stories that I brought in for her to read, and it really seemed to peak her interest” (Student #4, Case Study #2). Student #4 demonstrated her motivation to read when she stated, “I wanted to read the material” (Student #4, Case Study #2).

Improvements that were observed during the session were the improvement of reading skills, but also the student’s focus.

In the beginning it felt that everything was a joke to her. She did not seem to really care that I was there to help her become a better reader. By the third session she was asking questions about the strategy and was engaged in the material. The first session that I had with this student she connected everything to drugs, suicide, and murder. She was clearly unfocused and did not want to be there. By the last session she was actually interested in what I had to say and seemed to really want to learn. When we began the “Writing in the Snow” strategy, she thought that it was silly. But then she realized that it was helping her to understand a difficult story. Then she realized that it might help her in her classes.
at school, and she began to really work at it. She was making connections between the text and she was very engaged. (Student #4, Case Study #2)

Student #4 also noticed that she was becoming a better reader and there were a lot of different texts that interested her. According to Candidate #4, Student #4’s desire to continue reading beyond the tutoring sessions became evident.

With the data Candidate #4 collected, Student #4’s post-IRI showed reading growth. She scored independently with the grade 6 and 7 comprehension questions, but was frustrated at the grade 8 reading level. She was able to state the main ideas as well as sequence details in the story until grade 8. The dramatic drop might have been due to lack of interest in the topic, but she stated, “I don’t know” to the majority of the questions. When Student #4 reached grade 7 reading passages, she wanted to read them silently. She still answered 90% of the comprehension questions correctly at grade 7, but she only answered 50% of the questions at grade 8. This may be due to a lack of interest. The grade 8 passage was about the Civil War. When Student #4 read the previous grade 8 passage at the beginning of the tutoring sessions, the passage was about elephants, and she said that she liked elephants; therefore she was focused on the passage. Student #4’s comprehension seemed to be influenced by her interest in what she was reading, and that is certainly evident when looking at the results of the interest inventory as well as the tutoring sessions throughout the experience.

Candidate #4 was incredibly cognizant of her student’s responses to text and her reading strengths and weaknesses. As her student made connections with text, Candidate #4 made connections with her own instruction and reflected on the consequences of her
instruction to direct future tutoring in the following sessions. As her student was having transactional experiences with the text as Rosenblatt describes, the teacher Candidate was experiencing the ebb and flow of instructional decision-making, keeping the Student #4’s needs central to every decision made. As Purcell-Gates described the need to continue listening and observing during instruction, Candidate #4 picked up on the cues that would help her to develop her plans for her student. She saw that her student’s attitude and engagement shifted based on her interest in the topic being read. She saw the impact of high interest reading materials and how this influenced her struggling reader’s comprehension. Candidate #4 also incorporated the classroom content into her session, using the comprehension strategies practiced, and the short stories into her instruction. Just as her student was making connections and having a transactional experience, Candidate #4 was as well. Using the materials from class, the candidate was able to make the alterations needed in order to connect the materials to her student’s interests and reading needs.

4.5 Candidate #5 analysis of Student #5

Student #5 reading scores on the Pearson Reading Skill Assessment were independent at 5.0 grade level and instructional at 9.5. After Student #5 was invited to the reading program, she was given the Informal Reading Inventory. For the graded word passages, Student #5 comprehension score was at the independent level for grade 6 material with 90% accuracy and her the miscue analysis was instructional with 96% accuracy. Her comprehension dropped to 50%, frustration level, for grade 7 materials, but her word recognition was still at 96% with structural and visual miscues. When
Student #5 re-read the grade 7 material silently, her comprehension did go up to 70%. Student #5 was able to self-correct as she read which demonstrated that she was reading for meaning. She needed to slow down when reading orally and improve her prosody and inflection. At times she was reading so quickly, she lost focus and was unable to recall what she read. The candidate observed a lack of confidence when Student #5 was reading orally. Student #5 was able to make inferences and predictions, but struggled to recall details (Student #5, Case Study #1).

During tutoring sessions, identifying the main idea and supporting details were chosen by Candidate #5 to be the focus based on the results of the assessments. In addition, the candidate focused on metacognition—being aware of what she knows and doesn’t know. The candidate believed that because Student #5 read so quickly, she wasn’t thinking about meaning, so recognizing when she was losing her understanding of the reading materials was important to emphasize during sessions (Student #5, Case Study#1). She felt that creating a connection to her own thinking would help her develop as a reader in order for her to have a transactional reading experience.

Student #5 enjoyed cheerleading, volleyball, and softball. If she read, she enjoyed reading mysteries, science fiction, and poetry. She also loved scary movies. She enjoyed doing hair and make-up, tanning, watching Pretty Little Liars, and reading Seventeen magazine. Student #5 did have a library card and liked to read romance, poetry, humor books, mysteries, and detective stories. Her attitude toward reading was at a one when reading school materials, but the number went up if the material was of high interest to her, but she didn’t give a specific number (Student #5, Case Study #1).
To spark Student #5’s interest, articles about her favorite television show, *Pretty Little Liars*, were used to find main ideas and supporting details. The readability of the articles ranged from grades 7 to 15, but because the article was of high interest, the candidate thought she could engage her student successfully. In addition, because the student had more knowledge of the series than the candidate, she felt this may build the student’s confidence. Student #5 showed great enjoyment and engagement in the sessions using the provided graphic organizers and labeling them. The vocabulary was above the student’s level, but with the candidate’s guidance, they were able to work through the articles. The candidate’s strategy was supported by Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development. When orally reading, Student #5 self-corrected, and the candidate observed “determination in correcting them. She is motivated….this will help her become a confident reader” (Student #5, Case Study #2).

After working with the *Pretty Little Liars* article for a couple weeks, it became apparent to the candidate that Student #5 needed to work on word identification. They worked on word family identification through a word game. Decoding was a deterrence to comprehension, so building Student #5 word store was important to her comprehension and confidence. Candidate #5, would reassess weekly and change instruction based on information she learned from Student #5. Digital flashcards were used because Student #5 loves digital media. “The game requires use of numerous phonics and other reading related skills…stressing syllables and vowels in different ways…[Student #5] was ecstatic every time she was the first to guess the real phrase which was often after she made the connection with the first few examples” (Student #5, Case Study #2). After practicing with the word game, the candidate brought back the
vocabulary from the *Pretty Little Liars* article and inserted the words the student
struggled with, so she could identify and define the words. Student #5 also created her
own sentences using her own experiences to build her comprehension skills. “After
accurately identifying each word she then could attempt to speak with prosody and figure
out the rhythm to solve the real meaning” (Student #5, Case Study #2).

After working on word identification and prosody, the candidate worked with the
story *The Bracelet*. This was a mystery story, and Student #5 said she enjoyed mysteries.
They looked at the author’s purpose by looking at characterization, sequencing, and word
choice used by the author. Following this story, the jumbled paragraph from Cambridge
University was used to introduce metacognition and the cognitive functions of the
reading process. “It allowed her to perceive reading as a skill which can improve with
practice rather than something a person is inherently skilled at or not. She was very
surprised that she could read the jumbled passage and even more surprised that the
university knew why our brains were capable of reading it…she said it was very ‘cool’”
(Student #5, Case Study #2). *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes was used to look for
word choices and writing mistakes within the jumbled story and demonstrated that
readers could still understand the story even though it had numerous mistakes. This
helped to build Student #5’s confidence as she sequenced and unscrambled the
paragraphs and story properly (Student #5, Case Study #2).

The final tutoring session was focused on listening to Ashton Kutcher presenting
the speech at the 2013 Teen Choice Awards. Student #5 was listening for prosody,
inflection, emotion, and pauses within the speech that showed emphasis and power
behind his words.
According to Candidate #5, Student #5’s attitude improved dramatically with high interest material. “Her attitude does change rapidly when the materials are of high interest. If she finds the materials even slightly interesting, she becomes more alert and responsive. She will not hesitate to continue reading, nor is she concerned with length, vocabulary, or other issues that she struggles with while reading or completing homework” (Student #5, Case Study #2).

Candidate #5’s analysis of Student #5’s post-IRI showed improvements. Her miscues did not change the meaning of the stories and were self-corrected up through grade 8, scoring at 96% which was her instructional level, and her comprehension improved from 50% accuracy to 70% accuracy. Her independent level stayed constant at grade 6, but her fluency and instructional comprehension became stronger. As stated, her instructional comprehension went up to grade 8 when orally reading the passages. Initially, grade 7 oral reading comprehension was at 50%. It is now at 70% with 99% word recognition accuracy. She still struggled with making inferences, but far fewer “I don’t know” answers were evident. For the post-IRI, she attempted to provide answers. Her confidence with answers was observed as well. “Instead of answering a question with a questioning tone, she simply provided a statement” (Student #5, Case Study #2). Student #5 also slowed down her pace of reading which helped her retain information.

Improvement that Student #5 saw in herself over the weeks of tutoring was the “useful concepts about reading that she learned and will be able to apply later” (Student #5, Case Study #2). Candidate #5 said, “She explained how our eyes and our minds recognize and comprehend words and passages. This tells me that there were changes in her reading and the changes are very significant for improved reading. She became
capable of metacognition and various cognitive functions of the reading process…she is experiencing and applying them” (Student #5, Case Study #2).

Candidate #5 focused on having her student be aware of her own thinking—metacognitive awareness because she noticed that when her student was reading, she was unaware of her own understanding; therefore Candidate #5 wanted her student to be aware of her connections with the readings. She saw that the speed of her student’s reading was hindering her comprehension of text, so Candidate #5 worked on slowing Student #5 down while reading while also working on prosody. The candidate used reading materials of high interest, connecting also to the different types of media that would engage her student (i.e. digital media, magazines, books). This connects back to Purcell-Gates’ study with Jenny and Donny. She changed media to meet their needs to help engage them further.

Candidate and Student #5’s conversations and their combined analysis of the contexts utilized to understand the author’s purpose helped Student #5 make connections to the author’s thinking as well as her own. The discussions between the two helped Candidate #5 shape instruction. Reflecting Rosenblatt’s theory and methods of transaction, Candidate #5 utilized classroom strategies and readings and connected them to her instruction which created a transactional experience for the candidate while she also created the transactional experience for her student. Candidate #5 observed a change in confidence within her student. She realized this when the student answered with statements, demonstrating her confidence in knowing the answers versus answering with a questioning tone, unsure if she was providing the correct answer. Candidate #5 was consistently working with her plans always keeping her student’s needs in the forefront.
of instruction, attempting to provide instruction that would help her student to think and make connections while she, Candidate #5, was also making connections.

4.6 Candidate #6 analysis of Student #6

Student #6 reading scores on the Pearson Reading Skill Assessment were independent at the 4.4 grade level and instructional at 6.9. After Student #6 was invited to the tutoring program, the pre-IRI was administered. Her word recognition was 99% accurate which is independent at the 5th grade level, and at the 6th grade level, she was 98% accurate. Most miscues were self-corrected and structural. Student #6’s comprehension was independent at grade 4 with 100% accuracy, but dropped to 70% accuracy at grade 5 missing detail, inference, and cause and effect questions. Grade 6 comprehension was at Student #6’s frustration level, receiving 50% accuracy. Again, she missed the detail, inference, cause and effect, and vocabulary questions (Student #6, Case Study #1).

According to Candidate #6’s interpretation of Student #6’s answers on the interest inventory, she said she was interested in mysteries, supernatural, and romance stories and only will read if the text is something that interests her. She stated that she enjoys watching CSI and Supernatural, and wouldn’t mind reading a book that has been adapted into a movie to compare the two. If she chose a book to read, it would include elements of romance, but she will only pick it up if it has something interesting on the front page. Student #6 does not like reading particularly, but part of that was because she cannot find books she enjoys. She does not like reading texts that are for school subjects, but does like reading cookbooks and online short stories. Student #6 spends only a little time
reading when it comes to school and was indifferent to it. She doesn’t like it, but if she had to read, she definitely had some clear topics of high interest (Student #6, Case Study #1).

Candidate #6 used stories that challenged Student #6 because the candidate followed Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development philosophy. She guided her student through the stories. She wanted to push the student’s thinking as Vygotsky recommends. The candidate worked with Student #6 on prosody and intonation in order to build her comprehension skills and also focused on vocabulary in context using graphic organizers that guided Student #6 to look for “personal clues” that revealed the meaning of the word that was unfamiliar to her. The candidate also used reader’s theater that contained dialogue to help improve Student #6’s prosody and intonation.

The stories used during the sessions were of high interest to Student #6. For example *The Necklace*—6.6 readability based on Fry readability formula—this story was used because it “has suspense and a romantic quality about it; she will enjoy the aspect of learning about a woman’s great lengths to prepare for a fabulous party, but…the twist at the ending will truly capture her attention” (Student #6, Case Study #2). Candidate #6 realized that “[Student #6] was very attentive to detail and made connections with her prior knowledge. She made the connection that the time period of the story was probably in the 1700s because of a TV show she had been watching that used similar dialogue” (Student #6, Case Study #1). Candidate #6 was wanting to strengthen Student #6’s use of context clues, and this example demonstrated that these skills were improving. Candidate #6 also used graphic organizers to help her student look for personal clues that revealed meaning of a word that was unfamiliar to her.
After working on *The Necklace* for two weeks, Student #6 seemed to be comprehending the text when it was broken up into small chunks, but on the third week, when the tutor and Student #6 read through a longer piece, Student #6 “struggled with pulling out the main idea of the larger amount of text” (Student #6, Case Study #2). Candidate #6 realized the student wasn’t “pausing while reading through the material to check her understanding” (Student #6, Case Study #2); therefore not grasping the main idea. Teaching Student #6 how to chunk text for comprehension is a transferrable skill that can be utilized in her other classes. An additional insight the candidate made referred to the rapport between the tutor and student:

I feel that one reason my student is engaging in the story and trying to learn the strategies is because I have built a strong rapport with her already. I can tell she is excited to see me and tell me about her week, and I think it is making a huge difference in the way that she performs. I can see her face light up when she knows I am excited and proud that she is applying and understanding the strategy that I have taught her. (Student #6, Case Study #2)

Another story read together was *Who Done It?* This was used for reader’s theater to engage Student #6, but also because Student #6 loves television shows that are mysteries. Fluency and prosody were the goals of this session with Student #6. The candidate modeled inflection and prosody for Student #6, and then Student #6 imitated the inflection when she read. Candidate #6 also used a shorter reader’s theater, *A Magic Carpet Ride* to work on prosody and fluency. Emphasis was on ending punctuation, commas, and natural breaks in paragraphs. If Student #6 improved her fluency,
Candidate #6 believed her comprehension would improve and this skill could then be transferred into her silent reading.

Student #6’s favorite part of the reading sessions was the different readings that they chose together, and she also enjoyed meeting with the candidate each week. Student #6’s attitude did change after her tutoring sessions. She found short stories on the internet that she enjoyed and planned on going to the library over Christmas break to find some books to read. She was never totally against reading. She said she “had a hard time finding material that was interesting at her level that she was comfortable reading” (Student #6, Case study #2). Student #6 said that she had an even better attitude toward reading, and she was no longer indifferent. The candidate said, “The high interest material that I chose for her to read kept her interested in the strategies that I taught her. She also realized that when she takes the time to find texts that fall into a genre that she enjoys, reading can become a past time that she takes part in” (Student #6, Case Study #2).

Student #6 cited *The Necklace* as her favorite story. She liked the moral and the plot. During the session, the student asked questions about the text that had to do with the time period and vocabulary in the text. When the two worked on plays and reader’s theater together, the candidate said, “My student and I had fun reading and acting out the play, all while she was learning how to read with expression. She took much more notice to periods, commas, and other punctuation when reading, while also changing her expression in her voice” (Student #6, Case Study #2).
When administering the post-IRI, the candidate said there was “a noticeable improvement in my student’s fluency” (Student #6, Case Study #2). Student #6’s prosody had improved tremendously. Student #6 also noticed that her ability to use context clues had also improved. “My student also seemed more confident with her reading…My student also did not have as many self-corrections while reading.” (Student #6, Case Study 2). The tutee stated that she was finding reading easier and that when reading in her classes, she was trying to use the strategies she had learned.

Candidate #6’s data showed Student #6’s IRI scores improved from the pre-IRI to the post-IRI. In five short weeks, Student #6’s independent reading and comprehension level went from grade 4 to grade 6. Although she was still below her own grade level, improvement in finding the main ideas, details, and being able to make inferences based on the given text was evident according to the data collected by the candidate. Grade 7 comprehension accuracy went up to 70%, and word recognition was at 98%; therefore grade 7 was at her instructional level for both comprehension and word recognition.

Candidate #6’s case studies were different than the rest. She emphasized the importance of the rapport and the relationship that she and her student built together. She said that this connection helped create an engaging environment for her student to build her reading skills. Like Candidate #5, Candidate #6 used different genres of literature, engaging her student in reader’s theater as well as narratives that were of high interest. Purcell-Gates’s study with Jenny discussed the use of different genres to engage struggling readers. Candidate #6 observed her student’s reception to the material. For example, she noticed that her student was able to understand shorter passages than longer, so the candidate taught her student how to chunk pieces of literature into more
understandable pieces. She offered her strategies that had been discussed in literacy remediation class and connected those strategies with her student to help her strengthen her comprehension. Like the other candidates, Candidate #6, used high interest reading materials that would peek her student’s engagement and interest in reading. Her student was never totally opposed to reading but struggled finding interesting materials at her reading level. By the end of the sessions, Candidate #6 noticed a difference in Student #6’s confidence as she read orally. Because there were less self-corrections due to errors, the student was able to read more fluently which improved her ability to read for meaning. The student said she was using the strategies shown to her in her other classes demonstrated a transference of knowledge and skills and a connection beyond the tutoring sessions.

4.7 Initial Perceptions

Initial perceptions that we hold true about our learners can influence our ability to teach them effectively. As Dewey (1900) suggests, opening up discussions with the community of learners to discuss issues can help learners to see other perspectives as they consider their own. The purpose of the class discussions were to help to uncover any possible misconceptions about struggling readers, but even after discussions, some perceptions that the candidates had of struggling readers still existed. This demonstrated that the discussions merely placed the idea on top of what they previously believed to be true, but until candidates actually began working with the struggling readers did their perceptions actually alter and reconstruction take place. In a correspondence with Candidate #1, he said,
Before beginning the program, I expected to have been placed with a student who did not care about his or her education at all and might have come from a tough family life as well. Those attitudes changed when I met my student. My student in this program was extremely nice and caring and although seemed uninterested in reading novels at times, he still cared a lot about his education and truly wanted to improve his overall reading skills” (May 21, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Candidate #2 had the preconceived notion even in a tutoring situation that if he told the student to read, he automatically would, but then the candidate realized that he could not just expect the student to read something he handed him without knowing about his background, his interests, or without knowing the learner. “I needed to approach him in order to make my teaching experience with him more effective. I could not just give him a book and tell him to read it. I learned that I first needed to gain some background information on what the student’s interests were. After I was able to find out what he was interested in, I revolved my lessons around them” (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence). This helped Candidate #2 connect to the research and the importance of fully knowing the learner as Purcell-Gates et al. (2002) discussed.

Misconceptions regarding working with struggling readers abounded among these six candidates. Candidate #5 stated,

Prior to taking this course, I didn’t think too much about struggling readers. I knew that I had come across many struggling readers when substitute teaching, but I never thought it was considered a ‘big deal.’ My ideas were that it was solely the parents’ job to teach their children how to read, but I slowly learned and
accepted the fact that the teachers are also supposed to help those children who do not get the help they need at home. As a teacher, I truly believe now that the teacher sometimes is the only hope in a child’s life who is a struggling reader. After taking this course, I have understood the consequences that children one day will face if they do not have the basic literacy skills” (Candidate #5, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

In this quote by Candidate #5, her transformation and reconstruction of knowledge took place over time as the different phases of the experience took place. Reflecting back, she was able to make connections from her previous perceptions of struggling readers to her experience using this pedagogical model to the future repercussions on struggling readers if teachers don’t step in to help them. She had a “coming-together” of the learner and the experience which Rosenblatt referred to as a transactional experience. Candidate #5 formed connections that related directly to her own life as she could see it in her future, obtaining an understanding the whole experience.

Candidate #6 had misperceptions about the mindset of struggling readers. This misperception was included because throughout the discussions within class, several students held the same mindset as Candidate #6.

In my mind I thought that they just did not care about their education and just slid through the cracks. Even though one of the reasons that they are struggling is because they do not care, I learned throughout this class that there can be many other contributions, like the environment that they live in. This is where I think
that the school is vital to those students that may not get the help or 
encouragement they need at home. (Candidate #6, May 27, 2014, Personal 
Correspondence)

When Candidate #6 stood away from the experience, she was able to see the 
whole picture and realize that there are many variables that must be considered when 
working with struggling readers because they all have different literacy experiences 
coming into the classroom that may impact their learning or influence their attitudes 
toward reading. By lumping all “mindsets” of struggling readers together as one, we are 
losing sight of the individual learners and their needs and how their prior literacy 
experiences affect their desire to read and connect with the materials. Candidate #6 made 
this connection once she stepped away from the experience.

Candidate #4 had a similar perception to Candidate #6 about struggling readers’ 
mindsets toward reading when the course began, but based on her case studies, she saw 
how the use of high interest materials impacted the growth and improved the attitude and 
engagement of her student, but after being removed from the experience for 6 months, 
she reverted back to her previous notions.

Many of these students could care less about reading and what it does for you. 
Most of the struggling readers that we encountered thought reading was not cool 
and would rather do other things with their time. A few students realized that 
reading can be fun and that they are good at it if they actually try. (Candidate #4, 
May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence)
Her student was one who realized reading could be engaging and fun, but Candidate #4, after 6 months, returned to her initial perception that most struggling readers don’t care about reading and would choose to do anything besides reading. She lost her own connection to the importance of high interest materials and the authentic experience she had during the course. If we look further into this response, I realized that reconstruction did not take place for Candidate #4. She didn’t actually revert back to her initial perception because her perception s never entirely changed. The discussions and overall experience were merely placed on top of what she previously believed to be true, but her perceptions actually did not alter and reconstruction did not take place.

4.8 Working with Struggling Readers’ Interests

The data collected supported the idea that the teacher candidates learned that using student interests while choosing instructional materials benefits the struggling readers and helps them to be engaged in reading while creating the opportunity for students to interact with the text. “The adolescent reader needs to encounter literature for which he possesses emotional and experiential ‘readiness’…that world must be fitted into the context of his own understanding and interests’ (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 65). It was important for the teacher candidates to evaluate the consequences of their instruction utilizing high interest materials to see the impact of using them with struggling readers, connecting these instructional strategies to their futures as teacher educators. All six of the candidates in this study did realize and understand that struggling readers must connect to the materials. “By choosing material that the student was actually interested in and could relate to, it allowed the struggling reader to truly be able to connect to the
material and thus want to continue to read similar material more often” (Candidate #1, May 21, 2014, Personal Correspondence). Candidate #2 stated,

If there is anything that I really think was important from this program, I believe it was that it is very important to find your student’s interests because it not only helps them become engaged, but it also stirs motivation inside of them by making them feel more positive about reading, and finding their interests is an avenue that leads them down a path of succeeding” (May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Candidate #3 reinforced Candidate #1 and #2’s stance:

It’s important to be aware of what your students are interested and connect those interests to reading, especially if they are struggling or unwilling to participate…he initially thought reading was boring but I was able to show him some stories that piqued his interest. [Knowing his interests] helped me create lesson plans that correlated directly with what the student needed. I was able to plan more accurately the skills the student needed to acquire. (Candidate #3, June 2, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #6 connected the importance of utilizing student interests during instruction when the home environment was not a strong literacy setting and did not encourage reading. “I took this class twice and both of the students that I had did not have the best environment at home. As the semester progressed I tried to incorporate the interest that they had outside of school with increasing their literacy” (Candidate #6, May
Candidate #6 stated in the case studies the importance of building rapport with her student through discussions which was supported by the research of Purcell-Gates. In doing so, she was able to understand her struggling reader as a whole person. Candidate #2 reiterated the importance of the discussions to know the students’ interests. “Discussing the material with the student was also a good way to connect to the material by asking them what they already know about the subject/topic” (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Supporting Rogers (2004) research, Candidate #4 made the connection between student interest and using strategies to strengthen the student’s reading skills. “This was a big part of the course. Part of this course was to make sure that the materials that we used for the students were of interest to them. The students were more receptive to the strategies if they were interested in what they were reading. Showing them that reading can be fun and is a way to stimulate their mind and imagination is a great think” (Candidate #4, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

As Candidate #1 and #3 reflected upon their experience in the course, they were able to see its importance to their futures. Candidate #3 said,

I’ll be able to try and choose a variety of topics for reading in my classroom. It’s important to be aware of what your students are interested and connect those interests to reading, especially if they are struggling or unwilling to participate. Adapting to the students’ needs and realizing what they could and could not do while reading. From observing other students not every student struggles with the same skills” (Candidate #3, June 2, 2014, Personal Correspondence).
Candidate #1 took his thinking even further, understanding that high interest materials can be utilized in all classrooms.

You have to connect to their lives or they’re going to lose it. This experience backed that up. If you take something they care about, they will be more engaged and any time a student is engaged you’ll see higher levels of growth. In a class of 29 students, it works. Just because the recommendation is that you teach something using a specific book or chapter, and that’s part of the beauty of being a teacher and being creative. You can find what your kids are interested in and make the connection that you see between what you need to teach and what they need to learn and figure out how to pull it together. That’s helped me because I’m using the interest of kids at their reading levels to help prepare them with what is coming down the pike in the next couple years to be able to read a text and analyze it, and it’s really become a cross-curricular thing” (Candidate #1, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

4.9 A New Awareness

To gain awareness, one must know what they previously experienced and connect it to new experiences and new ideas. A transformation takes place if one is to acquire awareness and experiences are to be meaningful and purposeful (Dewey, 1900). This makes education an active process. Five of the six candidates were attuned to their new awareness that resulted from their experience using this authentic pedagogical model. The awareness for each candidate varied from a new awareness of what is all encompassed in the act of reading to the challenges struggling readers face as well as the
candidates’ new insight into themselves and their own attitude toward struggling readers. For example, Candidate #1 said, “This program impacted my future teaching by making me more aware of a student’s ability to actually read a text as opposed to how well they are actually understanding the text as they are reading it, and for me to be more sensitive to that” (Candidate #1, May 21, 2014, Personal Correspondence). While Candidate #1’s new awareness focused on the process of reading and his sensitivity to the process, Candidate #5 became more sensitive to the struggles students must overcome in the classroom.

It made me aware of the real life struggles that students face in the classroom every day. As a teacher, I feel obligated to meet the needs of the students who struggle in reading… I have learned that it is of great importance to get to know the struggling reader and find out what they are interested in, assess their reading level, and give them positive feedback in order to build confidence in them. (Candidate #5, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #5 discovered her own sensitivities as she uncovered some new characteristics about herself: “It has revealed a side to me that I never really knew existed; that is caring and having sympathy for struggling readers. Before taking this course, I never thought of how many struggling readers there were in schools” (Candidate #5, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Candidate #2 became aware of his role in the development of confident readers in his classroom and due to his experience, using this pedagogical model, became aware that he could truly make a difference in a student’s reading ability.
I truthfully didn’t think that it was a big deal if I had a struggling reader in the classroom. I always thought to myself that it would be impossible to completely make someone an expert in reading in just one school year. My view regarding this entirely changed during the program because I realized that my tutee did not have that much confidence in himself when reading, and I felt like I could be the one to help him start on the right path of strengthening his reading by finding his interest and capitalizing on it. (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Like Candidate #2, Candidate #3 also became aware of his role of working with struggling readers in his own classroom and connected the strategies from class to the pedagogy he could use in his own classroom.

I took what I learned in class into my student teaching doing more guided reading and more small groups and highlighted my struggling students. The class gave me ways to implement tutoring in the classroom with small groups. It helped me identify who the struggling readers were. They won’t be participating and you wouldn’t think they wanted to participate, but they were just struggling readers. (Candidate #3, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Just as Candidate #3 made connections with his future classroom and effective pedagogy, Candidate #5 also became aware of how to she could connect with her students, including her struggling students.
As a future teacher I have a better understanding on how to connect with my students in general, but also understand how to relate to students in my future classroom that are struggling. I think it is important as a teacher to relate to your students. I also think that once your students realize that you care and that you are willing to help them, they are more receptive to the information that you present them with. (Candidate #5, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #2 had another insight that included an awareness of the different levels of student reading abilities within one class. “Even when taking subbing positions and having students read out loud, I have realized the vast differences in the students reading levels just by listening to how fluent they are or how choppy they read. After this program, I have become more aware of how important it is to gauge students reading levels and be able to find their interests in order to spark some motivation in struggling readers…it has made me more aware of the differences in reading levels within a single classroom.” (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Due to this class, Candidate #5 became aware of the responsibility she had to her students. She made correlations to her future as an educator by connecting to the challenges of struggling readers.

I truly believe that struggling readers face problems in school every day, whether it is when the teacher calls on them, during silent reading, echo reading with a partner, or choral reading with the whole class. As a result, I feel like the knowledge that I have gained from this course is something I owe to those students who struggle. I have become more aware of student’s reading skills even
when substitute teaching and always hope that their teacher is not letting them sail their way through the year without good reading skills. (Candidate #5, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #3 became aware the importance of the diverse genres that could be utilized to reach students while Candidate #6 became aware of the importance of choice.

I think the reader was exposed to more diverse works of literature and also that reading could be fun and engaging. I realized that all of those factors are needed to create consistent readers. If any of those factors are missing, the reader will not truly participate. (Candidate #3, June 2, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

This awareness of the diverse genres that can engage and motivate students can be utilized when giving students a choice of reading materials. “I think it is a very important foundation to teach to our students and that if we don’t allow the students freedom of choice for reading, we may lose their interest and motivation altogether.” (Candidate #6, May 27, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

In addition to an awareness of the advantages to giving students choice in the classroom, Candidate #6 also became aware of the importance of building rapport with the students in order to connect and relate to them.

As a future teacher I have a better understanding on how to connect with my students in general, but also understand how to relate to students in my future classroom that are struggling. I think it is important as a teacher to relate to your students. I also think that once your students realize that you care and that you are
willing to help them, they are more receptive to the information that you present them with. This class also showed me that you have to be flexible because not every student is going to be the same. You may have the best lesson plan but if your students are not understanding what you are trying to teach them, you have to be flexible on the methods that you are using. (Candidate #6, May 27, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Just as Ness (2008) stated the importance of professional development to provide educators with explicit reading strategies, Candidate #3 became aware of the different strategies that can be utilized in the classroom to reach struggling readers, but he also became aware of the importance of literacy in the classroom.

Prior to the course I didn’t understand how to reach struggling readers. We expect students to read at their grade level, yet know that different students have different learning abilities and strategies. So, what do I do? Do I give each student the same book and expect them to complete reading it at the same time and grasp the same understanding? Of course not, but I really wasn’t too sure how I could assess the reading levels of students and utilize the results to help them grow. Through this course, I gained a new perspective on the importance of literacy in the classroom” (Candidate #3, June 25, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

4.10 Reflective Experience

The pedagogical model utilized in this course allowed for Dewey’s theory of reflective experience and Rosenblatt’s transactional theory to reconstruct the thinking and
prior experiences of teacher candidates. Three of the six candidates described their reflective experiences. Candidate #3 stated, “Overall I think this class prepared me for the outside world because I can now adapt a lesson to meet all of my students” (Candidate #3, May 28, 2014, Personal Correspondence). Initially candidates couldn’t imagine the authentic connections they would make with their own interests and lives, but after completing the course and reflecting, they were able to see the whole experience and how meaningful and purposeful it was to their own lives and teaching careers.

This specifically, this class, I didn’t know when I was done with it how it would apply, but now that I have 29 kids, seeing how finding their interests apply in the curriculum and putting the skills I learned to help the kids on their level to teach is what I need to do. (Candidate #1, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #3 also made the connections to his own life and reflected upon the impact of the course.

I previously did not focus on how a struggling student would be affected within my content areas. I was focused on getting the information out and expecting students to understand the material. I was a little naïve in thinking that I would only be teaching social studies and science content…after taking this course, I focused on introducing literacy into my two content areas through short stories, group readings, reading aloud, and by supplying texts of multiple levels. All of which were related to the subject material and helped guide students through reading and writing. (Candidate #3, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence)
As Candidate #1 connected the experience to his own life, he also looked at how he was applying the ideas directly into his own classroom.

I go through and look at their interests. I always try to take my social studies units and tie them back to what they like—make a real life connection, so when I’m using primary sources and what they can use and give them tiered levels for primary sources. For advance I have 6th or 7th, and for the kids who are behind I can look for a lower level, but find a source they can use and comprehend. What I can do is what I was doing, and use it to analyze. What I learned I can directly apply to what I’m doing in social studies. (Candidate #1, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #5 realized after learning the reading strategies and concepts taught in class, the reading was cross-curricular and could be used in any content area.

Teach concepts not teach a text. You can take a story out of the curriculum and follow that. You can apply all those skills to any text, so they need to know the skills for the OAA—to any text, they need the skills. That was the purpose. Teaching skills through something they can connect to and they can apply it to other things. I used a ‘Walking Dead” unit because I knew they would like it, but I was still teaching the same skills. (Candidate #5, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence)
4.11 On-campus Classroom Interactions

Just as Plucker (2006) suggests, discussion about the literacy practices being used in the classroom is integral to educator’s mastery of the strategies. Candidate #1 realized the importance of the classroom interactions:

Reading is not what I’m completely comfortable teaching, but for me, in class, especially at the beginning having the reassurance from those who are language arts teachers and you who know those methods like the back of their hand and can give me the affirmation that I’m doing the right thing or try this maybe you’ll see results that was huge for me moving forward so I could apply those techniques over again to my student and tweak on them and try it this way that helped strengthen my confidence and having that support throughout the year. (Candidate #1, May 30, 2014, Personal correspondence)

Candidate #3 also realized the importance of the classroom dialogue and wished the last day could have been used for further discussion and reflection.

I think the last day of class should be used for students to share and give copies of the materials that they used and found helpful, like we do throughout the classes and had discussions which helped a lot in understanding and connecting.

(Candidate #3, May 28, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #4 saw the benefits of the discussion in class and how these discussions connected to the strategies being taught and then practiced out in the field. She was able
to reflect upon the impact of this experience and how the readings, the strategies, and the
field application all tied to one another.

Chapter 7 of Ziegler’s book wowed me because it is something that we talk about
constantly in class and seeing it really made me reflect upon the knowledge…I
can honestly say that I learn best from observation and discussion rather than
being explicitly taught to. Teachers can try, but when teachers explicitly teach
and do not relate what they are teaching back to me and my life, I check out and
quit paying attention. The majority of the information I have gathered is through
my own observation and how I relate that back to my prior knowledge of topics.
(Candidate #4, August 30, 2013, Reflection)

In addition to Candidate #4’s connection, Candidate #5 also saw the benefits to
the classroom discussions and how those discussions provided additional resources that
could be utilized in the field.

Our classroom discussions solidify the ideas in the readings and what happens in
the tutoring sessions and makes all of it make sense. Now I know that there is a
better way, and I plan on using the better method. It is funny how the way we
were taught plays out in our classroom. I have used context clues to help students
construct meaning, but not the extent that I will from now on. (Candidate #5,
September 6, 2013, Reflection)
4.12 Teacher Candidates’ Confidence

The studies by Plucker (2006), Ness (2009), and Lovett et al. (2012) reiterated the importance of professional development in reading instruction in order to build teacher confidence levels. The studies demonstrated a need to provide teachers with the strategies they could be directly applied in class. The application of the strategies learned helps to build self-efficacy and confidence when having to teach reading across all content areas. The candidates in literacy remediation were not just language arts candidates. Their content areas were cross-curricular which meant that many of them didn’t have the reading strategies they needed to teach literacy in their content areas. Most of the students had never given the reading assessments before, so that, too, helped to build confidence.

I was nervous about the IRI system and how it may be difficult to truly measure the students’ reading levels based on a one time test. I actually found the assessment to be fairly accurate but I chose to challenge my student with her reading without reading the frustration level. I did not think I would use the IRI assessment, but now I think I may use it in the future. (Candidate #3, June 2, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #6 gained understanding through the classroom readings, the discussion and practice of reading strategies, and the authentic application to the field experience.

As a methods student…I did not have a great understanding of how to introduce reading and writing into the subject fields that I had been currently preparing to
teach, nor did I even realize how important doing so really was…the class ‘Literacy Assessment and Remediation’ was the first time that I can remember actually learning how to incorporate literacy into the classroom through examples, reading articles about the importance of integrating literacy, and working with others to determine how multiple methods of teaching literacy can improve understanding. Also learning different methods of assessing student comprehension and inflection allowed me to better utilize what I learned throughout my student teaching. (Candidate #6, June 25, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

As a result of the experience, Candidate #2 also felt more confident about his abilities in the field of teaching. “It has also impacted my future teaching because now I feel confident in being able to perform an IRI and gain knowledge about student interest to work with struggling readers” (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

The reading strategies learned by Candidate #5 and #6 made them more confident, and #5 felt responsible to reach all of her struggling students. “After knowing how to aid students who struggle in reading, I have no other choice than to impart to them what I know can help them” (Candidate #5, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence). Candidate #6 not only felt more confident about the reading strategies she learned, but also she was more confident about her ability to interact with struggling students. “When starting this class I was nervous about the interaction that I would have with students.
Now I know I can do it and work with them on reading” (Candidate #6, May 27, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Those candidates who taught other content materials beyond language arts also benefitted from the course. They, too, felt more confident in their teaching of reading after completing this course using the authentic pedagogical model that was offered.

I had a different experience because I teach math and I teach social studies. I’m not a literacy teacher. I can teach reading, but teaching reading is not my strong point as an educator. …especially at the beginning of the year and I’m not a reading teacher…it’s not my strength. I’m math and social studies. Those are my strengths. Those are what I’m comfortable with. Reading is not what I’m completely comfortable teaching, but for me, in class, especially at the beginning having the reassurance from those who are language arts teachers and you who know those methods like the back of their hand and can give me the affirmation that I’m doing the right thing or try this maybe you’ll see results that was huge for me moving forward so I could apply those techniques over again to my student and tweak on them and try it this way that helped strengthen my confidence and having that support throughout the year. (Candidate #1, May 30, 2014, Personal correspondence)

Candidate #3 and #1 continued to discuss the preparation and confidence they found after taking literacy assessment and remediation which is a goal discussed not only by Dewey and Rosenblatt, but also by Taylor (2006) who said, “Learning activities…can take place through their everyday lives at home, at work, and in the community” (Taylor, 2006, p.
Candidates were learning together within the classroom community, and they took
the information learned and used it directly with their struggling readers in the career
technical school. This helped build their confidence in teaching the strategies as well as
their belief in themselves and their ability to teach reading.

The class prepared me to work with struggling readers. The tutoring experience
was great practice in utilizing reading strategies learned in class and also helps a
struggling reader at the same time. This mutual benefit is necessary in the
development of new teachers. (Candidate #3, June 25, 2014, Personal
Correspondence)

Candidate #1 continued to discuss how the course impacted his confidence and
how the course was meaningful and purposeful to him. “It helped my confidence…and
having a directly applicable way to use it made it meaningful for me and my student….I
now work with [the information learned in class] using my primary sources, and I work
with LA teacher and ask there were they…I go through and look at their interests”
(Candidate #1, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

4.13 Struggling readers’ confidence

This literacy assessment and remediation course provided confidence for the
teacher candidates teaching literacy skills to struggling readers, but also the candidates’
instruction in the field strengthened their student’s confidence as well. This growth in
confidence due to the instruction is another important piece to this experience that
demonstrated to the candidates how the consequences to their action (instruction) produced a positive result in their learners (confidence) (Dewey, 1938).

One way that I believe it changed my student...he began to open up and feel more confident about himself as a person. He was more talkative to me and even began to share with me some history facts that he knew. I also noticed a boost in his confidence when reading. At the beginning he was very hesitant when it came to pronouncing words and was afraid that he would butcher a word up badly. Toward the end, I noticed that these weaknesses slowly faded away as he gained more confidence in himself. (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Purposeful thinking, thinking directly about the impact of instruction on struggling readers, benefitted the teacher candidates in that it provided them another opportunity to reflect on the experience to find purpose and meaning in their own learning.

I believe that he grew to a level of confidence that he had never achieved prior to the tutoring sessions we had together. He seemed to really listen to my advice when I would talk to him after our sessions. As a tutor I tried my best to make him feel confident in himself that he could become more fluent reader. Even though he knew what he was interested in before our tutoring sessions, I believe that I helped reinforce the fact that he should find what he likes and use it as a way to improve his reading skills. (Candidate #5, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence)
During this time of reflection, candidates were able to draw out specific reasons that their struggling readers made improvements. Candidate #5, and #6 saw the influence of building rapport with their students and how it helped to strengthen the skills of their struggling reader.

Building the relationships helped her continue reading. The last couple weeks, she talked about her book a lot. She had someone to discuss with that and if she has that she will continue, but it she doesn’t have someone to talk to, she won’t have the motivation to read it on her own. She needed someone to trust her. Once we built that connection she was open to suggestions. Her teachers didn’t do that. It was more of a building relationship to change her ways. The teaching structure helped change her ways and she became more receptive. (Candidate #5, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Due to the relationship Candidate #6 built with her student, her student felt secure in asking questions when she was unsure about an answer. Through the progression of the semester, this comfort in asking questions helped to strengthen her confidence in her own reading skills. “The student felt very comfortable around me and asked questions when she was confused or needed clarification on something. By the end of the semester the student felt confident in what she was reading” (Candidate #6, May 27, 2014, Personal Correspondence). Candidate #6 continued to discuss her student’s confidence level when she said, “Once she knew how to search for things and pay attention to certain details in a text, she felt more confident in her reading habits” (Candidate #6, May 27, 2014, Personal Correspondence). Not only did the candidates describe the rapport with
their students that resulted in the strengthening of their confidence and their comfort to ask questions, but also as the sessions progressed, the students were answering questions with confidence as in Candidate #2’s student. “I think my student became more confident in the classroom. I noticed that he was answering questions more in [sessions] than at the beginning of the year” (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Similar to the previous candidates, Candidate #4 also saw a change in confidence due to the interactions candidates had with their students. “At the end of the semester students were more confident in their comprehension and were very interactive with their tutor” (Candidate #4, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence). This new confidence heightened her student’s engagement as she learned different reading strategies and mastered the skills taught. Candidate #4 also saw confidence strengthened as she saw the students having more dialogue with their tutors.

Once students knew techniques or strategies that would help them better understand the text they were more willing to dive right into the text, even if the text was somewhat challenging. Some students came to the tutoring session without motivation because they knew that they couldn’t read or comprehend as well as the other students. Once they learned techniques that worked for them, they came to the tutoring sessions ready to work. (Candidate #4, May 29, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Confidence comes from a belief in oneself and one’s own ability. Just as the candidates began to believe in themselves and their ability to teach reading, the struggling readers also were seen having confidence and self-efficacy. Both Ryan (2008) and Belzer
(2006) discuss the importance of the authentic materials that build engagement and motivation and give students confidence in their own skills.

His attitude towards reading became better because he understood that he wasn’t a bad reader, but he actually needed to slow down and then he could comprehend what he was reading. His confidence was higher towards our last meeting than the first, but he still wasn’t convinced that reading was important to his future. He was interested with the text I provided because each text involved baseball…He was motivated in the library, but did not seem to want to work on anything outside of there” (Candidate #3, June 25, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

As Plucker discussed in her research (2006), educators’ belief in their own ability also impacts the growth and confidence of their students. Teachers’ energy is contagious, and their attitudes and encouragement of their students are reflected in student motivation and engagement which builds students’ confidence. Candidate #1 made this connection and saw how his own attitude and his ability to encourage and talk to his student helped his student build his own confidence levels in his reading abilities.

I’m a positive person and that helped to and because [my student] was behind and people tend to look at people who are behind in a negative light. I bring a positive outlook to things. You are behind but you can get better. If you work hard and do these things and get to where you want to be. Having that positive outlook helped him to and his confidence and we’re not there, but we’re going to get there. Having the reassurance helped. He saw he was making improvement. His reading fluency improved and he knew. He knew he was supposed to answer
questions at the beginning he knew he should know how to answer, but at the end of the year, he could go back to the text and support with reasoning. When they see improving they are more motivated and more apt to continue reading. He strengthened his confidence when he saw his growth” (Candidate #1, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

4.14 IRI and Instructional Strategies

According to Dewey (1938), as teachers utilize new strategies and instructional methods, they should be mindful of the consequences and how it transforms their own thinking and creates meaningful experiences for the students. Candidates learned the importance of utilizing the reading assessments to choose appropriate reading strategies that students would connect to. When doing this, according to Rosenblatt (1938), the teacher candidates were responding from the efferent stance, but when they are interpreting the text and relating to the text from their own experiences, their response is an aesthetic stance. Candidate #3 realized the importance of creating a meaningful, purposeful connection with the students while providing reading tools that would help in their understanding.

They could make a connection with the source material and I also provided them with the tools to analyze and comprehend what they had read. With the very relaxed nature of the tutoring sessions, many of the assessments were getting the student to observe and retell what had just happened in the story while creating connections. (Candidate #3, June 2, 2014, Personal Correspondence)
Bandura (1977) discusses the importance of modeling strategies to teachers and providing opportunities to practice the instructional techniques. Candidate #6 responded,

Throughout the semester we learned a lot of different techniques to help struggling readers. Many of the techniques we were able to use in our tutoring session with the struggling readers. I really enjoyed using these strategies because they allowed me to use reading material that was interesting to the student, but also teach them how to guide their thinking. It also allowed students to see that they can do the thinking needed for understanding. Once they knew how to search for things and pay attention to certain details in a text, they felt more confident in their reading habits” (Candidate #6, May 27, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

Not only did Candidate #6 respond to the experience practiced in class, but also she made the connection and saw the consequence of building her student’s confidence as a result of her instruction. Candidate #3 also saw the connection with the strategies learned in class to his instruction.

I knew that the material and concepts which we were learning and discussing in class I could adapt to his specific needs. I was very excited about this experience because it gave me the opportunity to think outside the box and help the student grasp the areas which he was struggling in in a different manner. (Candidate #3, May 28, 2014, Personal Correspondence)
After learning the skills to administer the IRI in class, Candidate #2 also saw the consequences of his actions. He realized the importance of administering a reading inventory at the beginning of the tutoring sessions to understand where his student’s reading level was before planning the reading activities that are strengthen the student’s reading skills. “It was also important to first and foremost, gauge the student’s reading level by giving him the IRI and knowing where he is regarding his vocabulary, word pronunciations, and reading comprehension” (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence). Candidate #2 also realized the importance of choosing appropriate activities for his student in order to help the student connect authentically to the reading. “The small activities that I had the student do (such as the vocabulary word bank) helped them better understand the material and connect to it authentically” (Candidate #2, May 22, 2014, Personal Correspondence).

4.15 Transaction with Readings

Teacher candidates had a plethora of reading throughout the course that all was geared toward their growth and understanding regarding the teaching of literacy and literacy strategies across all content areas. These readings were discussed in class, strategies were practiced, and the students had to write reflections about the readings which encompassed a discussion connecting the readings to their own lives and their current and future teaching experiences.

There were so many important parts to the assigned reading that I can use with struggling readers, but again, I really like the simple ideas presented because I think those may work best for struggling readers. I love the comprehension book
mark because it provides students with a bit of a safety net so they won’t become
too frustrated with remembering how to effectively read a passage independently.
Those simple reminders could really help a student” (Candidate #6, September
13, 2013, Reflection).

Candidate #5 was able to take the strategies and assessments practiced and
utilized in the field into her own classroom. This made the classroom materials
meaningful and purposeful not only for the semester of class, but also in her immediate
future as a teacher.

I brought the IRI into class and did it on every student, and I was surprised
because I thought some were okay readers because they would read a small
passage and move on, but I didn’t realize who they were, and that helped me
differentiate my classroom because I could divide kids with struggling readers
and not because I saw how effective it was with my student at the tutoring center.
(Candidate #5, May 30, 2014, Personal Correspondence)

Candidate #2 found a connection with the strategies that were provided in the textbook
read in class. Due to the materials, Candidate #2 had a transactional experience and was
motivated to find other materials for his struggling reader. He made a connection with
the reading materials that motivated him to continue researching other strategies that
would benefit his future learners.

On page 175, I found this interesting because it said to provide texts that are
relevant and interesting because it can have a positive outcome…This book does
use some good examples of activities for subjects that might fit the unlikable subject areas and it gives me motivation to want to further investigate outside of this book for other motivational activities to use” (Candidate #2, August 30, 2013, Reflection).

Candidate #6’s transactional, reflective experience was palpable. The ebb-and-flow of reflection and connection that Dewey discussed that resulted in a reconstruction of knowledge through experience was evident in her response. Candidate #6 connected to the readings and the information provided in class that took place through classroom dialogue, and she made connections to her future. The experience was transactional as she was able to draw meaning from all the information provided. She saw the authenticity of the experience which made the materials purposeful. She summed up her experience and how this experience was different from previous ones and could be carried into her future as an educator.

This class, Literacy Assessment and Remediation was the first time that I can remember actually learning how to incorporate literacy into the classroom through examples, reading articles about the importance of integrating literacy, and working with others to determine how multiple methods of teaching literacy can improve understanding. Also learning different methods of assessing student comprehension and inflection allowed me to better utilize what I learned throughout my student teaching. (Candidate #6, June 25, 2014, Personal Correspondence)
4.16 Across the Cases

As I look across the top of all of these cases, I realize that I cannot know everything nor understand all the reasons behind the teacher candidates’ reconstruction, or in the case of Candidate #4 the lack of reconstruction. What I do realize is that this study opens up opportunities for further discovery. What happened to Candidate #4? Why didn’t reconstruction take place or did it take place and then some occurrence happened during second semester that made her revert back to her previous perceptions about struggling readers? We don’t know. We do know that she was student teaching in the second semester, but we do not know where she was placed, the demographics of her student body or whether or not her student teaching experience supported the pedagogy represented here in this study.

The experience provided through my pedagogical model is not fool-proof. It did not solidify every teacher candidates’ perception after six months, but it did open up an opportunity to look beyond this study and consider where I could look when following-up with the candidates. After six months, five of the six candidates retained their changed perceptions regarding the teaching of struggling readers—the reconstruction remained solid, but we do not know the reason they retained their perceptions after the reconstruction took place. In addition, regarding Candidate #4, we assume reconstruction did not take place, or the ideas introduced only sat on top of her previous perceptions; therefore if reconstruction took place at all for Candidate #4, it was not strong or lasting. In other words, we do not know the depth and the extent of the candidate’s reconstruction. Was any of the reconstruction due to the power relationship between
professor and teacher candidate? Again, we do not know for sure; although I attempted to avoid this possibility at all costs.

4.17 Biases

Although I tried to remove all biases from the analyses, I am a strong proponent of experiential learning. Dewey’s philosophy of education and the reconstruction of knowledge through educative experiences that connect students to their social lives in order to gain understanding and leave room for further growth is also my philosophy of education. Part of this study included collecting and interpreting data surrounding students’ experiences and their interests. The purpose of this collection was to help teacher candidates learn to analyze and interpret data to develop lesson plans that included authentic, high-interest reading materials for their students.

As I coded data, I tried to remain objective and avoided presetting the codes. Rather I looked at the data, discovering the concepts they had to offer. The participants in this study were selected based on their consistency in attending the tutoring program, not the growth exhibited in their pre- and post-assessments. Understanding the experience of the teacher candidates was the goal, and the pre- and post-assessment analysis was a part of their learning experience. The results of their assessments were not a factor in the admission of data into the research.

The biases of the teacher candidates could have been present if they believed their grades in class were going to be higher based on the growth of their struggling readers; therefore power may have biased the data, but I tried to avoid this bias through classroom discussion, reiterating that their grades for the literacy assessment remediation class were
separate from the reading growth of their student. Other biases that became evident as
the data were analyzed were candidates’ perceptions of struggling readers. Some of the
candidates did have misconceptions about struggling readers and their desire to learn, but
these dissipated as the candidates continued working with their struggling readers and
interacted with them weekly building rapport. My goal was to look at the whole
experience of the teacher candidates. I attempted at all costs to keep my own biases,
attitudes, and inclinations out of the analysis and coding process. The peer debriefer was
also not informed of my coding system. She developed her own system which ended up
being parallel to mine, reflecting similar codes and themes.

4.18 Limitations

A limitation to this study was the location of the tutoring sessions. The teacher
candidates and struggling readers met in the library in the career technical school. Some
were able to meet in private rooms while others met out in the main area, so noise and
distractions could have impacted the engagement of struggling readers. The study overall
lasted the semester, but tutoring only lasted five weeks, so the long-term effect of this
pedagogical model and instruction based on the struggling readers couldn’t be collected,
but could provide additional information about the influence of authentic reading
instruction.

An additional limitation to this study was the follow-up interviews of teacher
candidates. Not all the teacher candidates included in this study were available to have
face-to-face interviews. Being able to follow-up their responses with probing questions
based upon their answers and observing the nonverbal communication could’ve helped in
the interpretation of their answers. Email communication is limiting; although messages
can flow back-and-forth, some interpretations can be lost in translation that would be available if the interviews had been face-to-face. The immediate feedback to a remark or probing for additional information is delayed through emails.
Chapter 5

Discussion

The goal of my study was to use a pedagogical model in my literacy assessment and remediation class that would create an experience for teacher candidates which would reconstruct their knowledge through an educative experience. This model would interpose Dewey’s theory of experience with Rosenblatt’s theory of transaction. For example, in the initial stage when candidates came to this event, they brought with them their lived experience. There was a conscious interaction with the situation, and there was an immediate and direct awareness with the event. Rosenblatt’s transaction—self to text and text to self—occurred within this space and time.

The special meaning, and more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text. (Rosenblatt, 1964, p. 30-31)
As the experience continued to move, the candidates entered an educative environment which incorporated my pedagogical model. This was a time of sharing, discussing, and learning with a community of learners that fostered a reflective experience. During the next stage of the reflective experience, the candidates inquired and analyzed consequences of instruction and ideas that caused the reconstruction of experience to occur. When there is reconstruction, there is growth and continuity and an opportunity for more experiences to take place. When learners moved around from one phase to the next, after reconstruction, there was a “new candidate.” They could never be who they once were if reconstruction truly occurred.

This idea is based upon teacher candidates’ ability to create continuity of their past knowledge with new information and to observe the reconstruction of that knowledge based upon the current experiences and how their outlook, perceptions, and skills altered based upon this. Dewey (1934) describes an experience as an intellectual and esthetic movement of thought that takes place over time. Based on the data collected, I feel confident that this “movement of thought” did take place for the candidates as they utilized this pedagogical model.

Based upon the data collected, it is evident that the six candidates not only reconstructed their own thinking about teaching literacy, but also they saw the impact of their instruction on struggling readers’ learning. According to Dewey (1938), it is important for learners to see the consequences of their actions. Utilizing high interest reading materials at their students’ reading levels, the candidates saw the impact of their choices of instruction on their struggling readers’ engagement and confidence.
candidates mentioned in their case studies that the high interest materials engaged their struggling readers. What did this engagement look like? Candidates’ students followed along with the reading materials; they asked and answered questions with confidence; dialogue became more frequent; and the struggling readers said that they were volunteering to orally read and answer in their other classes. This demonstrated the transference of confidence outside of the sessions as well. The candidates observed these changes and saw the impact of using high interest reading materials during instruction. The research completed by Belzer (2004), Purcell-Gates (1985), Taylor (2006), Bergeron and Rudenga (1996) as well as others all emphasize the importance of student engagement using high interest reading materials. Using this pedagogical model, the teacher candidates were able to understand the importance of these materials to student engagement, learning, and reading growth.

As the data were analyzed and interpreted, it was clear to me that the candidates reconstructed their thinking and felt more confident teaching reading skills. Candidates #1, #2, #3, and #6 all discussed how the literacy strategies they learned had given them the confidence to connect these reading strategies to their content areas utilizing high interest materials that would engage their students. This confidence did not exist previously because they did not know the instructional reading strategies, hadn’t practiced using reading strategies, nor had the understanding of the importance of utilizing high interest materials to engage struggling readers prior to this course. Because they were given the opportunity to directly apply the strategies in their tutoring sessions with struggling readers, their confidence using the strategies was strengthened further.
Ness (2009) reiterates throughout her research the importance of professional development to build teacher’s self-efficacy in teaching literacy skills.

Within class, before entering the teaching field, the candidates were taught how to administer, assess, and interpret data collected from interest surveys, reading inventories, and tutoring sessions and how to create high-interest tutoring plans for struggling readers based upon the assessment results. The model and components of the model were reflective of the research found that emphasized the necessity of knowing the whole learner. Purcell-Gates et al. (2002) emphasized in their research the importance of interviews to understand the learners and make instructional decisions. Rosenblatt (2005) stated the importance of knowing the whole learner so they can approach materials with “emotional and experiential ‘readiness’…that world must be fitted into the context of his own understanding and interests” (p. 65). Candidates had to become cognizant of the whole learner at all times; therefore the collection of information was ongoing throughout the process versus just collecting the data at the beginning and then never returning to it again.

To have a transaction, the material selected needed to be at the students’ reading level and of high interest in order for the material to have purpose and to build confidence. As observed in the case studies, candidates had to revisit their interest inventories and reading assessments as the sessions continued, being sure to keep instruction of high interest and at the reading levels of the students. Candidate #2 is an example of one who had to reflect on his instruction because he was using high interest materials, but the materials were too difficult. He had to consider the whole learner and understand what
was causing his student’s frustration with the materials. Candidate #2 realized he was pushing too hard with materials that were at too high a reading level. He had to develop new materials to meet the needs of his student at the appropriate reading levels to avoid further frustration. This learning moment and the constant ebb-and-flow and revisiting was integral to Candidate #2’s reconstruction of knowledge and understanding.

The candidates had to interpret the results in such a way that the analysis guided their instruction of the struggling readers. As Beers, Probst, and Rief (2007) stated in their study, discussion needs to take place to encourage meaningful thought, and the classroom allowed candidates the opportunity to discuss ideas and issues in an open forum. As Candidate #1 stated, these classroom discussions helped him to build his confidence in teaching reading skills before having to enter the field because he could confer with others. The data collected confirmed that the candidates’ confidence in teaching reading skills improved as a result of this experience.

Not only did the classroom environment help candidates build confidence, but being able to directly apply these skills learned into the field helped candidates make the connections between skills learned in class and the application of teaching these reading skills to others. Similar to the study done by Plucker (2006), the candidates could see success with their struggling readers using these reading strategies with high interest, authentic materials. As mentioned, candidates were to develop lesson plans using high interest reading materials. In order for them to know what was of high interest to their struggling reader, the candidates had to know their learners.
Candidates were to connect this pedagogical model with their prior experiences as well as with the possible, future experiences in the teaching field. After 6 months elapsed, follow-up interviews and emails that focused on the teacher candidates’ reflections of the class determined if the connections were made between theory and practice. Teacher candidates were to engage learners and help them reflect and respond to the text, linking the ideas from the stories to their own, personal lives. Connecting students to the reading material would generate the opportunity to lead readers into richer and more challenging literary experience. The transactional response is the “personal nourishment that literature can give” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 68).

Youth seeks to understand itself and its world, to feel from within what it means to be different kinds of personalities, to discover the possibilities in human relationships, to develop a usable image of adult aims and rolls. Such are the deep-seated interests that can be brought into play to nourish a vital interest in literature. (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 66)

In this study, I looked at the research question: what were the university students’ lived experiences of the literacy program? Based on the data gathered in this study which were also supported by research, the teacher candidates experienced transaction based on their lived experience when they connected the material to their own lives which helped them to draw meaning from the experience and grow as literacy learners as well as future educators who will be working with struggling readers in various content areas. Not only did teacher candidates have a transactional response, but also, there was a reconstruction of experience—candidates’ thinking was changed based on the use of this pedagogical model.
I can conclude that the teacher candidates felt more confident and prepared for teaching literacy in their content area, and they were more comfortable teaching comprehension strategies which will benefit the learners in their classrooms. In addition, by using authentic, high-interest reading materials with struggling readers, teacher candidates saw their struggling readers become more engaged and their attitudes begin to shift; their struggling readers were motivated to read more and began building confidence in their own reading abilities. This pedagogical model provided a transaction that connected teacher candidates directly to their interests in the teaching field and their own lives which made the class meaningful and purposeful.

In brief, the teacher candidates in this study have helped to confirm my belief that this pedagogical model is effective in the reconstruction of experience by providing teacher candidates an opportunity to bring their own lived experience to the model by having a transaction with the material, discuss and interact with a community of learners, reflect through inquiry and analyzing consequences in order to reconstruct their knowledge in order to grow and be open to further experiences. By engaging directly with struggling readers and delving into their experiences and interests and developing literacy lessons that used authentic, high-interest reading materials connecting struggling readers to those materials, the teacher candidates saw how theory and practice connect and how this literacy experience created an opportunity for a reflective experience that reconstructed their previous perceptions of struggling readers and their own knowledge and confidence in the teaching of literacy. According to the candidates, some of their struggling readers became more confident because the materials related to their own interests and experiences; therefore they were invested in their learning. They were
motivated and engaged in the reading process which provided a positive literacy experience for the struggling reader.

The teacher candidates saw the impact of knowing the whole learner to establish the best instructional strategies that would reach the struggling readers in order for them to function in a literate society. The students’ background experiences and interests influenced their ability to acquire literacy skills as did the prior experiences and perceptions of the teacher candidates. This pedagogical model not only created an opportunity for the teacher candidates to reconstruct their knowledge as they realized the importance of teaching literacy across all content areas using high interest materials, but also they were able to apply the strategies directly in the field, and in a short duration of time, they saw growth in their struggling readers which helped in the candidates’ own reconstruction of thought and their belief in their own ability to teach literacy skills to struggling readers.

5.1 Teacher Candidates’ Experiences

Using this pedagogical model, teacher candidates had the opportunity to work with struggling readers, connecting them to their prior experiences and interests which was also supported by Belzer (2004) and Taylor (2006). Teacher candidates used this information to develop lesson plans that connected their literacy instruction to their students’ lives while making connections to their own literacy experiences as future educators. This tutoring model was supported through the work of Purcell-Gates (1995) when she worked one-on-one with Jenny and Donny as well as Springer and Yelinek (2011) and Bergeron and Rudenga (1996). Through the use of different comprehension
strategies and different materials, depending upon the information gathered from the struggling readers, the plans were tweaked and revisited as both Purcell-Gates (1995) and Dewey (1920) discussed. During the candidates’ experience, in a short amount of time, they observed their struggling readers improve in reading engagement, reading skills and reading confidence. Because the tutoring sessions lasted 5 to 6 weeks, the growth in reading skills of the career technical students could only be utilized for the teacher candidates’ personal experience in assessment and remediation versus an overall deduction of long-term reading growth.

The teacher candidates’ experiences were vital to the success of this pedagogical model in the literacy assessment and remediation course. Based upon what they wrote in their reflections, emails, and said in their interviews, it became evident that this model was effective in creating a reconstructive experience that allowed candidates to have a transactional response with the materials in this course and the fieldwork they participated in. I was well aware of the research that supported the use of authentic instruction and the effectiveness of knowing the whole learner and utilizing their interests and experiences to create an instructional plan that would engage and motivate learners in order that they draw meaning from the texts, but when I listened to the responses and read the reactions of the candidates reflecting on this experience, I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of responses. We speak of modeling literacy practices for our students, but often we speak of literacy strategies that teachers can utilize in their classrooms but lack the authentic training and practice, training that will make practice tangible for the teachers. Ness (2008, 2009), Massey and Lewis (2011), and Bandura (1977) all discuss the importance of modeling and practice for educators. Ryan (2008) also discussed the
importance of authentic projects to reach learners. This is one of the purposes of using my pedagogical model. By offering the teacher preparation of literacy strategies in methods classes as well as providing professional development for current teachers in all content areas literacy strategies can be modeled and practiced which will prepare future teachers to utilize these strategies in their classrooms.

This pedagogical model which promoted modeling and practicing of literacy strategies was supported through the research of Bandura (1977). The modeling provides believability. The teacher preparation and professional development will help future educators to build self-efficacy and understand how literacy fits into all content areas. It is not just a “language arts thing.” Teachers need to have the skills, desire, and the confidence to teach literacy skills no matter their content area; therefore demonstrating the comprehension strategies will benefit all learners (Ness, 2009; Lovett et al., 2012). Using this pedagogical model gave the teachers candidates confidence and a belief in their abilities to teach reading in all content areas. If teachers are shown and convinced of the value of teaching explicit comprehension skills, students’ reading skills will develop, and students, as a whole, will benefit. Based on the data collected from the conversations with the teacher candidates, that goal was accomplished and changed teacher candidates’ beliefs about the necessity to teach these literacy skills which was supported by the research of Ness (2009) as well as the teacher candidates’ own belief and confidence in their ability to teach literacy skills in all content areas.

In addition, a reconstructive, transactional literacy experience took place using this pedagogical model. The teacher candidates were aware of their prior perceptions of struggling readers and the idea of teaching struggling readers, and they experienced a
reconstruction of their perceptions. Teacher candidates also became aware of the struggling readers in their classrooms when some hadn’t noticed them prior to this experience. According to Lovett et al., (2012), this awareness is important to the development and growth of literacy teachers and helps improve their attitude toward literacy instruction as supported by Massey and Lewis (2011).

Throughout the process, the teacher candidates’ confidence also improved as they discussed, read, and practiced the different literacy assessments and utilized the strategies during the tutoring sessions. The true conversations and dialogue in class encouraged meaningful thoughts and connections as Beers, Probst, and Rief (2007) and Schmoker (2007) pointed out in their studies. Practicing dialogue was also important to their growth and belief in their own abilities which Ness (2009) also supported in her research. Our conversations in class reflected on previous, current, and future experiences of all learners which helped candidates look at other perspectives as they reflected on their own. We looked at different instructional strategies and practiced those strategies, and then the candidates reflected on the effectiveness of the strategies. Then they could apply dialogue and strategies in their tutoring situation directly and monitor the thinking and connections made by their struggling readers. This dialogue encouraged the struggling readers and helped them understand the importance of reading. Belzer (2006) discussed the importance of dialogue and conversation in order to help learners comprehend the purpose of reading.

The candidates had a reconstruction of experience as they drew meaning and understanding from the pedagogical model. The awareness of understanding and the ability of the candidates to connect the dots and see the impact of the course was
unmistakable. Some candidates might have been aware of the importance of teaching literacy in all content areas; they might have been aware of the importance of using high interest materials and knowing their learners, but this course solidified those beliefs and provided an authentic opportunity to practice those reading strategies with struggling readers. This reconstruction of thought and a new awareness was evident throughout the data. Their new insight and new awareness based upon readings, discussions, and/or tutoring sessions demonstrated this reconstruction. The individual events were drawn together and connected to create an authentic, transactional experience that created an opportunity for further learning and development. The reconstruction of experience is learning, and that is what took place as a result of this pedagogical model.

5.2 Implications

Based upon the results of my research, this study can lead to a change in our teacher education program by providing professors a pedagogical model that allows students to reconstruct their own knowledge and experience through reflection based on readings, discussion, and action. Courses need to connect theory and practice and create an integrated experience in which they “must at each point retain and sum up what has gone before as a whole and with reference to a whole to come” (Dewey, 1934, p. 56). According to Dewey, education should be an active process. Without reflection, the actions become routine and arrest growth. This model directly correlated to the teacher candidates’ growth and understanding about teaching literacy and connecting content to students’ interests and experiences. In addition, professors’ approaches to teacher education of literacy can alter because they can use an effective model that changes the thinking of teacher candidates about the importance of teaching literacy across all content
areas. Teacher education programs of literacy need to provide opportunities for candidates to connect content materials with their students’ lives and experiences.

The current teacher preparation classes need to be explored to see what reflective, authentic experiences are being provided to teacher candidates that allow them to continually make connections among prior, current, and future experiences while practicing connecting content to students’ lives and experiences. This movement and connection of thought must take place in the classes through discussions and reflections that allow the students to work and think together as a social group as well as individually always building connections and drawing meaning from their situations. This will allow them to challenge and deepen their own thinking as well as the thinking of others. It is important to provide teacher candidates with immediate application within the field, so they can practice the strategies that are discussed in class to make the learning purposeful and meaningful.

Another implication of this study that emerged was the importance of having reflective analyses of our teacher education program as a whole. Collaboration and thinking must take place among the program designers in order to carefully look at all aspects of the program looking at the prior programs and the consequences of those programs and classes and move forward making connections and creating links to the future courses that will be purposeful and meaningful to our teacher candidates as the program and classes connect theory and practice.

Outside the teacher education program within a college institution or other school setting, the results of the study demonstrated the necessity for professional literacy development of teachers, currently teaching in the educational field, to build their
confidence in teaching reading strategies in their content areas, especially teachers outside the literacy field who often times don’t see themselves as teaching literacy. Today common core standards will force them to do that, but that doesn’t mean they have the tools, skills, and confidence they need to believe they have the capability to do so, nor the positive attitude to be successful teaching literacy.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

My first recommendation for further research was based upon the results obtained from Candidate #4. She was a disconfirming case to the reconstruction of experience. I would like to see this study done again but this time have the candidates observed as they experience their student teaching. Then following the student teaching experience, I would like to see if the reconstruction of experience from my class was strengthened and more deeply seeded, or if the reconstruction was altered and changed due to the student teaching experience. Candidate #4 totally perplexed me because during the class, she seemed “sold” on the pedagogical model and the depth of her beliefs that I believed were altered due to the experience with her struggling reader. At the time, the candidate seemed convinced that struggling readers did actually care about school versus her previous perception that they didn’t. I was obviously wrong in thinking her reconstruction was more deeply rooted than it was since she reverted back to her initial perceptions after six months. Did anything happen to cause this or was her mind not truly reconstructed and was the experience non-educative for Candidate #4?

In the process of doing my research, I uncovered some other areas that bear further investigation. The recommendations made are based on the data revealed in this research. These other areas needing further investigation are:
• A study that is more longitudinal would provide an opportunity for studying the struggling readers’ experiences in addition to the teacher candidates’ experiences. This would also provide an opportunity to measure struggling readers’ literacy growth.

• After providing professional development, a study with other classroom teachers who implement the pedagogical model with an entire class of students would be fascinating to research as they connect their content to high interest materials and the experiences of their students. This would benefit teacher education as a whole as we look at students’ growth and experiences. What does this classroom look like? What are the demographics of the students? How do the students progress utilizing this model? What are the students’ experiences using this model? Is it effective for all learners or just struggling readers?

• A study that follows our teacher candidates into the classroom to observe the transfer of this experience. Is there a transfer from this experience to the classroom? The teacher candidates allude to this transfer as they discussed their future classroom experiences, but a study to formally observe the transfer and report the effectiveness would be ideal to relay to teacher educators.

• A larger sample of teacher candidates using this pedagogical model would provide additional data for teacher education.

• Other teacher education courses using this pedagogical model could be studied and the experiences of the participants need to be communicated to continue providing effective teacher education courses.
As stated, this study opens up the opportunity for further research in several areas. Allowing teacher candidates to have a reconstruction of experience in order for them to transfer and practice within their own future classrooms will benefit the teacher candidates as well as their learners; therefore I want to emphasize two of the recommendations listed above: A longitudinal study that focuses directly on the struggling readers’ experience should take place that is strictly focused on the learners’ literacy experiences over a greater length of time that uncovers their learning, reading growth, and connection with the high-interest material and how this impacts their own prior knowledge to the new information. This study would inform all educators about the necessity for connection of content to our students’ lives in order to engage, motivate, and improve reading skills and deepen thinking across all content areas while improving reading skills.

In addition, another study in a regular, traditional classroom using this pedagogical model could demonstrate the growth of all learners in a classroom and their connection to each other and the world around them—the importance of connecting content to all students’ interest, not just the struggling readers and how this experience reconstructs all student learning would help educators understand the necessity of teaching literacy across all content areas.

What we do know is that using the pedagogical model, teacher candidates had a positive, authentic literacy experience that provided them an opportunity to reflect and connect their overall literacy experience to the whole of teacher education. Due to this course, they had a new awareness of what it meant to teach struggling readers as well as a new confidence in the teacher candidates’ own ability to teach literacy as they
understood the importance of connecting content materials to their students’ lives using high interest materials. Teacher candidates found meaning and purpose in their learning as they connected the information they learned to their own lives, providing them with a transactional literacy experience. Education should be an active process, and this pedagogical model provided university students a cross-curricular, literacy opportunity to use the comprehension strategies learned in class immediately with struggling readers. Overall, this pedagogical model was a success.
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