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"THE ORANGE-BOX KIDS": A STUDY OF THE MOTIVATIONS

TOWARD READING AND WRITING OF

RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

IN A DEVELOPMENTAL READING AND ENGLISH CLASS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate

School of The Ohio State University

By

Ruth Lee Dewald Baginski, B.A., M.A.
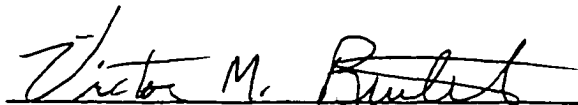
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The Ohio State University

1998

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study examines two Developmental Reading/ English I classes and a total of 23 students who were reading, according to the *Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test*, on the second-to sixth-grade levels as they entered ninth grade. 15 students were African-American; 8 were Caucasian. The researcher investigates the reasons why students had thus far not been able to succeed in the current educational system and outlines ways to improve student attitudes toward reading and writing. In answer to the questions, "What type of program motivates students who are reluctant participants in reading and writing activities?" and "What types of readings or activities are effective for the remedial at-risk reader?," nine program modifications are proposed.

The researcher discovers that students who initially indicated they were unwilling to read assigned texts were willing to read texts they had chosen of their own volition. Analysis of student writing samples about non-fictional and fictional works, adolescent and multicultural literature is used to reveal student progress. Students

were averse to EDL Learning 100 workbook activities and to rote, repetitive tasks, but were willing to engage in writing when it was immediately related to their self-chosen topics or purposes. Students needed unvarying attention to their individual needs and required continual inundation with opportunities for successful experiences. Students who feared failure at the outset of the study eventually responded to challenging assignments in which they enjoyed success.

The findings suggest that adolescent at-risk students need help to strengthen their literacy as well as to boost their self-esteem. Standard measurements including standardized testing and grading of the final product alone were ineffective methods for determining how these students could improve their literacy and for discovering why they had difficulty succeeding in the current educational system.

Finally, the results reveal that addressing both issues simultaneously, self-esteem and remedial literacy, is beneficial for students and teachers. Teachers of reading and of English can profit from performing individual microanalyses of students' literacy skills in conjunction with case-by-case evaluations of the effects of self-esteem on students' motivations toward literacy tasks.

DEDICATED TO ELIZABETH

JANUARY 4, 1978-MARCH 4,1995

TO MY HUSBAND, THOMAS

TO MY MOTHER, ANN DEWALD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Sandy Stiehl was the reading coordinator for Kingsboro County. As was customary, she met with the new reading teachers for the county the week before the beginning of the school term. It was her task to brief us on the group of students for whom we were to be responsible in the upcoming school year. All were students who had performed at levels three to seven years below grade level norms in reading. She leaned confidentially forward by way of prefacing her remarks about the group in question. "Last year, Mr. Tomlin," she recounted (referring to the courtly Southern aristocrat who was our Superintendent), "was talking about all the different kinds of students we had to educate in the county. We have College Prep kids, he said, and Tech Prep kids, and Life Prep kids, but we also have a group of kids who have fallen between the cracks and don't fit into any of these categories. He went over to the board where he'd been writing down names for all these different groups when he just happened to pick up an orange dry marker and drew a box. So now we refer to these kids as Orange Box—though we don't want you to ever call them that to their faces." She smiled knowingly at us here. "These are the kids that we are hiring you to teach this year."

I studied a Developmental Reading/English I program at a rural high school in South Carolina. The research is primarily descriptive and the process of gathering information has come almost entirely from observation, field notes, informal interviews, and reading and writing samples of my students. I was both teacher and researcher; I collected writing samples of reactions to the course materials and to classroom reading assignments. All my students chose to sign the proper consent forms. Pseudonyms have been given to replace the real names of participants. I have included a very helpful appendix (see

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Appendix A) in which academic and biographical profiles are given of the "Orange-Box Kids." The study is ethnographic and, as a result, changes in the design have occurred as new questions arose and new discoveries came to light during the course of my observation and analysis. Changes or additions in the research design have been reported in writing to the Human Subjects Review Board.

The research took place at Littletown High School in Kingsboro County, South Carolina and covered the duration of an entire school year, beginning on August 18, 1995, and ending on June 1, 1996. Follow-up research and interviews were conducted during the course of the following year as a way to monitor the progress of students and to give students, other member checkers, and peer debriefers an opportunity to read and to comment on my analyses.

The high school I studied had set up a program in which it identified students who were judged "at risk" and even "in danger" of not succeeding, not graduating, perhaps not even reading far beyond the second-to sixth-grade reading level, without some intervention. The Developmental Reading/English I program at Littletown High School involved 52 students in four classes taught by two reading specialists, myself and one other teacher. Each of the four other high schools in Kingsboro County also had several Developmental Reading/English I classes from which I could draw comparisons. The weekly reading meetings with the other seven reading teachers allowed

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me to discuss what the other teachers were doing with their classes and how students were reacting to these assignments and activities.

The study itself primarily involved my two Developmental Reading/English I classrooms and a total of 23 students who were reading, according to the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> administered in April of 1995, on the second-to sixth-grade levels as they were about to enter the ninth grade, their first year in high school. 15 of the 23 students in my classes were African-American; 8 students were Caucasian. (Two students, both African-American males, were expelled from school in January and thus were not counted as part of this study.) I had 7 African-American females, 4 Caucasian females, 8 African-American males, and 4 Caucasian males in my classes. From the beginning of the year until the end of the year at Littletown High School, I was searching for ways to make my students better equipped to face the future. While I observed, I was also searching for reasons why they had not so far been able to succeed in the current educational system and for ways to help them to improve their attitudes toward reading and writing.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A large number of students in Kingsboro County were reading many levels below their grade level according to the assessment of administrators and teachers. The administrators and teachers, in

turn, needed first to discover why these students now lagged so far behind other students at the school, and then set up a program that would work for this type of student. As reading and writing are considered skills that all students need to master, a program is necessary that teaches students appropriate reading and writing skills that would better equip them to meet the demands of life and society.

My study will show how one school attempted in good faith to set up such a program; what aspects of the program worked; which aspects of the program did not work; what the reactions of students were to such a program, to what aspects of the program students seemed to respond best, what aspects best helped students to improve their reading and writing skills; and finally, how what is learned about the students and the program may be utilized to understand why they did not succeed, and to change the program in ways that would give students the prospect of success both in future schooling and in the working world.

WHO ARE THE ORANGE-BOX KIDS AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

I first became acquainted with the term **Orange Box** at a meeting with the reading coordinator for Kingsboro County, Mrs. Stiehl. What Mrs. Stiehl told me and the other new reading teachers for the county at a meeting one week before school started was that students had been chosen for this program because they had tested on

the second-to sixth-grade levels on the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading</u> <u>Test</u> (SDRS). These were students who had somehow fallen through the cracks of the system, and had such extreme difficulty reading that many could be characterized as non-readers and all as very poor readers. Mrs. Stiehl then went on to tell us what was apparently intended to be a humorous story about how the program had come into existence, and how the students had been given the epithet "Orange Box." One day at one of the meetings with all the program coordinators, principals, vice-principals, department heads, and other various and sundry administrators, the Superintendent, Dr. Tomlin, began writing on the board, listing groups and types of students, such as Tech Prep, and Life Prep, and College Prep, those who wanted to work, those who wanted to go to a technical or two-year college, those who needed to take the SAT, circling all the different categories with a dry-marker, when suddenly he began talking about a group of students that had slipped through the cracks, had low literacy, did not necessarily fit into any of the above-defined categories. They simply were non-definable, but were a large-enough group that up until now had never been truly analyzed with regard to their academic "deficiencies", or even discovered.

As Mrs. Stiehl and the others tell it, Dr. Tomlin just happened to pick up an orange dry marker and, with that infamous pen, drew an Orange Box around the undefinable group. The students represented

by the empty orange box were from that moment on called "Orange Box," not the Orange-Box students, not the Orange-Box kids, but simply Orange Box.

To personalize my students a little bit, I have referred to them in the dissertation as The Orange-Box Kids, but I have refused to ever call my students this before now, or to use this appellation to describe them. I believe I was one of the few who refused to label these students in such a derogatory way. Mrs. Stiehl laughed at how humorous this was that the Superintendent had simply picked up that orange marker at the time and how amusing it is that the name seemed to stick, and sticks still to this day.

During the year, another teacher began to call them "The Orange Blossom Specials" with a little Southern drawl added to the word orange in order to extend the length of the word and perhaps to make fun of the whole idea, and in turn, the students. The principal repeated this phrase quite often when he was talking about our students, sometimes only in front of me and the other reading teacher, but several times in front of the whole staff at staff meetings. The entire staff invariably laughed—save for one person.

The only good thing that came out of this was that the students themselves never became aware of this stigmatizing label. Many teachers derided these students privately, even their own teachers, behind their backs—calling them "Orange Box" or complaining about

them, saying, "Oh God, I have Orange Box today" or once even, "We had to change rooms today, and if you think Orange Box have trouble anyway, just think how confused they were when we had to change rooms. They couldn't hardly deal with it." However, I never heard one teacher call these students "Orange Box" to their faces, nor did I ever hear a student use the term. So, as far as I know, this was just an inside joke, a dirty little secret between teachers and administrators. (I found out recently that the next group of "Orange-Box" kids, 1996-1997, knows that they are called Orange Box. No one knows exactly how they discovered this, but the group has used this name to tease others in the group, and to make fun of themselves also.) The principal told me that next year, they thought maybe the new group would be called the "Rosebuds;" however, the "Orange Box" remained the epithet during the following year as well.

To me, this is a sad story of how caught up in ourselves and our catchy phrases and titles and new programs we become and how little respect is given to students who do fall between the cracks, students who are different, students who have difficulty meeting the standards or fitting into the school mold for success, difficulty learning in the school system as it is.

It shows us how callous and cold administrators and teachers alike at times can be. It reminds us that we must begin to consider the needs of *all* of our students, and that teaching different types of

students is our job, no matter how difficult. Students are not jokes.

Teaching is not an easy profession, but, on the other hand, learning is

even more difficult—at least in the beginning. Each student matters

and each student deserves the very best education, regardless of the

skills with which he or she arrives at school.

A SET OF QUESTIONS THAT GUIDED THIS STUDY

Although in this research project I worked rather open-endedly

to discover answers to many questions related to young adults,

reading, writing and literature study, my central questions are:

> What type of program motivates students who are reluctant
> participants in reading and writing activities? What types of
> readings or activities are effective for the remedial at-risk reader?

In order to begin to answer this major question, the following

questions must also be asked:

> What type of reading program motivates students who are
> considered low readers or students who are considered behind in
> their grade level in reading?

> What had created these students' lack of motivation to read and to
> write?

> What is unrewarding or disengaging about reading and writing for
> these students? How can engagement be enhanced?

> What sets these students apart from other more successful
> readers? What is different about their approach to or beliefs about
> reading and its respective importance in their lives?

> What was the effect of the labelling—Orange Box, Remedial,
> Developmental on students' progress in reading and writing? How
> does the labelling affect student work?

What motivates students to read and what motivates students to write?

Does inherent interest play a part in motivating students to read and to write?

What types of literature do students like to read and are students motivated to read and write about subjects or topics they are interested in?

Do these students read mainly for pleasure or for assignments? Do they prefer to choose what they read and what they write?

What are some of the methods or strategies that teachers are using to introduce reading materials and to make materials interesting to students?

What worked best in this program? What were the most effective or motivational readings, assignments, tasks, teachings?

What worked least well in this program? What were the most ineffective components of this program? How could these aspects be changed, if possible, to make them work to motivate students? What changes could be made?

What type of program would be challenging for the various types of students who would be channeled into a developmental/remedial program such as the one I taught?

How effective is the use of adolescent literature for students who reportedly have difficulties with reading and writing?

Do students need to identify with the literature they are reading? If so, does identification with literature motivate students to read certain literature and subsequently to write about it?

These are the types of questions that originally motivated me to carry out this study. All of the above are complicated questions that many teachers, parents, students, and administrators are continually trying to answer. A study and description of how one school and one teacher attempted to respond to these questions through teaching

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strategies, through using adolescent literature and other relevant educational materials, through motivational approaches to elicit reading and writing from students, and finally, through creating special programs such as the Developmental Reading/English I program, may be an important source of information for other schools that are attempting to answer the same questions and respond to the same concerns. Perhaps some innovative ideas may be gleaned from this study regarding the types of materials and programs that will work for their school system to promote more active participation in reading and writing activities for their similarly classified students. An analysis of some of the teaching strategies, the literature being used, and, in particular, the written reactions of the students to their own chosen readings as well as the writing assignments accompanying the reading assignments, will be helpful in the understanding of one teacher's overall picture of the difficulties of teaching reading and writing, and the motivation or lack of motivation on the part of the students that accompanied their academic difficulties.

LIMITATIONS AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

As the study was conducted with only a small group of students in two classes, my findings cannot be generalized to represent what might occur with other groups of similar students. The study is primarily descriptive and anecdotal. However, through rich, "thick

description" (Geertz, 1974) and cultural and classroom anecdotes as well as student writing samples. I will reveal the processes through which my students struggled with their reading and writing skills and also how they improved in attitude and motivation toward such tasks through assignments and positive direction. Even though this study was done on a small group of students, I believe that teachers will discover similarities in their own students and may be able to consider the motivational strategies and motivational assignments as useful in their own teaching approaches.

A brief synopsis of the process taken in this study toward motivating students to perform at higher levels of reading and writing is useful here. At the beginning of the year, these students were unwilling to perform many reading or writing tasks, so I needed to work to give them appropriate assignments that they were willing to do. Students were, for the most part, allowed to self-select reading and writing topics. Their assignments became more and more complex as the year went by and students' responses in turn became stronger as the year went by. Most importantly, students began to read more, to write more, and to struggle less with performing their scholastic assignments. Moreover, students were beginning to show some understanding of the importance and value of education, and of reading and writing, for their future success.

Although the process was slow, and the gains are not easily described—as intellectual growth, maturity, and motivation are difficult to measure—students did make progress in all of these areas. They began to become more self-assured that they were capable of reading and of writing at higher levels of proficiency.

The information presented in this study, although primarily descriptive and specific about a small group of unmotivated, anxious, uninterested, and even troubled students, may, however, be transferrable to other teachers as well as other schools with students in similar situations.

The anecdotes and analysis of the students in my classes are written for the benefit of other teachers. It is the hope of every teacher-researcher that their studies not only be read by fellow teachers but also by high level educational administrators who are in a position to provide for the academic environment in which students are better equipped to develop academically. This dissertation is written in a language that the teachers who are its intended audience speak: the language of pedagogy and of social reform. An analysis of how actual literacy events play themselves out in the classroom is our common ground, and our common language is an idiom which has the potential to be extremely valuable to other teachers and to researchers:

One of the reasons that teachers' research has not been taken as seriously as I would argue it should be is that teachers customarily conduct and report research in anecdotal forms . . . .That teachers tell anecdotes when discussing teaching is common knowledge. What is not generally recognized are the functions that shaping, reshaping, and rehearsing of anecdotes play in the research we informally and. . . systematically conduct into our practice. For example, when Jane and I began to shape the anecdote about Gilbert's mother's growing-up story, we gathered pertinent information about a teaching-learning interaction. . . .When we reshaped the anecdote for colleagues, first in one setting, then in another, we selected, deleted, organized and analyzed the information we had gathered for a purpose: to effect better teaching and learning. The anecdotes we teacher-researchers tell and account for to one another function in our research community as what Kenneth Burke calls representative anecdotes: 'summations, containing implicitly what the system that is developed from [them] contains explicitly.'. . .

In our professional talk, we teachers allude to the library of anecdotes we share. . . .Teachers avoid abstract statements when we talk to each other about our professional work because while such statements may be informative, they are not representative of teaching and learning. Anecdotal accounts, populated and overpopulated as they are with meaning and significance, seem to serve us more usefully as we research the dynamic interactions that constitute teaching and learning in our classrooms. (Stock, 1995, pp. 98-99).

It is the teachers, and students, after the anecdote has been internalized by the teacher, who can most profit from hearing and analyzing the real events that occur in classrooms:

Teacher talk has too often been denigrated as just one social manifestation of gossip: teachers' lounge prattle, post-class complaining, recitals of old stories. Teacher research is too often brushed aside as merely anecdotal: robbed of value because it is occasional and rooted in occasions; not worth notice because of its particularity. My argument for teacher talk, for the power of anecdote, for the importance of narrative in educational research rests in just these characteristics: in their very occasionality, in their very particularity. Teachers who read the anecdote that Jane and I shared with our colleagues as significant recognize elements of the anecdote as

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similar to ones they have experienced. In the particularities of the anecdote, they recognize particularities in the circumstances in which they teach. Furthermore, when teachers respond to telling anecdotes, we do so as good readers. We read the particularities in the telling against the particularities we would tell, looking for new ways to respond and act in analogous situations, on analogous occasions. As good readers do, we respond aesthetically to figured shapes of human activity that enrich our sensibilities. As we work to enrich or sensibilities and our understandings, they work to enrich our practice (Stock, 1995, p. 99).

The following account is based on real events, real students. This dissertation is addressed to other teachers who are distressed about students who are either denied or refuse their educational opportunities. I have no doubt that teachers will see some of their own students and relive some of the events in their classrooms vicariously through the anecdotes and writings of my own students; they will also visit and revisit methods of motivating and engaging students in reading and writing through the assignments in which students have participated. Hopefully, this will give other teachers renewed interest in reviving their own students who are similar to mine. Although unmotivated students who "hate" English are not the easiest students to work with, we owe it to them to accept the challenge and not to give up on them in spite of the obstacles.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MANUSCRIPT

Following the Introduction, the first chapter of my dissertation is a review of the literature on motivation as related to confidence, reading, and writing; the second, a review of the literature on the history and definitions of ethnography as well as a description of ethnographic patterns and procedures. The methodology used in this particular study then follows in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five provides a description of the actual school under study and the culture of the community. In Chapter Six, I present a picture of the school community as I understood it before meeting students and beginning to teach, as well as a discussion of the written and unwritten assumptions of the Developmental Reading/English course and a brief dialogue on how students presented themselves to me when I first met them.

In Chapters Seven through Ten, I present my findings on the characteristics of students and the program. Through observation of student reading actions and reading habits, some of the reasons why students had not succeeded in the current educational system at Littletown will be revealed. Also discussed in these chapters are student manifestations of negativity toward reading and the value of education, which was most evident in their strategies to avoid or resist work and in their utter lack of motivation toward reading and writing activities. Chapters Eleven through Fourteen are discussions of my

findings about students' actual reading and writing abilities,
culminating with evidence of student success and improvement. In my
conclusion, I revisit the original assumptions of the program and
provide suggestions on how to improve the course and, in turn,
heighten student motivation toward reading and writing.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON LITERACY AND MOTIVATION

In order to answer the question posed on why my students had so far been unable to succeed in the current educational system, I needed to review the literature related to the definitions, behaviors, and motivations of "at-risk," remedial, and reluctant readers and writers. I also needed to review the literature on motivation, especially motivation for reading, and what methods motivated the reluctant reader and writer in order to discover strategies that might help a teacher to succeed in changing students' negative motivations toward reading and writing to more positive ones.

My students were not using reading to its utmost, if they were reading at all. All of my students had dreams of what they wanted to be, but most of them had no idea of what was expected of them in order to get there. The system had failed them in part by in the past not providing them with the reading opportunities that would lead them to higher opportunities to reach their goals, to reach their potential. The majority of my students readily admitted that they had not read much and that they did not enjoy reading.

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The discovery that my students were not motivated to read most of the time led me to frame my major question. "What motivates the reluctant at-risk reader and what categories of readings or activities are effective for this type of student?" To address this problem, I reviewed the literature on achievement motivation, at-risk students, labelling, reading motivation, and reading and writing engagement strategies as well as non-motivational strategies. I also discuss relevant literature on the topics of adolescent and multicultural literature.

MOTIVATIONAL THEORIES

The students I observed and taught had low motivation for many reading, writing, and school-related tasks. Some of the reasons for this may possibly be explained through general theories of motivation. Bernard Weiner (1992) indicates that "a theory of motivation should be those activities that are most prevalent in everyday life" and that "[i]n our culture, two sources of motivation are most dominant: achievement strivings and social bonding" (p. 363). As "the most prevalent concerns are achievement success and social acceptance," which is related to "self esteem" which "has been documented to be determined by experiences of competence and incompetence in the achievement domain, and by acceptance and rejection in the

interpersonal arena" (O'Brien & Epstein, 1974), then "[t]hese topics therefore should be at the focus of a theory of human motivation" (Weiner, 1992, p. 363).

Individual expectations or emotions revolve around thoughts on success and failure in most motivational theories (see Darom & Bar-Jal, 1981; Cooper & Burger, 1980; Frieze, 1976). Probabilities of success and failure are interwoven into "achievement-related actions" according to Atkinson (in Weiner, 1992) in his expectancy-value theory of motivation:

> Achievement-oriented behavior was viewed by Atkinson as a resultant of a conflict between approach and avoidance tendencies. Associated with every achievement-related action is the possibility of success (with the consequent emotion of shame). The strengths of these anticipated emotions determine whether an individual will approach or avoid achievement-oriented activities. That is, achievement behavior is viewed as the resultant of an emotional conflict between hopes for success and fears of failure (p. 181).

In common-sense terms, theories of motivation are "hedonistic conceptions" as "[i]ndividuals are believed to act to maximize pleasure and minimize pain" (Weiner, 1992, p. 200).

Those who are motivated negatively by strong fears of failure, however, do not always move toward the easiest tasks nor shy away from "tasks of intermediate difficulty," as all tend to choose tasks in the middle range, although the higher the motivation level, the more prone to choose tasks of intermediate difficulty:

> . . . [A]ll individuals seem to prefer intermediate difficulty, although this preference may be more evident among

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individuals highly motivated to achieve. These data pose some problems for Atkinson's theory, yet they do tend to support the broad (and often tested) hypothesis that groups classified by the strength of achievement needs will display differential preference for intermediate difficulty tasks (Weiner, 1992, p. 194).

One possible explanation for individuals choosing tasks of average difficulty is that these intermediate tasks provide more feedback or information for the individual upon completion and that information is both wanted and needed for both highly motivated and less highly motivated individuals:

> An alternative interpretation of risk preference appeals in informational rather than hedonic principles. Research has demonstrated that outcomes at tasks of intermediate difficulty provide performers with the most information about their efforts and capabilities. There are logical reasons that performance at intermediate difficulty tasks provides a maximum of personal information. Selection of easy tasks typically results in success, and that outcome is attributed to the ease of the task (see Weiner & Kukla, 1970). In similar manner, selection of a very difficult task typically results in failure, and the blame is placed on the characteristics of the task. Thus, selection of easy or difficult tasks generally confirms one's knowledge about the external world. Conversely, tasks of intermediate difficulty are just as likely to produce success as they are to produce failure. Thus, performance at such tasks provides information about the efforts and abilities of the *person* undertaking the activity. Given this conception, differential risk-preference behavior between groups differing in achievement needs would indicate disparate desires for personal feedback or self-evaluation (Weiner, 1992, pp. 195-196).

The activities that a person chooses to do are thus based in expectations of failure, success, and ability, as well as in the desire for feedback on tasks performed. This indicates that motivation to perform easy tasks is perhaps not as strong as those to perform

intermediate tasks, as the feedback on easy tasks would be self-made and the prospect of success is equal to that of failure. The majority of people, or students, will take the intermediate risk of failure in the quest for feedback or learning.

Success and failure are also major components in theories of attribution. However, the extent to which one strives to achieve is based more on the reasons behind past successes and failures:

> Attribution theories departed from the expectancy-value tradition in the explanation of achievement-related behavior. In the attributional formulation, achievement strivings are based on causal interpretations of past outcomes—that is, whether prior success and failure were due to external causes, stable or unstable causes, and controllable or uncontrollable causes. Expectancy of success is linked with causal stability, and causes have affective consequences. Achievement striving is then determined by expectancy of success and affects tied to causal perceptions that push or goad the organism toward or away from the goal (Weiner, 1992, p. 347).

Thought (negative or positive, or goal-related) and action, choice and control, failure and success, stimulus and response, and motivation toward action and avoidance or inhibition are intertwined in a complex manner in theories of motivation. Past and present responses to stimuli are central to understanding an individual's motivation for tasks. In total, all of the above dichotomies work together and for or against the individual attempting any task. Most theories discuss action or goal-related tendencies as well as immobilization or inaction tendencies, which is what my students appeared to suffer from most. According to these theories of

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motivation, an underlying principle is that action and inaction are strategic opposites; thus, a need for action is prompted by feelings of prior success, and conversely, a cause for inaction would be prior failure at a certain task or similar group of tasks, such as reading and writing activities. Furthermore, motivation is so complex and so dependent on a myriad past events that the changing of tendencies to act or not to act regarding certain tasks is difficult and occurs only with the appropriate interventions or changes in inclinations and only with time. Birch, Atkinson, & Bongort (1974) explain this phenomenon:

> The theory of motivation as reconstructed in *The Dynamics of Action* begins by noting that a change in activity can occur only if the relative strength of the inclinations, or motivational tendencies, of an individual change. It goes on the identify the causal factors responsible for these changes in motivation and how they operate over time.
> Certain of these factors are to be found in the immediate environment of an individual, which is seen as providing psychological forces on an individual to engage or not to engage in various activities. The prior life experience of the individual determines what forces, with what magnitudes, are imposed by the environment. If a certain kind of activity has been intrinsically satisfying or rewarded in this kind of situation, there will be an *instigating force* for that activity. This will cause an increase in the strength of the person's tendency to undertake that activity, an *action tendency* (pp. 75-76).

And, an individual "exposed continuously to the *instigating force*" will continue the strength of the *action tendency* (Birch et al., 1974. p. 76). On the other hand, the opposite is true for those individuals experiencing an *inhibitory force* on certain tasks, or perhaps

all tasks in a certain category where negativity was present in the past:

> If a certain kind of activity has been punished or frustrated in the past, the environment will be the source of an *inhibitory force* and there will be growth in the strength of *negaction tendency* , i.e., a tendency *not* to engage in that activity. The anticipation of a negative consequence for engaging in an activity, which has the functional significance of an inhibitory force acting to increase the strength of a negaction tendency, produces *resistance* to engaging in an activity. A negaction tendency opposes an action tendency and dampens the resultant strength of the inclination to act (Birch, Atkinson, & Bongort, 1974, pp. 75-76).

What a subject (in this case, student) expects to occur as a result of their analysis of causality of the success or failure related to a task or a certain category of tasks, i.e., reading or writing-related activities, often has a profound effect on the outcome. Through their research on competitive sport, McAuley & Duncan (1990) indicate that:

> [i]t appears . . .that in cases where expectations with respect to future outcome are very strong with respect to outcome and are subsequently disconfirmed, negative outcomes produce more pronounced affective responses. Conversely, when there is some doubt as to what the outcome might eventually be, that is, the situation is optimally challenging, then successful outcomes result in stronger reactions (p. 42).

Other negative outcomes are related to what attributes or causes a student gives for his or her failure on achievement-oriented tasks. Self-esteem may suffer especially when a student attributes his or her achievement failure to ability (See Greenwold, 1980; Weary, 1981; Zuckerman, 1979; Psyzcznski & Greenberg, 1987). If ability is the considered culprit of the failure, then the future of similar goal

attainment is lessened: ". . .[F]ailure that is ascribed to low ability should decrease the expectancy of future goal attainment more than failure that is ascribed to bad luck, fatigue, or mood" (Weiner, 1974, p. 56). Hewstone (1989), rephrasing Weiner, restates the various connections between success and failure, ability (an internal and stable or uncontrollable cause) and self-esteem as well as the major tenets behind achievement attribution theory:

1. *Locus.* The main hypothesis is that success attributed internally (e.g. to personality, ability or effort) results in greater *self-esteem* (pride) than success attributed externally (e.g., to task ease, or good luck). It is also predicted that failure attributed internally will result in lower self-esteem than failure that is attributed externally. . . .

2. *Stability.* The major importance of this dimension is in relation to (changes in) the *expectancy* of success and failure in the future (Weiner et al., 1976); although Weiner (1983) has suggested that stability may be linked to affective reactions such as 'hopelessness', when failure is attributed to internal and stable causes.

3. *Controllability.* This dimension relates to sentiment and evaluations of others. The main hypothesis is that if personal failure is due to causes perceived as controllable by others, then *anger* is elicited. . . . If negative outcomes for other people are due to causes perceived as un-controllable, then *pity* is elicited (pp. 67-68).

Experiencing success and feeling that one is capable or has the ability to perform a task or task then is extremely important. Positive emotions, such as feelings of success and pride in accomplishment, are motivating factors that may propel one to want to reexperience such emotions or 'pleasure' surrounding a task:

In achievement settings, pride in accomplishment has a positive motivational function, directing the person to repeat pertinent goal-directed actions and hence to reexperience this emotion. That is, pride captures a 'pleasure' that strengthens the likelihood of a particular class of activities. Hence pride in accomplishment is a positive motivator, and it is therefore is desirable to foster this self-directed emotion following successful goal attainment (Weiner, 1992, p. 273).

It is important to note that if achievement tasks are too easily attained, those performing the task will not feel as strong a sense of pride in their work as those who had to work harder or as those who performed at least a task of intermediate difficulty.

The presence or absence of coping mechanisms is also a relevant aspect of the motivational picture. If participants are told that they will be successful on a task or are given coping mechanisms, i.e. strategies for finding solutions to a problem, participants will be more likely to use the strategies available, be motivated to attempt to complete the task, and more likely to attribute the source of the success to themselves or to their ability to solve problems. On the other hand, if participants are given no coping mechanisms, i.e., by being told that the problem is unsolvable, he or she is less likely to complete the task, and may take a defensive approach by blaming external causes or by becoming defensive for the failure in order to protect self-esteem, which according to Duval & Duval (1983) will be protected at all costs. Unfortunately, "[t[he target or targets of defensive attribution will be those stimuli that remind the person of

or, more generally stated, are associated with the problem (Duval & Duval, 1983, p. 133).

Participants who become defensive may, however, internally accept the failure as attributed to their own ability, or lack of ability; although they choose not to allow others to see their debilitation, the effect of such occurrences remains devastating and long lasting. The ability to cope with situational distress is virtuous in some respects and may allow those with more availability of coping mechanisms to rise over adversity (See Lazarus, 1974; Bolles, 1974) and to find success. However, external attributions, or blaming others, the difficulty of the task, or chance, for failure may produce a distorted rather than an informed view of self and one's capabilities as evidenced in the following example and may cause one to decide that the goal was not worth pursuing:

> . . .[H]ow we handle causal attribution determines, at least in part, not only what we expect from our acts but also how we will value the outcome. Aesop's fox who could not reach the grapes did not reach the realistic conclusion that he was incapable of doing so, but the distorted conclusion that the grapes weren't worth having (the fox was evidently a high need-achiever) (Bolles, 1974, p. 18).

Although a distorted view of one's abilities is problematic in some ways, in the end there is a fine line between telling a student the truth about ability, if it is indeed low, and attempting to motivate a student positively. Certainly finding positive value in the outcome of any activity considered worthy is often crucial; i.e. we would be, and

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probably have been, appalled if a student came to the conclusion that he or she did not find education or reading or writing "worth having" simply to save respect for self following reading or writing that was too difficult, or for any reason (career choices, attitude, fear of failure). Furthermore, movement toward reaching a goal is connected to the value of attaining that goal, whether the goal is reaching the grapes or literacy:

> The basic assumptions of expectancy-value theory are in accord with our commonsense thinking about motivated behavior: What behavior is undertaken depends on the perceived likelihood that the behavior will lead to the goal and the subjective value of that goal. Hence the greater the belief that the goal will be attained and the higher the incentive value of that goal, the greater the motivational tendency to engage in the appropriate instrumental behavior (Weiner, 1992, p. 161).

Teacher and administrator reactions are crucial to enhancing or destroying motivation. Students are astute and sensitive in particular to teachers' perceptions of them. In "Communicating Low Ability in the Classroom: Bad Things Good Teachers Sometimes Do," Sandra Graham (1990) studies the effects of effort and ability and their relationship to success and failure:

> Of all the perceived causes of success and failure, ability and effort appear to be the most dominant. When explaining achievement outcomes, we tend to attach the most importance to what our perceived competencies are and how hard we try. Recognizing the import of these two prevalent self-ascriptions, much of the applied attribution research in achievement-related contests has been concerned with ability and effort, particularly the role they play in coping with academic failure (p. 17).

According to Graham, a teacher's subtle responses by either exhibiting pity, which reveals to students that the teacher considers them of low ability, or by expressing anger, which reveals to students that the teacher finds the cause of failure to be lack of effort, are both understood and internalized by students (See also Weiner, 1995, especially pp. 44-45; Covington & Omelich, 1979a,1979b).

Students of all ages also understand that the teacher is more likely to help students of low ability than other students, or students whose behavior and ability actions are controllable. So, cues are given from the teacher to all students who can not only severely judge themselves but also judge others on their ability and the reasons for their success or failure. Furthermore, Graham explains, the consequences for believing one has low ability are considerable:

> One well-established finding to have emerged from the prior research is that self-perceptions of low ability versus lack of effort have far-reaching and disparate consequences (see Weiner, 1985,1986). Failure because of perceived low ability reflects on the failing individual and therefore has implications for self-esteem. As a chronic cause of failure, a self-ascription to low ability also tends to lower ones expectations for future success. And because low ability is perceived to alter the course of failure. Hardly a more debilitating attributional pattern is imaginable. Attributing failure to lack of effort, on the other hand, is more adaptive because effort is perceived as both changeable and under ones volitional control. Thus the failing student who believes that he or she did not try hard enough can be bolstered by the expectation that failure need not occur again and by the belief that there is a relationship between one's effort and subsequent outcomes. Guided by these causal distinctions, a number of application-oriented investigations have attempted to change the failing student's attribution for failure from low ability to lack of effort. . . (p. 17).

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Graham would like to see teachers discover methods that allow

students to change their pessimistic attitude to an optimistic one, as

characterized by conversations such as the following:

> I haven't solved any of these puzzles so far and the teacher
> obviously feels sorry for me. She must think I am not good at
> this task. I really did get the puzzles wrong because I'm not
> good at puzzle solving, and I don't expect to do better in the
> future.

Or alternatively:

> I haven't solved any of these puzzles so far and the teacher
> obviously is angry with me. She must think I'm not trying. I
> really did get the puzzles wrong because I didn't try hard
> enough, but I expect to do better in the future (pp. 22-23).

As Weiner (1974) indicates,"[i]t. . .logically follows that if the

attributions for success and failure made by the achievement motive

groups can be changed, then their achievement-related behaviors also

will be altered" (p. 64).

To avoid such overwhelming reactions, negative responses about

ability, whether expressed through pity or anger or in other ways, are

thus to be spared from subjects when possible. Conversely, providing

students with opportunities for the stronger reactions that come from

expected or unexpected success is a much more viable and productive

option.

In a study with students remarkably similar to those in my

study, Peterson (1988) was able to show that students who "receive a

healthy dose of success coupled with challenge" (in Peterson, 1990, p.

54) are able to change their efficacy and attitude:

. . .I met with teachers and administrators at a suburban high school in New York who were undertaking an educational experiment. They were interested in the fate of average students, those who seemed lost in the shuffle and destined to pass through school without achievements. Could something be done to encourage these students to greater efforts, both in and out of the classroom?

To this end, a special program was developed for 34 students who fell in the gray region of the student body. These students were placed within their own class, and team taught by three instructors who coordinated their effort in such a way so as to encourage students to do more than just get by in their studies. . . .[I]n psychological language, its stated goal was to increase the efficacy of the students involved. . . .

The results were clear-cut. At the beginning of the year, the students in the special program scored somewhat worse on the Attributional Style Questionnaire, as would be expected, granted the criterion by which they were chosen. But by the end of the year, their explanatory style had changed for the better, and now was more optimistic than that of the comparison group (p < .002). Interestingly, the students in the comparison group had become somewhat more fatalistic as the school year progressed. As so many educational critics have charged, a typical school can erode a student's will to do well. However, it also appears that special interventions can stem and even reverse this trend (Peterson, 1990, p. 65).

In sum, although their are some exceptions, individuals (students in this case) need to feel successful in their achievements strivings in order to be successful in their achievements. Optimism is preferred over pessimism, action over inhibition or passivity, and the positive over the negative. Those who chose the latter of the above dualities are often less successful and less oriented toward achievement. Methods of securing the positive over the negative are methods that are more likely to secure the success of the participants. Expressions of failure and success are then not entirely based on

actual ability or in fact, but instead are learned through a form of cumulative subjective self-grading in past experience, and are based on emotion, on feelings, indeed even on the concept that "history repeats itself." The import of the research on human motivation for this study is that, although difficult, gains are able to be made with respect to motivation. What needs to be done is that the scenario, or environment, replete with stores of memories of past failure must be somehow changed, in an incremental way, to encompass a new outlook on individual ability and hope for future success.

READERS AT-RISK

At-risk students are those students who, often, as a result of their inabilities to read or write or perform other academic tasks well enough to keep up with their grade or age-level peers, are at most risk of dropping out of school.

Many factors may contribute to the reasons why students are at-risk. As was explained earlier in this chapter in the section on motivation, adolescents are extremely sensitive about their abilities and their peers' reactions to their abilities as well as their feelings and experiences related to their own successes and failures. Being retained in grade and being socially promoted are often considered prominent factors that can over time serve to destroy a student's desire to learn with his or her peers (see Mann, 1986; Allington & McGill-Franzen,

1995; Fine, 1991; Nelson, 1988)) and often "[e]arly retention, with no effective remediation, propels students into cycles of cumulative failure" (Fine, 1991, p. 238). Absenteeism, and even being suspended during high school is also problematic, especially if teachers or administrators are expected to shun or further punish students by not providing students with make-up work upon their return (Fine, 1991).

Reading level is also a significant factor that places students at risk. Students who are behind in their reading level may be working diligently to "catch up" with their peers; however, ultimately what matters is their test score or how they measure against what other students are able to do:

> Because in schools the focus is on grade levels and normal and average achievement, growth that leaves the children still behind their peers is discounted. Children whose learning is not recognized and respected are likely to quit on us; in fact, children like those . . .regularly drop out of school (Roller, 1996, p. 125).

My students were considered below level in both reading and math (they were part of a remedial math program also) and the majority of them were also overage. The combination of all of these factors is often deadly:

> Having been left back in elementary school, overage upon entering ninth grade, and behind grade level in reading and math, all serve as solid predictors of dropping out (Fine, 1991, p. 238).

A student may drop out because he or she does not like school; being placed in remedial classes with different materials from the rest of the

students, or being unable to read well are some of the reasons that Nelson (1988), citing the Children's Defense Fund, gives for students dropping out:

> 'We found that children may not like school if they cannot read well and are not given appropriate instruction or materials in school. They may not like school if they are of average intelligence but are incorrectly labeled and placed in a special class for slow learners' (p. 230).

From her findings, Fine also discovered that low readers were at grave risk of dropping out:

> . . .if girls are poor readers, they are twice as likely to drop out as to graduate. If boys are poor readers, they are six times more likely to drop out than graduate (p. 244).

Add to this scenario, the fact that the majority of my students were African-American females (followed by African-American males, white females, and white males), from low-income families, living in an area with few jobs or hopes for success whether or not one received a diploma, and the problem intensified for these students:

> Since low-income students disproportionately attend dropout-prone schools, and since they drop out more often than relatively elite peers, it is important to document the economic impact of their early departure from high school. Here we find an even more elaborate layering of social inequity.
>
> A high school degree is economically more valuable to those who are already privileged by class, race/ethnicity, gender, and geography. Women's returns on each year of education are estimated to be 40 percent of men's, and African-Americans' are approximately 63 percent of whites'. . . . The high school diploma yields, for whites, men, and upper-middle-class students, consistently more per additional year of education than it does for African-Americans and Latinos, women, and working-class or low-income students, respectively. . . . Whether a dropout or graduate, African-American women are two to three times more likely to be poor than white women of

the same age and education, and over four times more likely than white males. Not having a high school degree thus yields substantially different consequences by class, race/ethnicity, and gender. One might conclude, therefore, that a high school diploma bears little economic benefit for African-American and Latinos youth and adults (Fine, 1991, p. 23).

Not graduating from high school, of course, does have consequences. And, students do have more hope of attaining a job with degree in hand (Fine, 1991). In Littletown, even the paper company and the steel company were adamant about only accepting applications from those with a high school degree—and there were plenty of graduating students who would be more than happy to find a position at one of these plants. As there were not enough jobs to go around, however, a high school degree might mean a company would interview a graduate for a job, but it certainly did not mean that a graduate would receive that job. And, the consequences for not having at least a high school degree are becoming steeper and steeper:

> Projections for the year 2000. . .are that new jobs will require a workforce whose median level of education is 13.5 years. That means, on the average, that the workers who will fill these jobs will have to have some college training. Not to be the boss, mind you, but just to bring home a paycheck (Smith & Lincoln, 1988, p. 2). (See also Berlin, in Fine, 1991, p. 24).

Add to this problem the fact that South Carolina has the sixth highest dropout rate, over 50 percent (56.9) in the country (Nelson, 1988, p. 229) and Littletown students' hopes shrink even further.

REMEDIAL COURSES AND LABELLING OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

Schools today often find remedial programs necessary in order to aid students who find themselves behind in their grade level; the most common problem is not reading according to schedule:

> Instructional support programs are those many and varied efforts to intervene when learning difficulties become apparent. Failure to maintain an on-schedule pace of reading acquisition is the most frequent basis for referral to an instructional support program (Walmsley & Allington, 1995, p. 19).

Poorer students are more likely participants in these programs:

> Children of poverty are the most likely participants in either remedial or special education programs, primarily because they have not been successful in acquiring reading ability or have not acquired it according to the schedule set by the school (Walmsley & Allington, 1995, p. 22).

And often, the participants in these programs are chosen based on low test scores; sometimes selection is based on only one test as in my students' situation. Unfortunately, many programs also gear instruction toward promoting test scores rather than actually helping students gain in literacy :

> Most remedial programs live by a very simple axiom—take in children who have scores below grade level, and graduate them back into their regular classes. . . .Of course, it isn't surprising that most remedial programs are fixed on helping the lowest-achieving children raise their test performance (Walp & Walmsley, 1995, p. 179).

In my class, the workbook activities devoured over 50 percent of the class time; they were considered to be of great importance by the administration as the skills taught in the workbooks were expected to

match closely with the types of questions asked on The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, the test which had caused them to be placed in a remedial reading class. The purpose of the class, as stated in the assumptions section, was expected to be to prepare students for a tenth grade regular English classroom, to ". . .graduate them back into their regular classes", a goal difficult to achieve when we were required to spend so much time on workbook skills.

Workbook materials are also connected through the research as being related to heightened student dropout rate. According to Nelson (1988) "being fed on a diet of dull, often stupid, rote materials" (p. 235) has a long history of being ineffective, although much used, for at-risk students:

> Curriculum materials are of critical importance in whether students stay in school. In recent years, the use of workbooks and xeroxed pages from workbooks has increased enormously. In the 1960s researchers on the dropout problem frequently pointed to a connection between dropping out of school and the overuse of workbooks and other boring materials. Writers warned that workbooks were a teacher's crutch and not a substitute for teaching that was sensitive to individual needs. This is still true today. No mechanical form of instruction can substitute for classroom interactions. It is even more deadly for potential dropouts, for they frequently are treated as a separate species who must be fed on a diet of dull, often stupid, rote materials. As Wilbur Bookover has cautioned, equality of opportunity is not facilitated by differentiated materials and methods based on the presumed differences between children. A common curriculum with common materials is associated with an open society. The heavy use of Skinnerian technology with poorer students and Deweyan approaches with more able students will only create more dropouts, just as it has been doing. It is also a violation of educators' commitment to equal access to the curriculum (p. 235).

Furthermore, "research does not support the idea that students who have never really become interested in learning do best with a system of learning that relies on workbooks, preprogrammed instruction, drills, and tests (instruction delivered one piece at a time. Indeed, such student prefer discovery approaches" (Tanner, in Nelson, p. 236).

Beyond being given different materials, students placed in remedial programs often receive less direct reading instruction than "regular" students, rather than more or an "equal" amount, which often leaves them even further behind:

> We know that increasing the quantity of reading instruction provided is critical to acceleration of reading development, and yet participation in either remedial or special education is more likely to decrease the quantity of instruction, even though most school personnel assume that quantity is increased. . . .We know that one-to-one tutorial instruction is powerful, yet it is virtually unavailable in current programs. We know that active involvement in actual reading and writing of texts is critical to accelerated development, yet remedial and special education students are the group least likely to be asked to read or write—in any sustained form—during instruction (Walmsley & Allington, 1995, pp. 22-23).

> If certain students have less eye contact, verbal interaction, and time of direct reading instruction, these factors may contribute more to reading failure than socioeconomic factors (Heath, 1982, p. 44).

Students' instruction is also limited as the tasks that remedial students are given to accompany their reading also are restricted:

> The instructional tasks that learners are assigned are another critical dimension of effective instructional programs. The tasks represent the experienced curriculum and delimit the range of learning. Poor readers have historically experienced a curriculum quite different from that experienced by better

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readers (Allington, 1983; Collins, 1986; Hiebert, 1983). Low achieving readers are more likely to be asked to read aloud than silently, to have their attention focused on word recognition rather than comprehension, to spend more time working alone on low-level work sheets than instructional activities. Instructional tasks, then, differentiate the experiences of children who have little difficulty acquiring reading and writing abilities and those who have some or much difficulty. Much of the difference in reading strategy between high-and-low-achievement readers can be explained by the differences in the instructional tasks emphasized (Walmsley & Allington, 1995, p. 29).

Remedial students are often considered students who are unable to perform many reading and writing tasks; hence, students in these classes are not challenged or given appropriate thought-provoking reading materials or writing assignments. In order to become better readers and writer, more reading and writing practice, is what students need, not less:

> Traditional remedial programs withhold intellectual and literary experiences from poorer readers deemed 'not ready' to engage in them, and routinely underestimate what these less able readers are capable of learning. Our view of a remedial program is that it should help the poorer reader access and participate fully in a rich core curriculum. Our experience suggests that Stanovich (1986) is right when he talks about the 'Matthew effect': the better readers get better because they get to read the good literature, while the poor readers wither on a diet of 'high-interest,' low-vocabulary books (Walp & Walmsley, 1995, p. 181).

Remedial programs often are "aiming low, . . .scaling down. . . expectations—as so many remedial programs do—training to do the minimum, the minimum here being a simple workbook sentence free of error" (Rose, 1995, p. 141).

Furthermore, once students are placed in a remedial track, it is unlikely that they will ever traverse beyond it (See Fine, 1991; Passow, 1988; Rose, 1989; Walmsley & Allington, 1995; Leonhardt, 1996). The students who are so labelled are "quarantined" and remain in quarantine, labelled and slotted and kept away from their peers until they are better students, which is, of course, difficult as students are treated differently than other students and are, as indicated above, often given less reading and writing assignments than their peers:

> The theoretical and pedagogical model that was available for 'corrective teaching' led educators to view literacy problems from a medical-remedial perspective. Thus they set out to diagnose as precisely as possible the errors (defects) in a student's paper—which they saw as symptomatic of equally isolable defect in the student's linguistic capacity—and devise drills and exercises to remedy them. (One of the 1930s nicknames for remedial sections was 'sick sections.' During the next decade they would be tagged 'hospital sections.') Such corrective teaching was, in the words of one educator, 'the most logical as well as the most scientific method.' Though we have, over the last fifty years, developed a richer understanding of reading and writing difficulties, the reductive view of error and the language of medicine is still with us. A recent letter from the senate of a local liberal arts college is sitting on my desk. It discusses a 'program in remedial writing for. . .[those] entering freshmen suffering from severe writing handicaps.' We seem entrapped by this language, this view of students and learning. We still talk of writers as suffering from specifiable, locatable defects, deficits, and handicaps that can be localized, circumscribed, and remedied. Such talk carries with it the etymological wisps and traces of disease and serves to exclude from the academic community those who are so labeled. They sit in scholastic quarantine until their disease can be diagnosed and remedied (Rose, 1989, p. 210).

What is suggested by Walmsley & Allington (1995), as well as others (Walp & Walmsley, 1995; Rose, 1995; Slavin, 1987, 1990) is

that students be educated with their peers, and with the same curriculum and tasks, not with a watered-down curriculum that focuses only on a few skills and on the performance of simple tasks that do not promote practice with reading and writing tasks that peers would experience as they develop their literacy skills:

> It is true that the major differences between the literacy strategies of better and poorer student can be explained by differences in curriculum, opportunities, and instructional tasks, then there should be no barriers to entitling all children to the same literary experiences and expectations. Convincing regular classroom teachers and specialists to afford all children these opportunities is a major task, however, in light of the long history of disentitlement (Walmsley & Allington, p. 29).

Although a small number of students may benefit greatly from such programs, according to most studies, the majority of students do not (Walmsley & Allington, 1995). Part of the difficulty is related to the negativity experienced as a result of a lowered self image that comes from students feeling left out, different, and less able than other students. Students who are segregated from their peers often suffer extreme negative consequences:

> . . .[I]ncreasing evidence suggest that segregation, be it the result of flunking, or placement in a special education classroom, or even participation in remedial or resource room programs, stigmatized children to a far greater degree than educators ever realized. It is this evidence that has fostered the movement toward 'inclusionary' education (Walmsley & Allington, 1995, p. 41).

Leonhardt (1996), speaking to parents of reluctant and at-risk readers, suggests that students should be able to choose their

placement because a student will then accept his or her placement more readily and also work hard to make the program work for him or her:

> When possible, let your [child] be the one to make the decision about her educational placement, and about the kind of help she receives. There are two reasons for this. If she makes the decision she'll be much more likely to 'buy into' any arrangement, and so work hard. Even more important, she needs to feel like a competent, in-control individual in as many areas of her life as possible (1996, p. 88).

Although this option is rarely available for students, it is an excellent idea and one that I believe would have worked well for my students. Not all of them would have self-opted to go to a regular classroom—but those who most fought the program and those stronger students that I wanted to have the opportunity to be in a regular class would have. Then, I would have had a class willing to accept the parameters of the class and also more time to spend with those who truly needed my undivided attention.

Leonhardt also suggests to parents, "Don't let her stay in a school situation that is making her desperately unhappy. *Somehow* get her out" (1996, p. 88). One of my student's parents did exactly this, and it was indeed the best move, for I also felt that she did not belong in the class, but had tried unsuccessfully to arrange for her to take a regular class. I was unsuccessful at moving any other students whom I felt would be better served in a regular class. Actually, from the research cited above, it is unclear as to whether students are

served at all from being cycled into such a program. Many others were "desperately unhappy" with their placement and had extremely negative reactions about such placement that were also self-directed, for they found themselves questioning their ability and fought against doing work in a class that labelled them as incapable to begin with; they began to become less able in a type of self-fulfilling prophecy. Certainly, no program is worth the sort of agony it created for some students.

In order for remedial programs to work, they are expected to support the core curriculum without being dramatically different from it:

> Remedial programs (including special education) are, when you think about it, forms of ability grouping. To reform the remedial program as an entity separate from the core curriculum maintains the separateness of the two programs, and perpetuates the notion that children need to be sorted into programs according to their literacy abilities. In contrast, if the remedial program is seen as an integral part of the core curriculum, the sorting notion gives way to a support model, in which children are given help according to their core curriculum needs. . . . 'Support implies that the remedial program is an integrate part of the core curriculum, and that its role is to help students participate successfully in that curriculum (Walp & Walmsley, 1995, p. 193).

The setting apart by ability grouping is not only detrimental to students because they are not using the same reading materials nor being given the same written tasks as other students, but also because students are labelled and treated according to the label as if they were less able than other students:

'Locking out' students from equal access to knowledge is clearly not a practice educators should support in a democratic society. Where grouping institutionalized expectancies by classifying and labeling students, condemning some to inferior programs and limiting their educational opportunities while encouraging and challenging others, it is clearly an inappropriate practice, both educationally and morally (Passow, 1988, p. 222).

The problems related to tracking, or setting students apart from other students through separate programs, concluded by Schafer and Olexa (1971) are summarized by Passow (1988):

(a) the procedures used for assigning students to a track discriminate against those from lower-income or minority group families intentionally or unintentionally since the tests and teacher judgments are weighted in favor of white middle-class students; (b) 'the organizational processes of curriculum assignment are complex, with assumptions made by counselors about the character, adjustment, and alleged potential of incoming students playing an important part in the decision'; (c) the system locks students into educational and occupational career lines prematurely and provides little or no chance for shifting later on; (d) compared to the program offered students in the upper tracks, the education provided lower-track students is of inferior quality resulting from 'damaged self-esteem because of the stigma attached to lower tracks, poor peer models, dull subject matter, and ineffective and uninspired teaching'; (e) by imposing economic and racial segregation on the classroom and limiting contact with students with other backgrounds, the school system 'fails to prepare student for effective living in an open, multiethnic society'; f) tracking actually contributes to the problems schools seek to prevent such as rebelliousness, dropping out, and delinquency by alienating youth, developing negative self-concepts, and lowering their aspirations for the future (p. 218).

The above characterizations seemed to fit fairly accurately the reading program and the students I was teaching: students were for the most part minority and low-income; they were fed on dullness with respect to the workbooks in particular; they were given different materials

than their peers. But by far the most disturbing quality of the program was what placement in such a course did to their self-esteem and their ability to be considered equal to their peers, and that, in turn, such placement may have jeopardized their potentials for future success. The question then becomes, how do we help students succeed in reading and writing without the overwhelming negative effects that can occur?

Finding ways to keep the at-risk student from dropping out is crucial. Working toward making students better readers, better writers, better mathematicians, and avoiding retention and social promotion are some of the ways which promote more likelihood of success for the at-risk student because these are the abilities that cause a high school student to both feel and be successful. If students are not motivated to read and to succeed in school, and if they drop out before graduating, or graduate without the necessary skills, the results can be devastating and will carry with them for the rest of their lives. Motivating students to hunger for knowledge, reading and writing ability especially in this case, and to want to read and write better and more are the motivational aspects that will be discussed in the next section.

MOTIVATION AND READING

> Historically, motivation was characterized as a drive or as being based on the reinforcement of behavior. In contrast, current views of motivation describe it as readers' beliefs about themselves, such as their sense of self-efficacy, expectancies for reading success, and sense of self as a reader (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, p. 8).

In order to discover why some students read and others do not, or choose not to read often, one must first look at the factors involved in motivating students to read. Although motivational researchers have discussed the relationship of motivation to academic achievement, "few of these researchers have explicitly addressed motivation for reading" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, p. 5). The focus of the following section will be to review the literature that does focus on motivation as related to reading, in particular, and writing, and literacy, in general.

Research on what I consider to be the five most important factors related to motivating reading for students who are at-risk and who dislike reading intensely will be discussed. "The questions most directly relating to motivation are 'Can I succeed?' and 'Do I want to succeed and why.' In terms of reading, these questions are 'Can I be a good reader?' and Do I want to be a good reader and why?'" (Wigfield, 1997, p. 14). The five main motivational factors that will be discussed are: (1) Interest and Choice (2) Providing a Variety of Texts and Promoting Ownership (3) Motivational Nudges (4) Age Appropriate

and Culturally Interesting Materials: Adolescent and Multicultural Literature (5) Promoting Feelings of Success: Positive Envisionments as Encouragement.

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

1. INTEREST AND CHOICE

One way of promoting feelings of success for students is to allow them to choose texts and writings that they will do based on an interest they have either in the topic or in the particular book. Motivation in general is expected to be high when a person is interested in or notes value in the activity:

> Another of the commonsense terms that must have motivational significance is *interest*.. One might say, 'I am interested in this problem.' We know, then, that presentation of this problem will engage motivational processes and result in persistence and working with intensity. . . . *Importance* is yet another such label that surely has motivation impact. The person on the street might exclaim, 'it is important for me to do this!' and the listener can then infer that motivation will be high. Is importance merely another word, a synonym, for motivation, or will it also require incorporation into the systematic study of motivation, along with value, interest, desire, want, and a host of other phrases that permeate everyday language and connect with motivational issues? (Weiner, 1992, p. 364).

"When individuals value reading, and they are interested in the subject they are reading about, engagement is enhanced." (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, p. 8).

Interest and choice are not only related to increased motivation but also to better comprehension:

. . . .When children are involved in making decisions about what they will read and how much they plan to read, they are more likely to follow through with their commitments.

Another factor leading to increased motivation and learning is interest. When children have opportunities to select material they find interesting, they use more effective learning strategies and have better comprehension than with uninteresting material (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995). This work further supports the importance of choice and control. Children deserve many opportunities to select books to read and topics for investigation that matter to them (Santa, 1997, p. 227).

Similarly, Hidi (1990) found that interest and comprehension may be interrelated. Hidi also presents evidence to show how student interest and interesting text can be important points to consider when choosing texts and activities for the classroom:

. . .[I]nterest is central to determining how we select and persist in processing certain types of information in preference to others. I have presented evidence to show that both individual and text-based interest have a profound effect on cognitive functioning and the facilitation of learning. . . .I have suggested that processing interesting information involves elements that are not present in processing information that do not clearly distinguish between the processing of interesting text segments and the processing of important ideas in text. . . .

There are, however, many unresolved questions in the research on interest that need to be dealt with. For example, the conditions, the length of engagement, and the focus on external stimuli versus internal states are very different depending on whether interest is due to individual, personal significance, or the interestingness of the text. . . .Another question that should be investigated concerns that role that individual interest versus text-based interest plays in learning. Because of the differences between these two types of interest, they may be contributing to different aspects of the learning process. Individual interest might play a strong (but so far neglected) role in writing and intentional learning as well as in difficult learning and expertise. Specifically, individual interest may be the key to explain the difference between expert and skilled performances. Situational interest, on the other hand, seems to be more relevant to reading and to easier learning.

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That is, it might best contribute to the beginning stages of knowledge acquisition (p. 565).

Furthermore, students who are interested in the reading that they do are more likely to become independent and to read for intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards:

> The type of learning that occurs at home capitalized on intrinsic motivation—motivation that comes from inside the child. When children are intrinsically motivated they learn because they *want* to do what they are doing. As children are doing something they enjoy, they learn language. Researchers report that intrinsic motivation frequently produces higher levels of sustained interest and better learning (Malone & Lepper, 1987). Including choice in instructional environments takes advantage of the interest and learning benefits of intrinsic motivation. When children choose their own reading materials, they are more likely to read texts that tell them something they want to know. If they want to know, they will persist in their struggle to construct meaning. The struggle for meaning provides the motivation for learning and practicing reading. In my classroom, book choice serves two functions: first, it takes advantage of intrinsic motivation, and second, it breaks a lock-step system that has all children reading the same text when it is impossible to choose a single text that is appropriate for all (Roller, 1996, p. 45).

As interest in text has been shown to improve comprehension because students will often engage longer in activities and will be motivated to learn about the subject on which they are reading, interest may play a crucial role for the reluctant reader. If a student has refused to read in the past, has been unable to persist in completing reading assignments, then he or she may need to be taught how to choose interesting text and perhaps more importantly, to be allowed that choice. If a student in the beginning stages of developing his or her reading habit, as my students were, will not read unless he

or she is able to choose what is read, then allowing choice of reading, and of interesting text is absolutely essential.

2. PROVIDING A VARIETY OF TEXTS AND PROMOTING OWNERSHIP

In order to provide an atmosphere for students to find interesting text that they truly wish to read, students need access to the library as well as a classroom full of books, magazines, and other reading materials. These resources also need to include as wide a range of reading levels and types of materials as possible.

A teacher needs to "[c]lutter up the classroom," "[p]rovide time for reading," and "[e]ncourage the reading habit throughout the school year" (Sanacore, 1996, pp. S14-S16) in order for students to progress toward becoming better readers, toward moving into more difficult and challenging reading, and ultimately, toward a habit of reading which might result in turning the reluctant reader into a lifetime reader.

Students need to be given a wide variety of choices, and teachers also need to allow them to make their own choices independently in order to promote their development:

> Choice is only as wide as the alternatives available. . . . Often classroom libraries contain a rather narrow range of books deemed appropriate for the average child of that grade. We do this despite our knowledge of the variability in reading capabilities and interests of the children in any particular grade. Our selections for classroom and school libraries must acknowledge the range of reading abilities that exist in every classroom.

In addition, the range of types of materials available is important. Some children love stories; others hate to read them because they are not true. Some children like nature books; others like books about machinery. Some children look through the books in their classrooms only to find that there are none about children like them. Classrooms must have many books and other print materials available—newsprint, catalogs, advertisements, classroom announcements, directions, poetry, nonfiction, story books, and so on. And these must include materials on a wide array of topics, in many genres, from a numerous variety of cultures and life settings. The range must be as wide as possible so that as many children as possible can find books they both want to and can read.

However, the problem of choice is not as simple as providing a wide and appropriate range of reading materials. This is only the first step. Teachers must also create an environment that encourages differences. The children's prejudices against easy books are deeply held. To get struggling readers reading, teachers must first find ways to enable them to read some of the books they want to read, and then find ways to make them want to read the books they can read. Teachers, in short, must 'make difficult books accessible and easy books acceptable' (Roller, 1996, pp. 45-46). (Also see Sherman, 1996).

Allowing students to make their own choices of what to read, and to choose their own topics for writing is also positive and motivating for the reluctant reader because giving students independence and trusting their opinions helps to build feelings of ownership as well as confidence. Ownership is also a powerful motivator and is connected to choice and decision-making of readers and writers. Applebee (1991) defines ownership as:

In writing, opportunities for ownership occur when topics call for students to explore their own experiences and opinions, or to elaborate upon a point of view (p. 554).

Feelings of independence, and of interest in one's own ideas is also

encouraging for a young adult:

> Ideas are a resource because adolescents are surprisingly responsive to any real encouragement to think for themselves . . . (Booth, 1980, p. 171).

Appreciation of literature may also come from teaching a

student the strategies for negotiating the meaning of a text (in

literature the text is always negotiable) and in allowing that student

to actually negotiate his or her own meaning:

> . . .we also believe that confidence in one's own negotiation of meaning in a text is a precursor to the development of individual appreciation of literature. If we are continually dependent on others for defining meaning in the text we will not experience the levels of enjoyment and aesthetic appreciation that are possible when we have a well-developed sense of content and context ourselves (Purves, Rogers, & Soter, p. 132).

Students gain confidence when their ideas and opinions are respected

and when they are allowed to make their own decisions.

In a study of how students develop ownership and how it affects

their reading and writing skills, Au (1997) defined ownership as a way

of involving oneself in literacy activities and as a result of such

involvement, a way of learning to value literacy; the goal of a

curriculum that fosters ownership in students is to help them to

choose to develop the habit of literacy on their own:

> The overarching goal of the curriculum was ownership of literacy. Ownership was defined as students' valuing of literacy, including holding positive attitudes toward literacy and having the habit of using literacy in everyday life. Students display positive attitudes by willingly engaging in

reading and writing, showing confidence and pride in their own literacy, and taking an interest in the literacy of others....Students show that they have the habit of literacy when they read books at home, write in journals or diaries, maintain books of addresses and phone numbers, make lists, create greeting cards, and correspond with friends and relatives. Some of these activities (such as journal writing) may have been introduced by teachers, but students who have the habit of literacy engage in these activities outside of school when they are not required. . . .(Au, 1997, p. 169).

It is hoped that students introduced to the habit of reading, the ownership of literacy through reading and writing activities at school, and through being able to select the literary texts they feel are not only interesting but important to them, will choose to continue the literacy habit at home and will gradually become more proficient at school. As learning is occurring as students perform more literate activities, students will, in turn, become more proficient at these activities, and thus, will be more successful, and ultimately, more motivated:

In the whole literacy curriculum, a reciprocal relationship was assumed between ownership of literacy and proficiency in reading and writing. Students who have ownership of literacy are motivated to learn to read and write well because literacy plays a central and meaningful role in their lives. Also, as students become more proficient at reading and writing, these activities can be carried out with greater ease and success, so they become more motivating (Au, 1997, p. 169).

3. MOTIVATIONAL NUDGES

Although allowing students the right to choose their own books and their own topics is important because this helps promote a sense of ownership and independence, sometimes an extra push is needed in order to help students find a book they believe will be of interest to them. Having used a curriculum based on choice for an entire year, I discovered that once students were taught how to use the library and given the opportunity to choose their own subjects of interest regarding their literacy, they read. However, there were times when students needed to be nudged in order to get started choosing a book. The book talks I gave or other students gave were often all that was needed. There were, however, times when a stronger nudge was needed. So, besides having an abundant number of books available, it is important to have some subversive tactics available to entice students to read. Swiderik (1996) indicates that ". . .the key to motivation is twofold: Timing, Timing, Timing and Conning, Conning, Conning" (p. S4). She came up with a list of strategies that motivate the reluctant reader; below is a summary of these "cons":

> Con 1: The Read. This is simple but it works. If a book is particularly slow in parts, paraphrase, condense, or move to the exciting sections. Leave kids dangling if possible. . . .
>
> Con 2: The Swear. Middle schoolers are fascinated with swear words and they delight in reading such language in script other than their own.
>
> Con 3.: The Tease. The Tease is easy to do and, unlike the swear, you can repeat it over and over. One form is book talk.

Another method is to read a book silently (while the kids read), then say each day, 'Listen to this. I can't believe this.' Then read a paragraph or two. I did this with *They Cage the Animals at Night* by Jennings M. Burch, and kids began pestering me to finish the book so they could read it.

Con 4: The Forbidden. The quickest way to pique 12-to 14-year olds' interest is to forbid them to do something. Each year I omit one chapter in Torey Hayden's *One Child* when I read it aloud. I stop, look up, say very seriously, 'I won't be able to read this chapter because your parents might object.'... I used the Forbidden with Robert Cormier's books. I read *We All Fall Down* and then removed it from my bookshelves. I told the students it was 'too violent.' Several students read every Robert Cormier book in the library trying to locate the book (pp. S4-S6). (See also Leonhardt, 1996).

My students were easily enticed through such tactics as those listed above, and especially by "The Swear." Once a book was found by another student at the library that contained swear words, every other student in the class could not wait to read the book. As did Swiderik (1996), I too worried about parents' reactions. However, my students were up front with their parents, even brazen about taking their books home and flaunting the swear words in the book they brought from the school library. The parents that I talked to all indicated that they were a bit worried at first, but then accepted the book or books because they wanted their child reading. I told the parents to look at the entire book before deciding to censor the work or to deny its value.

Students also enjoyed the time we set aside for reading outloud. They often wanted to read the book or the story by themselves after we finished reading it. My students, for example, also thoroughly enjoyed our reading of mystery stories where they really needed to listen in

order to predict the ending. We also read scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* while students played the parts. Reading aloud promotes a social bonding between students, other classmates, as well as a pleasant engagement with reading (Bloome, 1985; Heath, 1980).

Oral reading is also effective for enhancing listening skills, vocabulary, and understanding of reading. Many have discussed reading stories aloud to students to foster initial phases of reading and reading readiness (Teale, 1984; Bloome, 1985; Hiebert, 1981; Morrow, 1988) or for growth in comprehension (Anderson et al., 1985). Only recently have researchers examined how reading stories promotes motivation for reading in older students (Wilson, 1995; Sanacore, 1992; Tanner, 1992; also see Collignon, 1991; for annotated reading lists, see Harris, 1992; Greene, 1990; Nilsen & Donelson, 1985; Cullinan & Galda, 1991). Reading outloud to students often brings out the most reluctant student, especially when the teacher and students read together, sometimes taking turns reading, and students are able to interject discussion or comments in a relaxed atmosphere.

My students were also very interested in reading aloud any story that had been made into a movie. Hence, Alice Childress' *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But A Sandwich*, Richard Wright's "The Man Who Was Almost A Man," (entitled *Almost a Man* when adapted to film), Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, even *Jaws*, are the types of stories that can be read aloud with the extra enticement of allowing students

to watch the movie together later. In my class, we read outloud the first two of the above listed stories that had been made into films and then watched the film afterwards. A good exercise to accompany this activity is to compare scenes in the book to changes in the movie, and to discuss the differences between books and movie presentations of books (see Costanzo, 1992; Bogle, 1991; Marcus, 1977). Students will often decide that it is better to read the book than to see the movie, if only one can be chosen, as the book contains more scenes, and more details about the characters.

Students are also often interested in what the teacher is reading and will be able to see that the teacher finds both pleasure and value in reading, so it is important to read along with your students (see also Sherman, 1996, and Leonhardt, 1996).

4. AGE APPROPRIATE AND CULTURALLY INTERESTING MATERIALS:
ADOLESCENT AND MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

4.1 WHY USE ADOLESCENT LITERATURE TO INTEREST STUDENTS?

The main point of most of recent literary theory can be stated thus: Texts are written by authors, deal with something called 'the world,' and are read by readers. It used to be that we looked at literature primarily as reflecting the world. Then we thought of texts as the outpourings of their authors. Then we thought of them as isolated specimens to be examined. Now we think of them as things read by people. Today, texts are seen as situated in an intertextual world, and they have an indeterminacy of meaning dependent upon the varying

experiences and natures of the readers (Purves, Rogers, & Soter, 1990, p. 43).

Adolescent literature should also be a part of literature study because it has the potential to motivate and interest the young adult in ways that not all literature will. Many students do not ever learn to enjoy reading, and as a result, often will not do the reading for English class. When a young adult finds a good adolescent literature novel to read, he or she will often tell another friend about the book. It is in this way, that the reading of literature can become contagious. Teachers should be able to use adolescent literature as well as the traditional literature in the classroom, and should allow readers the opportunities to find many types of fictive worlds to enter:

> To teach literary concepts only through traditional literature—those works found in the anthologies—is to miss a great opportunity to teach adolescents about the wonderful ways in which good writers have created the fictive worlds that they, the young readers, find so easy to understand and enjoy (Mertz, 1993, p. 148).

A literature teacher needs to read, and to listen to students to become aware of the variety of good adolescent literature that is available; the teacher also needs to be aware in order to suggest reading choices for individual readers and in order to choose adolescent literature to study in the classroom. The reading of adolescent literature along with students during their free reading time will also reveal to students the importance of reading and will allow the teacher to

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become more involved in students' reading and even more aware of the

topics of interest to adolescents:

> . . .[T]he teacher needs to be an avid reader of young adult (YA)
> books. Seeing a teacher reading 'their' books is far more
> powerful for students than being told that reading's
> important. If the students believe the teacher reads avidly,
> they'll share their opinions about the titles the teacher hasn't
> read yet. I can't count the times that a student has taken me
> by the arm, led me to the bookcases, and given me a book talk
> on his or her favorite title, closing with putting the book in my
> hand and looking straight in my eyes—I get the message!
> Read it! Just last week a girl I never would have 'pegged' as a
> reader assigned me Martha Humphrey's *Until Whatever*. I can't
> wait to talk to her on Monday—what a book! And she's
> probably hooked on reading forever (Sherman, 1996, p. S9).

The use of adolescent literature in the classroom is extremely

valuable because it relates often very directly to young adult concerns,

and it thus may be able to "turn on" readers who might otherwise not

be very interested in reading. The turmoil in an adolescent's life needs

to be addressed and adolescent literature does address many of their

concerns:

> Perhaps the central concern of adolescents is the search for
> identity. A teen's physical self and emotional reactions are no
> longer the familiar, comfortable fit they were in childhood.
> Relationships with parents and friends have undergone sudden
> changes. The state of aloneness may be faced for the first
> time. Some teenagers have the uncomfortable feeling that
> others are watching them. Others recognize for the first time
> that they have an inner life, and their thoughts seem unique
> and troubling. . . .
> In the search for identity the young use books, particularly
> fiction and biography, as a main source of information.
> Through them they try on different roles, and sometimes
> discover people like themselves whom they can observe
> handling their lives. This may not be a proper use of
> literature, but it is a phase that teenagers must go through if
> they are to keep reading. Unless the books offer them

experiential encounters, most will be turned off reading (Carlsen, 1978, p. 15).

Carlsen also adds that "the developmental tasks facing the adolescent represent experiences in dealing with human relations, dealing with inner self, and dealing with vocation" (p. 16). Considering all that this difficult stage involves, it is not surprising that Carlsen also believes that students "use reading in a personal if not therapeutic way" (p. 16). Although I disagree with Carlsen that adolescent literature "may not be a proper use of literature" and that "most (italics mine) will be turned off reading" if we don't teach young adult literature, I do agree that this type of literature often deals very effectively with students' concerns and that it should be used (see also, Smulyan, 1986; Manning & Allen, 1987, Black, 1967; Probst, 1984; Nilsen & Donelson,1985; Cullinan & Galda, 1994).

Young adult novels seem to speak specifically to adolescent concerns through the view of young adult characters in situations that a young adult can relate to more closely. Teachers can use some well-chosen young adult novels to spark student interest and to teach some unfamiliar concepts with understandable content. Many sources are available for the teacher who wants annotated bibliographies of works that are suitable on certain topics or categories of interest to young adults (See International Reading Association, *More Teens' Favorite Books*, 1987 to present; Cullinan & Galda, 1994; Nilsen &

Donelson, 1985; Probst, 1984; Lindgren, 1991; Lipson, 1988; *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*; and *English Journal*).

The prevalent idea that adolescent literature is too easy, and too often deals with ideas that are not worth reading or discussing or that contain the "wrong" sort of language is refuted by Mertz (1978) who explains that young adult novels not only are deep, but often "follow a rigid. . . moral code" (p. 103); and that those who are criticizing and even banning their use in classrooms "have not taken the time to read carefully the books they are banning" (p. 104). One book often banned is Salinger's always controversial *The Catcher in the Rye*, which is the perfect capture of adolescence in all its glory and doom. High school students should have the opportunity to read this book and to discuss it in class with adults, and with other teenagers who may have some serious but important problems to discuss.

It is through adolescent literature and books relating to adolescent concerns, that students may learn about caring for other people, about relationships with other people, including parents, siblings, and friends, about decision-making, about goals for the future, and even about themselves. Adolescent literature may help us to have those discussion about topics of importance to young adults that will help them to deal more effectively with decisions, choices, and problems they are presently facing or will encounter later in life.

Many have discussed how teachers can use adolescent literature as a bridge to the classics or to more difficult literature (Purves, Rogers, & Soter, 1990; Carlsen, 1978; Nugent, 1984; Freier, 1983; Neuleib, 1983; Danielson, 1983, Johnson, 1984; Mertz, 1978, 1993). Teaching themes or novels in comparison can truly build on understanding of various concepts, genres, point of view, symbolism. It must be added, however, that some adolescent literature can be difficult; it is termed adolescent literature not because it is written for low-level readers, but because it contains young adult characters, settings, and themes. Choosing wisely from amongst all types of literature: adolescent, multicultural, traditional classics can help to provide all kinds of balances, not simply the balance between difficult and less-difficult literature. Teachers should not sell their young adults short, thinking that they could not possibly tackle the concepts of Elie Wiesel's *Night* until they have first read *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Chosen* (Chaim Potok). Of the three, the latter is the longest, probably the most difficult, and is a staple on adolescent literature lists.

When students are allowed to self-select reading, they will often begin with a choice from amongst the adolescent literature available, but often will also choose gradually to move toward more difficult and often diverse reading:

> It was miraculous—I've seen too many cases for it to be a fluke. Self-selection really does work, and the best thing, the

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real pay-off, is that students become readers. It still amazes me to read in a student's reading journal how she thinks R.L. Stine is too predictable now and that Lois Duncan is more her style. More than one young woman has found her way to Cynthia Voigt and Torey Hayden, not because I forced the journey, but because she tired of the less challenging authors. Seventh grade boys who don't consider themselves readers at the beginning find their way from Stine's *Goosebumps*: to Spinelli's *Maniac Magee* (which still brings tears to my eyes after many readings); to *Space Station Seventh Grade*, through the superb prose of Gary Paulsen; and finally to Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Magorian's *Good Night Mr. Tom*, and Piers Paul Read's *Alive!* and similar titles, as they come back to me later to recommend other authors they've discovered (Sherman, 1996, p. S8) (see also Swiderik, 1996; and Sanacore, 1996).

Mertz indicates that we need to continue to search for books that reflect themes of interest for readers and to reconsider the place that adolescent literature might have in our curriculums: "Perhaps with more discussions of the literary aspects of young adult fiction, those who are still skeptics about this form of literature will realize that it is an important part of today's diverse literary landscape"(Mertz, 1993, p. 142).

4.2 MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE AND OTHER MATERIALS OF INTEREST TO YOUNG ADULTS

As well as being interested in young adult literature, teenage students are also often interested in multicultural literature or non-fiction works on or by African-American subjects, especially if the students themselves are African-American, and stories or non-fiction

works on topics of concern to adolescents, such as relationships, career choices, and role models. Of course, all students can benefit from learning about others. Reading about different perspectives on the joys, trials and tribulations of living are important to help students build knowledge and understanding of self as well as others.

Having a variety of choices available to students on subjects of strong interest to students is highly motivational for the reluctant reader, who, often, will not read unless he or she finds a book or topic that invites him or her to participate in reading. Some enticement must exist for this type of reader, who often must find value in reading through some kind of personal connection. Entertainers, sports figures, rap stars, drug and alcohol abuse, political leaders, young adult situations, are all often subjects of interest to most young adult reluctant readers, and are the types of materials that are available in the school and classroom library, about both African-Americans and others. Strong characters and good role models who are also well-known are also often of primary interest to young adult students. Such characters and stories are available for the African-American student who wants to see a reflection of him or herself in the mirror.

Although there has been a shortage of multicultural literature available to students in the past, more culturally diverse authentic literature has been published in the last ten years in response to an outcry from parents, teachers, and others that the literary landscape

was not complete without the faces and stories of African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans, as well as many others (Harris, 1992; Galda & Cullinan, 1994). One of the major problems of not including multicultural literature in the curriculum cited by researchers was that students were reading only the canonized works of dead, white males and were not even aware of many important works written by others (Harris, 1992; Lindgren, 1991; Sims Bishop; 1982).

Furthermore, one of the prevalent theories in education is that students who do not find resemblance, or who do not see their culture or themselves in the curriculum are not affirmed in the classroom, and may suffer from lack of self-esteem. African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic students, in particular, who make up a large portion of the overall school population, have in the past been unable to see themselves or their cultures as important enough to be included in the curriculum, which was harmful to the self-esteem of students trying to form their identities and to find culturally appropriate role models (see Asante, 1988; Hare & Hare, 1991). And, what was available to be read often presented a distorted or stereotypical image, which was also damaging to the ethnic groups presented:

> Readers shape their view of the world and of themselves partially through the books they read. If children never see themselves in books, then their absence subtly tells them "You are not important enough to appear in books." Missing, negative, and stereotyped images of an ethnic group are harmful not only to the children of that group but to others

who get a distorted view. Culturally diverse literature informs us about ourselves and helps us to know each other (Cullinan & Galda, 1994, p. 345).

What many seem to be advocating is for all American children to find some resemblance or relevance to self, not only at home or in the community but in the art, literature, and activities that are provided at school:

> all aesthetics find their sources in resemblance (Welsh, 1979). When you say that you like something or do not like something, you are speaking on the basis of an idea in your mind about what resembles you. This is more than physical resemblance, it is spiritual, emotional, and intellectual resemblance as well. In most instances, it reflects the idealized versions of ourselves. Thus, the beautiful person is not necessarily a look-alike of me but one who possesses the qualities I most admire. Only by understanding this relationship between aesthetics and ourselves can we truly understand and appreciate Afrocentricity. . . .Literature, dance, art, and theater are revolutionized because they not only speak to us or of us but *from* us. In essence, the smart Harlem Renaissance poets were speaking of us to others.... This aesthetic is neither narrow nor limiting as some critics have stated. They misconstrue not only the nature of Afrocentricity but also of art. All art is culture bound. . . (Asante, 1988, pp. 82-83).

According to Asante, not listening to the values that make up the African-American's spirit is denying that self. So, the African-American must always search out those things that "affirm" his or her beliefs:

> Do not be captured by a sense of universality given to you by the Eurocentric viewpoint; such a viewpoint is contradictory to your own ultimate reality. Isolate, define, and promote those values, symbols, and experiences which affirm you (p. 41).

As true as Asante's sentiment may be, it is not always so easy for the student to be "affirmed" in the classroom. Valuing one form of art or literature or even of telling a story over another can cause students who do not find their "resemblance" in the "appropriate" form to feel failure (Michaels, 1981, 1984; Au & Jordan, 1977; Kochman, 1985; Heath, 1982, 1983).

Hare and Hare (1991) also believe that "[w]hat has been neglected most starkly in the education of inner city children is the *affective*" or the "knowledge of self" and "secondly, the *functional*" or "*sociocultural*" which is "knowledge of the social terrain or manipulation of cognitive and affective knowledge for the advancement of self, community and society" (p. 89). Students need and are entitled to an education that focuses at least a good part of its attention on

> knowledge of self and self-potential, who you are, what you want to become and what stands in the way of it....Attention must be directed to the functional—how the individual can apply his knowledge toward negotiating the cultural, political and socioeconomic terrain" (p. 83).

Many African-American families believe that literacy should reflect culture and can be important for helping to improve the community; the schools should promote what the culture is trying to promote:

> It is a community that (despite being besieged by many of the current social problems) has sustained a respect for heritage, where education has been valued for the sake of learning, and where literacy has been equated with 'learning something' that builds on culture and results in community improvement (Gadsden, 1992, p. 331).

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Many also believe that their children can and should learn about their legacy:

> The legacy of literacy is not limited to influences in the community. Many of the informants believe that the legacy has been given by 'great leaders' in the community, particularly religious leaders, and by people with national recognition. Like many children today, they learned in the absence of literature about their own group. Few knew the work of W.E.B. DuBois, but all knew about Booker T. Washington. The vast resource of materials written by African Americans were inaccessible (see Harris, this issue), unlike the opportunities to obtain such materials today (Gadsden, 1992, p. 334).

The materials are indeed readily available and easily found; however, we must ask why these materials are not used as much as they could be. We also have much new, and some old, information about the teaching and learning of African-Americans that may not be considered deeply enough in schools or in teacher-training programs.

Ladson-Billings (1992) also believes that students should have more choices to read about their own ethnicity, indicating support for "the basic assumption. . .that *what* people are taught to read is as significant as the fact that they read" (p. 313). The lack of choices in most literature curriculums that reflect African-American heritage is proof that the power issue is always at work; those making the choices have the power to do so and "[t]eachers of African-American students who have a commitment to improving the students' literacy often find themselves left out of the literacy debate" (Delpit, ctd. in Ladson-Billings, p. 313)

Many educators have written about their multicultural literature choices and how to use them (See Schullstrom (1990) for a variety of approaches toward expanding the canon; Peterson (1992) for a teacher's personal choices and ways of including students in her choices, and Purves, Rogers, & Soter (1990) for some ideas for choices and about multiculturalism and a response-centered curriculum; see also *The English Journal*). Literature does not need to be labelled as "other" literature or included in literature classes only because it is *not* the traditional dead white male but instead needs to be included simply as literature about life to be read.

Many have studied whether multicultural literature is being used and have shown how it is being used in the classroom. Applebee (1991) in his study of anthologies discovered that only a small percentage of minority works are included in the anthologies used today. Pace (1992) also made similar findings when she studied anthologies. She discovered that the works presented were often not representative of a variety of types of characters within cultures.

Pace indicates that part of the solution to the problem of not including enough variety in multicultural literature is to reflect balance in reading selections, a balance of the times and a balance of the positive and the negative, as well as to leave openings for discussion about power structures:

> Just as we need to be aware of women characters as socially constructed beings, we need to see these minority characters

as creations of people from other times. Without dismissing the negative experiences of minorities, we need to balance them with stories of positive, autonomous experiences in minority cultures (p. 37).

[E]ducators who teach these works need to discuss these culturally encoded structures of power and stereotyping in their historical perspectives (p. 37).

[T]here should be room in the scaffolding of our ideals for people to live beyond stereotypes, for people to ask questions, to seek answers, to be who they are (p. 38).

Students in US literature are not just shadow and light and color, not celluloid beings; they are flesh and bone young adults. They need to face controversy, to learn to trust their own ability to make knowledge through the 'problem posing' kind of education outlined by Paulo Freire (1970). They need to see that others like them have asked questions, sought answers, created change (p. 38).

Ultimately, "[t]o become involved in change, we have to see that it is needed. We must believe that our voices matter, that we can speak up, that we can make a difference. The silent parade of women and people of color that visit our classrooms through this canon do not deliver this message" (Pace, p. 38). Opening up the choices, creating a balance of types of characters presented, and being mindful of the quality and authenticity of the works are ways to present multicultural literature more appropriately. (See also Sims Bishop, 1982; Harris, 1992; Cullinan & Galda, 1994; and Lindgren, 1991 for discussions on and reading lists regarding choosing authentic and balanced multicultural literature.)

The goals of Banks' (1991) multicultural curriculum are worthy and take into account a variety of perspectives and ideals to make

education for young adults of all walks of life to learn from many different types of readings and activities:

1. The multicultural curriculum should help students develop the ability to make reflective decisions on issues related to ethnicity and to take personal, social, and civic actions to help solve the racial and ethnic problems in our national and world societies. Effective solutions to the enormous ethnic and racial problems in our nation and world can be found only by an active and informed citizenry capable of making reflective personal and public decisions. . . .

2. The multicultural curriculum should also help students view historical and contemporary events from diverse ethnic perspectives, clarify their ethnic identities, and function effectively within their own ethnic communities before they can relate positively to people who belong to different racial and ethnic groups. Educators need to foster the development of self-acceptance, but to discourage ethnic ethnocentrism.

3. The multicultural curriculum should also help individuals develop cross-cultural competency—the ability to function within a range of cultures.

4. Another important goal of the multicultural curriculum is to provide students with cultural and ethnic alternatives.

5. The multicultural curriculum should also try to reduce ethnic and cultural encapsulation and enable students to understand their own cultures. . . .The multicultural curriculum seeks to help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures.

6. The multicultural curriculum should also help students to expand their conceptions of what it means to be human, to accept the fact that ethnic minority cultures are functional and valid, and to realize that a culture can be evaluated only within a particular cultural context. . . .[E]ducation should deal with the total experience of humankind.

7. Another important goal of the multicultural curriculum is to help students master essential reading, writing, and computational skills. . . .Students are more likely to

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master skills when the teacher uses content that deals with significant human problems, such as ethnicity within our national and world societies (Banks, pp. 24-26).

The purpose of the multicultural curriculum approach is "to broaden students' conceptions of what 'American' means and to present them with new ways to view and interpret American society" (p. 20). Not only students who attend schools that are primarily multicultural, but all students, even those who attend all white schools, can benefit from such a curriculum (see also Larrick, 1965; Banks, 1991; Applebee, 1991; Ravitch, 1990).

Students who read multicultural literature have the opportunities to learn about self and others, as well as to learn about self in relation to others. Banks (1991) also indicates that knowledge of self and "[functioning] effectively within their own ethnic communities" presupposes "[relating] positively to people who belong to different racial and ethnic groups." My African-American students had a strong desire to learn about their culture, and had been denied that learning at least to some extent in their earlier education; according to Banks, these students might be able to more strongly deal with their relationships with the world once they had peered further into their own ethnic identity. Banks' final goal is "to help students master essential reading, writing, and computational skills." Banks also indicates that "[s]tudents are more likely to master skills when the teacher uses content that deals with significant human

problems, such as ethnicity within our national and world societies."
Much multicultural literature does deal with "significant human
problems" and also incidents of historic significance (pp. 20-21).

To young adults, searching for identity and their place within
the world, as well as for reading of interest and value, multicultural
literature is often of extreme importance. Multicultural literature that
provides a variety of different views about the world, presented through
characters sometimes like and sometimes unlike the students
themselves, is often of interest to the reluctant reader, and is often of
particular interest to minority students, but also to the curious teen
who wants to know not only about herself but about others and other
places and ways of living, ways of dealing with real-life situations.
Allowing students to choose to read about their own or others'
cultures according to their own personal interests is one more
important aspect that allows students to participate in their own
literacy development at their own rate and according to their own
decisions about what is important and valuable to them. Making
certain that authentic multicultural literature is available in plenty is
yet another motivational avenue for students continuing down their
"chosen" path of literacy and participation in their own literacy.

Allowing students, African-American students in particular in
my case, to see that many authors of their culture have participated in
creating the modern literary scene is both motivating and welcoming

to the African-American reader. Promoting students' awareness of the African-American literature by such authors as Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Langston Hughes, Ruthie Bolton, Walter Dean Myers, Virginia Hamilton, Richard Wright, Alice Walker, and many more is positive and affirming for the young African-American reader. Through knowledge of multicultural literature, and especially African-American literature, the teacher shows respect for students' identities. Gaining trust through being respectful of students' identities is a crucial element teachers must remember when motivating students who have experienced failure or resisted their own education in the past (see Au, 1997; Ogbu, 1993; Erickson; 1993; Ladsen-Billings, 1992; Gadsden, 1992).

5. PROMOTING FEELINGS OF SUCCESS: POSITIVE ENVISIONMENTS AS ENCOURAGEMENT

The use of choice, interest, adolescent and multicultural literature, are all important aspects of motivating students to want to read and to develop their literacy habit. But, no plan will be motivational unless students feel that they will be capable of success in their reading endeavors.

Allowing students a choice of reading materials can help lead a student toward reading efficacy. Reading efficacy and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are both important factors contributing to students' reading incentives. "*Reading efficacy* is the belief that one

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can be successful at reading" (Wigfield, 1997, p. 22). Students are more likely to read more frequently when they feel competent and are motivated intrinsically, for example, by curiosity, challenge, and interest, rather than extrinsically, by grades and rewards to read (See Wigfield, 1997; Sweet, 1997; Ruddell & Unrau, 1997; Guthrie & McCann, 1997; Gambrell & Marinak, 1997). Furthermore, students also need to possess a drive that will lead them to find books and topics that they are interested in as well as lead them as a matter of course to motivation that is intrinsically generated:

> Research has shown that intrinsic motivations for reading also influence the growth of volitional strategies (Corno & Kanfer, 1993). Students who are internally motivated to read must possess and coordinate strategies for finding books, managing time, locating places to read, and avoiding distractions. These volitional strategies enable students to initiate literacy events compatible with their interests. From the motivation interview data, we observed a high association between increases in intrinsic motivations for reading and volitional strategies for accomplishing reading goals. This implies that students who decreased in motivations also decreased in volitional strategies for reading. We believe these findings suggest that engaging classrooms must support not only the first occurrence of interest in learning or the opportunity for pursuing intrinsic goals, but also the long-term enhancement of intrinsic motivational goals such as curiosity, involvement, social exchange, and the enjoyment of challenge (Guthrie & McCann, 1997, p. 142).

Creating a positive environment is also crucial to reading efficacy, or to convincing a student that he or she is capable of success in reading, and to motivating a student to continue reading and improving:

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The influence of environment on student thoughts and beliefs is evident when teachers give students feedback (such as, 'That's right. You really are getting good at reading these science materials') that raises self-efficacy and sustains motivation for skill improvement" (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 36).

Leonhardt (1996) also suggests that a teacher find ways to make a student feel successful; "praise" a student for the things he or she does well, such as listening, or reading, or writing, or art work done to accompany a story. She also set up a classroom environment where students could choose their activities and where students performed activities at which they would succeed:

I gave them lots of warm affection, and placed them—as often as I could—only in situations where they'd do well. This means that, as far as reading went, I gave them only books they'd chosen and I was sure they'd like. I set up the classroom so they usually had a choice of activities. They could read in the classroom, or go to the computer lab and write. If they wanted to read using pen and paper, that was okay. Maybe they wanted to write at home on their own computer, and spend all of their class time reading. That was fine. They just needed to bring in drafts every so often so I could see how they were doing (pp. 62-63).

Teachers and parents need to make sure that the child feels successful in order for him or her to choose to continue with schooling: "The crucial element in ensuring academic success with high-risk kids is making them feel like *good* kids, and successful kids. Don't let anything jeopardize that" (Leonhardt, 1996, p. 63).

Although motivation is enhanced by creating a positive environment, students also need to continue to learn skills, to be successful, and to value literacy in order to maintain their self-efficacy

and their willingness to improve. The script for the reluctant reader needs to be continually monitored so that all parts of the successful literacy picture continue to move forward:

> Self-efficacy is important, but it is not the only influence on achievement. Other important influences are skills and knowledge, outcome expectation, and perceived value of learning. High self-efficacy will not produce a competent performance when requisite knowledge and skills are lacking. Outcome expectations, or beliefs about the anticipated consequences of actions, are important because students do not engage in activities they believe will lead to negative outcomes. Perceived value (or the importance of learning or of the use that will be made of what is learned) affects behavior because learners show little interest in activities they do not value (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997, pp. 36-37).

In total, students need to be given positive encouragement, a reading-oriented environment, challenging assignments, appropriate instruction, plenty of books as choices for reading, and time for reading.

We want to avoid forcing students to read only what is required of them—or to read only a sampling of the classics we read and loved—and will instead attempt to supply students with a background for reading many types of literature. We want reading to become a habit of pleasure before it becomes a gruelling, tiresome task. If we allow reading to first develop from pleasure, then it may never become an uncomfortable task. If we allow students to choose what they read, they will not only pick texts that they will enjoy and can learn from but also will choose texts with which they will have a successful reading experience.

We want to set up a positive reading environment, to continue to promote student choice and ownership, and to continue to help students build on their reading skills and knowledge, all of which are crucial building blocks through which reluctant readers may choose to participate in reading, and perhaps make reading a habit that will in turn allow their literacy to be strengthened. By allowing students to read some works that are more in tune with their tastes, and to read works of different types and quality along with some classic works, we hope to have broadened their horizons enough that they, in turn, will search out other reading according to their own tastes, needs, and abilities. And, if we have given students suggestions on what they might want to read next, and a basis for judging literary texts, then we must accept their choices whether or not they reflect our own often too haughty tastes—for we have done our best to offer them the opportunities to peer into as many types of literature, and as many "worlds" or worldviews as possible. At the same time, we may also have moved our students toward that lifetime habit of reading.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON ETHNOGRAPHY

> Through all my experiences with people struggling to learn, the one thing that strikes me most is the ease with which we misperceive failed performance and the degree to which this misperception both reflects and reinforces the social order. Class and culture erect boundaries that hinder our vision—blind us to the logic of error and the everpresent stirring of language—and encourage the designation of otherness, deficiency. And the longer I stay in education, the clearer it becomes to me that some of our basic orientations toward the teaching and testing of literacy contribute to our inability to see. To truly educate in America, then, to reach the full sweep of our citizenry, we need to question received perception, shift continually from the standard lens. The exploratory stories. . . encourage us to sit close by as people use language and consider, as we listen, the orientations that limit our field of vision (Rose, 1989, p. 205).

The following discussion details the history and methods of ethnography and also explains the reasoning behind choosing this approach, as well as the types of data that can be collected from such methodology and the rules that an ethnographer must follow in order to keep data valid, honest, trustworthy. A discussion of the methodology for this study will follow in Chapter 4.

WHAT IS ETHNOGRAPHY?

Ethnography is the collection and analysis of descriptive socio-cultural data. A researcher normally studies one group in a naturalistic setting and uses the descriptive data collected in order to make comparisons, generalizations, and explanations. Ethnography involves social relationships, human beings interacting, the researcher as learner and as research instrument, participant observation, long-term study, the study of everyday life, and the study of culture from as many perspectives as possible in an attempt to come to an understanding of the culture that goes deep beneath the surface. The researcher will immerse him or herself in the culture, constantly posing questions, observing, comparing, generalizing, hypothesizing, and interpreting human behavior in order to understand as fully as possible any contexts wherein meaning about the human actions, responses, patterns or systems of the group can be discovered, compared, and analyzed.

The ethnographer can take many different approaches to collecting data, and will in most cases be constantly changing or varying his or her approach, or questions as a result of new information, further observation, and more understanding of the meaning of actions and interactions. The goal of ethnography for the anthropologist is to bring about understanding of the culture from many perspectives or directions and to be as unbiased as possible. An

ethnographer looks at parts of culture in order to understand the interconnections—how the parts relate to the whole; looks for cross-cultural frames of reference, and also human universals. What the ethnographer does cannot be done in a laboratory because the ethnographer wants to understand the group's socio-cultural context, and meaning associated with various elements of culture which is in many ways specific to the surroundings. The ethnographer believes that is not enough to say, "These people do X" or to compile statistics to show just how many times a certain group "does X" because it is more important to come to an in-depth understanding of why a certain group behaves, or believes a certain way in a certain type of situation or context. "Ethnography is, in a sense, an evaluation, for it describes how relationships in social contexts 'work'" (Spindler & Spindler, 1987. p. 80). Ethnography is a human approach which may often be able to inform in ways that other social scientific approaches cannot.

Ethnography has been scrutinized because it does not fall into dominant research modes, quantitative, and experimental, but seems to fall into a category all its own—a category that makes the study of people as something more than a compilation of statistics or description of a list of activities performed by a group. Although ethnography is not an exact science, there are consistent methods for collecting data and its goal is much the same as other social sciences,

"to provide. . .true and useful information" (Pelto & Pelto, ctd. in Spindler & Spindler, p. 65). Even in the "real" social sciences there are no absolute truths delivered, so ethnography's version of the truth is *at least* as valuable as other presented versions and is also in some ways similar to other social scientific methods:

> 'However distinctive the purposes of social science may be, the methods it employs are merely refinements of developments of those used in everyday life' (Hammersley & Atkinson). For example, we all have conversations with high levels of specificity, with the milkman or our solicitor, which closely resemble the interview. We hypothesize about the nature of society in pubs and on trains, and use comparative method to experimentally test our ideas against reality (Spindler & Spindler, p. 68).

Ethnography also leads to and includes ethnology, "the comparative science concerned with how and why cultures differ and are similar," and thus may be said to take the extra step that other social sciences do not normally take:

> By comparing human behavior and cultural phenomena under various conditions, in all places throughout time, the ethnographer develops the understanding necessary to explain the situated nature of human behavior and cultural phenomena (Zaharlick & Green, 1989, p. 18).

Ethnography allows a researcher to be comprehensive, and often to discover answers about a certain people or place that might not have been found had further questions not been asked:

> Many of the early attempts to make ethnographic inquiry an explicit procedure reflect the desire to be comprehensive. These attempts are guides to inquiry, lists of questions, of observations to make. They bespeak a stage of history when much of the non-Western world was little known to Europe, and when a variety of reasons, scientific, religious, practical,

motivated some to seek more adequate knowledge. These
guides to inquiry have in common a concern with all of a
way of life. . . . What are the people of such and such a place
like? (Hymes, 1982, p. 22)

Hymes cites Lewis Henry Morgan's questionnaires for recording

kinship terminologies in the 1870's to show the importance of the

types of information that can be gathered through ethnographic

research:

First, he had a contrastive, or comparative insight: from his
experience with the Iroquois Indians, together with his
knowledge of classical Greece, he realized that there was a
principle of kinship organization sharply contrasting with
that familiar to contemporary Americans and Europeans. He
sought then to determine the main types of kinship systems
and their locations throughout the world. Second, he needed
systematic information, information not available except as
he sought it himself. Hence his own travels in the Western
United States and his relentless correspondence with those
who could help. Third, he made use of his findings to
formulate first a historical. . . and then evolutionary
interpretation. . .of the most general of human development
as a whole (p. 23).

John and Beatrice Whiting in their studies also discovered the

traditional forms of research and the literature provided did not

answer the questions that they needed answered in order to complete

their project, so they came up with an ethnographic approach that

did:

The Whitings had attempted to come to some general
conclusions, testing hypotheses on a theoretical base from the
ethnographic literature that existed at the time. They found,
as so many find, that their questions were more specific than
the literature could answer. The sources were not detailed
enough for their purpose and not comparable enough.
Therefore, they organized a project to provide the detailed,
comparable information they needed. Ethnographic teams

(generally, couples) were trained in terms of a guide to the field study of socialization, sent into the field in several different societies for an extended period of time, kept in touch with through correspondence throughout the field study, and brought back to write up their results. (*Six Cultures* by Beatrice Whiting, 1963 is a principal outcome). Like Morgan, the Whitings had insight into contrast and a general theoretical frame. . .to which contrast and specifics were relevant (Hymes, p. 23).

Further information about a culture or a situation may be only available through direct access to actual participants and access to other types of information that cannot be gained from traditional methods:

In Philadelphia, for example, a questionnaire was prepared by a person generally qualified by training and background. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out what parents thought of a community-relations policy and person. The questionnaire was duly administered. The [researcher] administering the questionnaire discovered, by informal conversations with parents, that they interpreted the questions differently from the designer and the school. They distinguished between a play-ground (having equipment designed for children to use) and a play-yard, but the questionnaire did not. When asked if they had had a chance to meet their School-Community coordinator, they answered 'no,' because to them, to 'meet' would require having *talked*, and knowing by name, even first-name, not just having been introduced, but in terms of the questionnaire their 'no's were interpreted as 'not having met.' The [researcher] administrating the questionnaire was distressed, but there was no way in the procedure of inquiry for him to take account of what he had learned or to have what he had learned affect the presumed results (Abbott, qtd. in Hymes, p. 25).

Although ethnographers do sometimes use statistics and question-naires, they are "devised after sufficient participation and observation

to ensure their validity" (Hymes, p. 36). Ethnography also allows for change and for reinterpretation to occur based on new information.

Zaharlick & Green (1989) also indicate that ethnography is "more than a set of field methods, data collection techniques (tools), analysis procedures, or narrative description." Instead, "[i]t is a theoretically driven, systematic approach to the study of everyday life of a social group which includes a planning phase, discovery phase, and a presentation of findings phase" (p. 3). Ethnography has to do with human beings, human struggles, human gains—and it is "a culturally driven approach" (p. 3):

> Ethnography is guided by a concern for exploring the human condition to illuminate the nature of 'social being.' The goal of the ethnographer is to explore, describe, and compare the cultures of different groups in order to obtain a general understanding of similarities and differences among peoples and cultural processes (eg. literacy, communication, socialization, educating children). Thus, ethnographers identify and explore the cultural patterns of everyday life and the consequences for participants of being members of particular cultural groups (eg. religious, social, ethnic, educational, and/or bluebirds reading group). Ethnography, therefore, is a deliberate inquiry process guided by a particular point of view (i.e. cultural theory) (pp. 3-4).

In total, "[t]he ethnographer's task is to develop a 'cultural grammar' of the life in the particular culture under study" and "[t]he purpose of the ethnography is to develop a description that captures 'daily life' for members of the culture and that can be used by a 'stranger' (the ethnographer and others) to guide participation in the culture under study" (Zaharlick & Green, p. 53) As the ethnographer

does not really know at the beginning of the project what will be discovered about the interworkings of the community, and as there are so many interrelated details, norms, expectations, activities, at work on a daily basis, he or she must observe, think, make comparative analyses, and allow the circular process to begin again in order to make as much meaning as possible from those observations, interactions, reactions, and patterns of human behavior that are 'seen':

> The key is to collect as much information as possible to begin to understand and uncover the complex relationships among persons and the relationship of persons to objects and places in the environment; that is the pattern of daily life (Zaharlick & Green, 1989, p. 53).

HISTORY, PURPOSES, AND IMPORTANCE OF ETHNOGRAPHY IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Before beginning an ethnographic project, the researcher must first have an understanding of what the definition and the purpose of ethnography is. Although Hymes (1982) indicates that the history of ethnography traces back to the ancient Mediterranean world, it has become a "new" technique for educational researchers fairly recently (p. 21). Hymes also finds ethnography difficult to define and indicates that it is a particular problem to define especially in regards to its "relation to the study of institutions of our own society, such as education" (p. 21).

Although doing an ethnography of education involves a great deal of work, the rewards in the amounts of various types of important information involving the processes of education are worth the wait. As an ethnographic researcher can study not only school life, but also home life, and the community, his or her study may have the potential to clear up misunderstandings about the culture or the classroom learning environment—as a result of further information being available through direct access to the actual participants. This is the type of access and information that a researcher based in the quantitative or experimental approach will not normally have. Ethnographic studies are important in education because they provide a way to access information that might never be accessed or considered if this approach had not been taken, or if an ethnographic approach had not been included as an additional part of a quantitative or experimental study. And the need for ethnography continues because "[t]here are still discoveries of aspects of culture or of perspectives on culture [and of course schooling], such that the existing literature fails to provide much information" (Hymes, p. 23).

One of the first steps that an ethnographer must take is to "select a cultural theory that supports an exploration of literate behavior, actions, or resources in the community or group at large (p. 206). A theory that a researcher interested in education, and literacy,

in particular, could use is *cultural ecology*; researching according to this theory would lead the ethnographer to:

> ask questions about: who is or is not literate within a community or social group; how literacy resources are distributed within the community; who has access to such resources; how resources are associated with power; how literacy resources function to reproduce the social order (e.g., workers vs. elites); and how the beliefs and values (the ideology) of a group support a particular type of social order. (Zaharlick & Green, 1989, p. 6).

What the ethnographer needs to ask is "who makes decisions about literacy, with what outcomes, with what ensuing rights and responsibilities, under what conditions, for what purpose, when, and where" (Zaharlick & Green, p. 7) The goal of the ethnographer ultimately will be to come to "understand why some members of the group have access to certain types of literacy and others do not" (Zaharlick & Green, p. 7).

How does an ethnographer search for some of the answers to some difficult questions about literacy and schooling practices? The ethnographer will need to first find as much background information related to the school under study; some suggestions on what to look at in order to gain the necessary background to begin a study on access to literacy are discussed by Zaharlick & Green:

> The ethnographer who seeks to understand literacy from this perspective will describe the allocation of resources (e.g., budgets, uses of funds, distribution patterns of books in schools) and will explore the relationship of such resources to social categories (e.g., ethnicity, class, gender). The categories to be explored are researcher defined categories (etic categories) derived from the theory or past research and

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are not categories that reflect the meanings of those involved in the culture (emic categories).

The ethnographer who adopts this theoretical orientation would use interviews, participant observations, document analysis, and historical analysis. The interviews, would focus on politicians, bureaucrats, leaders, literacy program directors and personnel, and producers of materials. Participant observation would focus on decision making and distribution within an organization, government funding programs, school system resource distribution, newspaper subscriptions by subgroup within the culture, and policies of textbook companies and adoption committees. The ethnographer would also examine the policy documents and the history of material resource distribution within the culture (Zaharlick & Green, p. 7).

The ethnographic researcher of an English classroom would also look closely at the curriculum document, for the curriculum, although often general and open-ended, does give strong suggestions and guidelines to teachers and administrators about what the English program should be. The curriculum is also an interesting document to study, for the ethnographer may see that the curriculum contradicts what actually goes on in the classroom. Ultimately, the classroom—the teachers and the students interacting with actual texts and assignments—will tell the tale. Knowledge of documents pertaining to the English program can then be compared to what is actually happening in the classroom.

The ethnographer must observe the classroom, interview teachers and students, and come to know the school, its management and its outcomes in order to put at least part of the picture together about how literacy is being addressed in school. The ethnographer

also must know from the outset that all of the questions and directions cannot be focused on, for the classroom, and the promotion of literacy in the classroom is a complex being; an apt analogy for this is the focusing of the camera, the angle or degree of the lens decides for the ethnographer just what needs to be seen to make up the picture of life in the school:

> Just as a photographer must aim and focus a camera in order to capture a scene, so too must an ethnographer focus on what the theory suggests is important in order to describe, and possibly explain, some particular aspects of culture or even define what constitutes a holistic description of the culture. Thus, a theory can be thought of as a lens through which the ethnographer views the everyday life of participants in a social group and the occurrence and interpretation of social events. The value of the lens is the degree to which it permits the ethnographer to see and record the particular aspects of interest (Zaharlick & Green, p. 5).

The English teacher/ethnographer may discover that the teacher's theory of practice reveals more about the access students have to literacy and learning; classroom interactions will also show how teachers and students are interacting with the curriculum and what materials are being presented to them; the ethnography often begins in the classroom.

> . . .the curriculum is what students have an opportunity to learn in the ordinary events of life in classrooms. . . . For our study, we view the classroom as the appropriate level to begin the exploration of the English language arts, since we agree with the argument that it is at this level that the curriculum is constructed and reconstructed in the daily interactions among teacher, students, and material resources (Zaharlick & Green, p. 32).

The curriculum and other related documents, the classroom interactions, and the larger societal community (i.e. the home environments of students) are all part of the research toward explaining a picture of the classroom and school community that the ethnographer is painting or describing; the classroom may be the actual place to begin the fieldwork and the observations but all of what occurs in the classroom, all of what a classroom is and stands for is always connected to various other contexts:

> . . .[T]he selection of the classroom level as a place to begin does not mean that we ignore the other levels of interaction with the English Language Arts in which the classroom is embedded (e.g., the school, district, state). Rather, it means that we will begin by exploring indepth what occurs in particular classrooms and then explore the relationship of other levels of context as indicated in the analysis of face-to-face interactions (e.g. text selection decisions, material provisions, grouping policies, content decision procedures, documents provided to the teacher. In this way we will explore English language arts from a situated perspective and then move to a comparison across situations (eg. classrooms) as well as to an exploration of the local situation (the classroom) in the larger community contexts (Zaharlick & Green, p. 33).

Another step that must be prepared before entering the 'field' or before entering the classroom is to set up a conceptual framework. What this means is that the ethnographer must lay the groundwork for the study by fully researching the cultural group for the planned study and by discovering his or her own mental slate—including biases and assumptions about the group and about the expectations of the study as learned from previous reading and experience:

Such frameworks are needed since ethnographers do not enter the field as 'blank slates.' Rather, ethnographers need to learn as much as possible about the cultural group or phenomenon to be studied. This knowledge forms a mental grid for the study. For example, . . . the mental grid [could include] knowledge and assumptions about cultural behavior and phenomena derived from previous research on discourse processes, conversational analysis, ethnography of communication, classroom organization, teaching-learning processes, adult-child interactions, child language, cross-cultural communication, evaluation of performance, socialization, reading acquisition and development, metalinguistic awareness, sociolinguistics, and cognitive development. In other words, the conceptual framework is based on a review of relevant literature in which information about the setting, group, and processes are identified prior to entry into the field (Zaharlick & Green, pp. 33-34).

It is after the researcher has reviewed the 'literature' in his or her mind and written down these thoughts as a reference that the researcher can look at again, in comparison to what he or she finds during the study, that the process of the gathering data from the field actually begins:

Once the researcher enters the field, this information 'goes on hold'; that is, the ethnographer enters the field knowledgeable yet open-minded. The ethnographer does not use the predetermined descriptions or theories to control and delimit the study. Instead, these theories are used to help identify the initial types of data to be collected. During the study, often the researcher will have to 'rework' the descriptions of phenomena or the information obtained from previous work. . . . These revisions or reworkings of concepts, phenomena, and processes enable us to develop new understandings about the situated nature of phenomena of daily life within and across social groups. These new understandings help to refine, extend, and modify theory and provide the basis for comparative research across groups (i.e. ethnology) (Zaharlick & Green, p. 35).

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To enter the field, an ethnographer must be fully prepared with questions, and with decisions made about what specific group to be studied, when, and where. The fieldwork will often commence with:

> formal and informal interviews to learn whether the initial patterns and impressions being developed (the etic perspective) reflect those of the members of the culture (the emic perspective). This type of data collection-verification process is called triangulation. The ethnographer uses the member's perspective in a contrastive way. If the member's perspective and the ethnographer's match, then the ethnographer feels reasonably sure that a 'piece of cultural knowledge' has been identified and this information can be used to guide a stranger's understanding of the culture (Zaharlick & Green, p. 52).

If there is no match between perspectives, the ethnographer may need to gather more information and to reconsider his or her approach; however there may also be additional reasons that are beyond the researcher's control that may seem to indicate a mismatch (i.e. member's tacit knowledge of culture, each member does not know *all* cultural information about the group, and because culture is a group-oriented concept, certain members perform different roles and hold different relationships with other members of a group). To truly determine the nature of the mismatch, the ethnographer must do further study, ask more questions and interview more members of the community who perform different roles within the community:

> No single member of a culture 'holds' all cultural knowledge. Rather, cultural knowledge is a 'group' phenomenon. The ethnographer must extract this knowledge from different members of the group (e.g., women, men, children; teachers, students, administrators, parents, support personnel; or high reading group members, middle reading group members,

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teacher). Members of a culture hold differential knowledge related to their roles and relationships with others in the cultural group (Zaharlick & Green, p. 52).

After the initial interviews (initial because interviews may need to be done throughout the ethnographic project) have been completed and the ethnographer has refined his or her approach to the study, it is time to begin observing the cultural norms of the group on a daily basis and to see how the group functions as a group. Again, part of "[t]he ethnographer's task is to develop a 'cultural grammar' of the life in the particular culture under study" and part of "[t]he purpose of the ethnography is to develop a description that captures 'daily life' for members of the culture and that can be used by a 'stranger' (the ethnographer and others) to guide participation in the culture under study" (Zaharlick & Green, p. 52). In ethnographies of education, the ethnographer might also consider the task and the purpose to be to find ways of both understanding how the educational process works and how it can be made better for the cultural group(s) under study, how the knowledge learned in this study can be transferred to inform other "similar" schools throughout the nation.

What is necessary for the ethnographer is to be systematic in all fieldwork, to ask many questions, to be observant, and to consider the nature and meaning of all findings. Some of the types of information that should be studied in detail when observing a classroom are the physical surroundings, related activities, sequencing

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of activities, the goals of all the participants, and even the "feeling" or "the emotions or reactions felt and expressed" (Spradley, 1980, p. 78). It is in this way that the ethnographer can discover patterns or interrelationships among the members of the group. As the ethnographer does not really know at the beginning of the project what will be discovered about the interworkings of the community, and as there are so many interrelated details, norms, expectations, activities, at work on a daily basis, he or she must take copious notes and observe, think, and observe again in order to make as much meaning as possible from those observations, always accepting that there is more to know, more to see, but that ultimate knowledge or total truth is not possible. A good educational ethnographer will find a perspective that will both inform self about teaching and education and that will inform educators, administrators, students, and perhaps even society in the doing.

This purpose, goal, and methods will continually be refined and redefined as the ethnographer observes further activities and discovers the patterns that are repeated and the relationships of how the parts observed relate to the whole: literacy, schooling, society. An ethnographer will also need to redefine according to the make-up of the group in order to consider how groups within the group function and work within the particular classroom, i.e. non-native speakers, or low-proficiency readers.

Although the ethnographer in his or her daily observations of activities may be considered a participant observer, sometimes acting like a 'fly on the wall' who does not want to upset the natural environment, the ethnographer is a participant and can actually help teachers and students and other members of a certain social group to see things that might otherwise have gone unobserved. The ethnographer must, however, be careful not to cross over any boundaries that will dramatically affect the way the group behaves in their daily activities or that will reveal disrespect for the cultural norms or rights of the group being observed. If all of these general rules are followed, what the ethnographer discovers may well be an important part of how classroom procedures occur in the future:

> For example, Erickson & Mohatt (1982) explored the ways in which native (American Indian) and non-native teachers taught Indian students. What they discovered was that there was a difference in the ways in which the native and non-native teachers interacted with students especially at the beginning of lessons. The native teacher simply began the lesson and students 'tuned in' as she got their attention. The non-native teacher would not begin the lesson until he had all of the students looking at him. This particular style did not match the interactional expectations of Indian students or the larger Indian community. This information was shared with school staff and the Indian group and provided a basis for understanding why the native teacher had less 'trouble' with the students and was more successful. Thus, Erickson & Mohatt provided information that was unavailable to members of the social group (Indian community) that was then used to develop the group's understanding of an ordinary aspect of daily life and its consequences for a subgroup (the students and their teachers) (in Zaharlick & Green, pp. 53-54).

An ethnographer with a preconceived notion of what might occur in the classroom might never have noticed such a simple action that had such a dramatic effect on the teaching-learning process.

Teachers are often not conscious of their biases or the roles that they place students in as a result of setting up a "norm" that does not permit all members of the group, or all sub-groups to participate:

> Michaels (1981) has found that in the 'circle time event' in kindergarten and first grade there were expected ways of 'telling a story.' Students were to stand up, share one event, and then sit down. The narrative form they were to use had a beginning, a middle, and an end.
>
> Some students in the classrooms studied did not tell stories in this way but used another form that Michaels called 'topic associating.' The narrative form of these stories was more like chains of loosely related actions or events with the topic left on the tacit level. This way of telling stories was related to the patterned ways of telling stories in the students' home community. . . .
>
> Thus, some of the students' stories did not match the expected norms of the circle time group, but rather the norms of the teacher who held an asymmetrical role within the group. However, the students' actions were consistent with storytelling in the students' home and ethnic group. The problem arose for these students when the teacher did not accept the ways in which they told their stories. In one instance, the teacher told a student that she had already shared one thing part way through her story. When interviewed later by the ethnographer, the student commented that she was always being interrupted by the teacher and did not get a chance to finish sharing (ctd. in Zaharlick & Green, pp. 22-23).

Zaharlick & Green's synthesis of the Michaels' findings explains much about the teaching-learning process in the classroom and points again to the importance of ethnographic research to find and help to correct some perhaps unconscious "errors":

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This example demonstrates the complexity of group membership and the crosscultural nature of this everyday activity for students. The conflict in cultural patterns and ways of interpreting events can be seen in the following:

1. The teacher had developed a set of norms for participating in circle time;
2. She assumed that all of the students shared or had learned these norms;
3. The actions of one subgroup of students indicated that they did not share the norms or had not learned how to participate in the group in the way the teacher expected;
4. The teacher's actions did not help the student learn how to 'do' group in circle time. Rather, her actions set up a tacit problem for the subgroup of students: and of the problem and, therefore, did not participate in the expected way. This conflict or clash in cultural patterns became problematic in that the teacher based her assessment of students' abilities on students' performance in circle time. The work. . .indicates that the teacher may have underestimated student narrative ability. This work suggests that performance in classroom settings is often due to student's perceptions of the tasks and to prior experiences, not to actual ability (Zaharlick & Green, pp. 23-24).

Michaels, the ethnographer in the above study, later tested out her hypothesis to see whether her analysis of the reading circle time was appropriate; what she discovered was the teacher's, and the students' actions during storytelling time were connected to the methods of storytelling learned at home:

In a later study, Michaels (1984) gave student narratives from her ethnographic study to adults representing two different ethnic groups. One set of adults matched the students' background and the other matched the teacher's. Those adults who matched the teacher's background did not rate the students' narratives as well-formed stories. Many of those whose background were more like the students' indicated that the stories were well-formed and were similar to 'down home' stories: that is stories that matched their sense of storytelling in the community but not at school (Zaharlick & Green, pp. 25-26).

Certainly, describing events in the classroom that cause problems for the learners can be difficult for ethnographers, so they must learn to be diplomatic in writing up or explaining the findings of their studies. As a major goal of an ethnographic study on access to literacy is in part to understand the culture and also to help those members of the culture studied to have a better access to literacy, it is appropriate for the ethnographer to find a method to explain the events in such a way as to allow the classroom community more meaningful and appropriate learning experiences in the future.

Shirley Brice Heath (1982) also discusses the importance of ethnography and the need to connect classroom ethnography to the larger community. She describes the techniques of the ethnographer:

> The range of techniques the ethnographer uses includes mapping; charting kinship and other patterns of interaction; interviewing; collecting life histories; studying written documents relevant to the history of the group; and recording folklore of all types—narratives, songs, myths, riddles, rhymes, and proverbs. If used at all, survey data, questionnaires, and experimental methods play a much less significant role than participant-observation. The ethnographer's description will, ideally, deal with the totality of existence of a particular social group in its natural setting (p. 34).

The ethnographer must "relate the origins and history of the group through time to consider the social past as well as the social present"; and must study "[i]nteractions within the school, such as the lessons, athletic games, composing activities, and reading circles"—because all are "interdependent pieces that go toward making

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up the cultural phenomena of the school" (Heath, p. 38). Classroom artifacts and "the uses of written materials are also particularly important for analysis by the ethnographer, since they often contain hidden expectations for the students" (p. 40). Perhaps most important is that the ethnographer study not only the students, but also the school, home, and community in order to work toward a comparative perspective. This is a thorough approach to studying learning or education when we consider the complete definition of education:

> . . .education refers to the process of *cultural transmission* which extends throughout life); formal schooling is only one aspect of this process. Therefore, when formal schooling is the focus of research, anthropologists attempt to study it in relation to the broader cultural and community context in which it exists. For example, the behaviors of pupils are ideally viewed not only in relation to fit or contrast with those of teacher, typical student, or successful pupil, but also with respect to home and community enculturation patterns of pupils and teachers. Thus, the ethnographer must be concerned with a definition of community if the study is to follow students into their home environments, or even if communities served by the school are viewed as background for development of the school (Heath, p. 37).

Ethnographic research, although not normally quantitative or experimental in approach is able to reach further and to probe deeper and in more meaningful ways according to Heath:

> Pieces of data about social groups, such as number of siblings, income of parents, time of mother-child interactions in pre-school experiences, have been correlated with the output of students expressed in test scores, subsequent income, and continued schooling. The effects of formal instruction have been evaluated by correlating these input factors with educational output. Gradually, many educators have begun to realize that large-scale surveys, correlational studies, and exclusively quantitative studies do not provide

actual data about events either in the classroom or the communities of students and teachers. Moreover, their findings are often used to predict the academic future of certain groups of students. Used in these ways, they reinforce stereotypes and easy generalizations about abilities of students, the inability of 'others' to fit, and the disintegration and community life. They often allow already overworked teachers and principals to have 'reasons' for closing off innovations and options in instructional methods and evaluation techniques (p. 43).

Also on the side of ethnography is its "interactive-adaptive nature" (Heath, p. 43) which means that the researcher does not necessarily follow a certain rigid set of expectations, nor does the researcher need to fit the results into a certain specified format that might be used to put students into certain boxes that define future achievement. Instead of relying on numbers, the ethnographer instead relies on human beings and human behavior for data and finds a valid method of research:

> The validity of abstract representations of human behavior must rest on reality founded on disciplined observation and analysis. Ethnography provides an empirical data base, obtained through immersion of the researcher in the ways of living of the group. This immersion allows perception of the interdependence of parts and also permits frequent returns to the data. . . .Ethnographic data can often help provide the context for expanded interpretations done by other researchers.
>
> Correlation studies (e.g., low scores on reading tests and low socioeconomic class) can be amplified by ethnographic work. For example, the ethnographic study of a specific low socioeconomic group may reveal that reading scores correlate not only with economic level, but also with the degree to which reading is relevant to group membership, status achievement, work opportunities, and retention of cultural values for the group as a whole. Ideally such contextual evidence for specific communities helps educators reexamine school values for literacy in terms of how they can be related

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to home and community values. Another explanation of the correlation might be found in an ethnographic study of reading circles done through videotape analysis. (cf. McDermott and Gospodinoff, 1979). If certain students have less eye contact, verbal interaction, and time of direct reading instruction, these factors may contribute more to reading failure than socioeconomic factors (Heath, p. 44).

In total, ethnography has the potential to allow educators to discover ways to make schooling better and to make a difference. Hymes believes that "[f]rom the standpoint of education, obviously one wants to consider the possibility of adding ethnographic inquiry to the competencies of principals, teachers, and others involved with schools" (p. 30). The strong need for a comparative perspective is of course necessary, so not only will one classroom be compared to another, but the literacy of one group to another, and the cultural expectations and knowledge that is brought from home to the classroom should also be considered. The ethnographer can no longer be one who simply observes classrooms, without following the student home to discover the interworkings of the home, the methods of storytelling, the methods of doing homework, and various other aspects that help to determine a student within this particular group's access to literacy.

Heath calls ethnography a "tapestry—busily detailed, seemingly chaotic; however upon closer look, it reveals patterns, and with repeated scrutiny, it may reveal yet other patterns "(p. 44), patterns that although seen by the albeit perceptive "eye of a stranger" may be able to reveal meaning in every word, every move. Once a pattern is uncovered, often

positive changes can be made. Ethnography's final praise then is that it is both a thorough and a democratic response to the needs of students:

> The fact that good ethnography entails trust and confidence, that it requires some narrative accounting, and that it is an extension of a universal form of personal knowledge, makes me think that ethnography is peculiarly appropriate to a democratic society. . . .As envisioned here, ethnography has the potentiality for helping to overcome division of society into those who know and those who are known (Hymes, pp. 29-30).

RESOLVING VALIDITY ISSUES

Qualitative research and ethnography done in particular in the fields of anthropology and education have allowed others to think through and elaborate on through practice the methods and gains of science other than the positivistic kind. But with this liberation in rules and design of social scientific research has also come discussion about how one should proceed in qualitative research in such a way as to best benefit the culture(s) studied and humanity as a whole. How can the researcher produce valid research that both benefits the research world and at the same time the group(s) being studied? What are the rules for human decency that we can follow in order to get the information we need without going too far? What is the purpose of our research and how can we minimize our mistakes? And, how can culture be written? Who should write culture, the insider or the outsider? How can we be more objective by being subjective, or by admitting our presence means something, and by being reflexive about

our role in the research gathering process and in the community studied? And, ultimately, how can we write up our research in a way that benefits the society studied and that perhaps even allows for future ethnographic research to be better, more beneficial, more insightful, and more based in the reality of what is seen than in the power of the well-written word?

Along with an enormous number of new "problems" come also an enormous number of new possibilities for the social sciences. Hopefully, we are on the way to discovering through this process what it is we want to know and also how ethnographers learning from practice and due process (validity, ethics, hard work) can help to set new guidelines and more importantly, find new information about the world of schooling that will allow us to interact in more beneficial ways with other human beings and human social systems in the future.

THE PROCESSES OF CREDIBILITY, VALIDITY, AND CONFIRMABILITY IN GATHERING AND WRITING UP ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

One of the major problems of observing and then later representing a culture is that what one finds, the "truth" that one thinks one discovers is only a partial truth, is only a small portion of the "truth" of the culture. And, the "truth" that one finds must be not only credible but ethical, and must account for the researcher as

instrument and the researched as contributors who together form the image presented to the world. Presenting a "truthful" account, one that is verifiable through the data collected, through negotiation between the researcher and the members of the society being studied, is a must for data to be considered credible. One of the main questions that an ethnographer must ask is, "How can one establish confidence in the 'truth' of one's findings of a particular subjects [sic] with whom and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 234).

INTERNAL VALIDITY

There are many checks that an ethnographer can perform on his or her data in order to present a credible study. These checks must be made throughout the data gathering process and should also be on-going throughout the writing process after the data has been gathered. The criteria of internal validity, which has as its ultimate goal the task of "establishing a match between the constructed realities of respondents (or stakeholders) and those realities as represented by the evaluator and attributed to various stakeholders" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 237), must be met in as many ways possible by the researcher throughout the course of study.

PROLONGED ENGAGEMENT AND PERSISTENT OBSERVATION

Prolonged engagement, or being involved in the community in many different aspects for an extended period of time, is one credibility check, for it helps the researcher to "overcome the effects of misinformation, distortion, or presented 'fronts' " and "to establish the rapport and build the trust necessary to uncover constructions, and to facilitate immersing oneself in and understanding the context's culture" (Lincoln and Guba, p. 237). *Persistent observation*, another credibility check, is similar in some respects to *prolonged engagement* because it is observation of different kinds over time; it is important because it allows the researcher to "identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued" so that she can begin "[to focus] on them in detail" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 237). It is through the researcher's immersion in the community that the researcher may allow herself to become trusted and known in the community and that the research community can also come to "trust" her judgments about what is written about the community studied.

RESOLVING FACE VALIDITY ISSUES
FACE VALIDITY: PEER DEBRIEFING AND MEMBER CHECKING

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), *face validity*, or the confirming of the accuracy of the data gathered through use of other

eyes than simply those of the researcher, "needs to be seen as much more integral to the process of establishing data credibility" (p. 235). They suggest both member checking, or having data read and discussed by members of the community being studied, and also *peer debriefing*, or having data read and discussed by a disinterested third party, perhaps a fellow ethnographer or student who is not a part of the study at hand. The main purpose of *peer debriefing* is to "[test] out the findings with someone who has no contractual interest in the situation and [to help] to make propositional that tacit and implicit information that the evaluator might possess" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 237). Some other purposes are to allow fresh insight about methodology, biases, apriori convictions, and also to provide some therapy to alleviate the stress of fieldwork through extended discussions of the research.

Guba and Lincoln consider member checks to be "the single-most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 239). Member checking strengthens our ability to satisfy "the truth value of any given inquiry, that is the extent to which it established how things really are and really work" (p. 234) and it allows "stakeholders" to verify that what a researcher has written in his or her field notes matches the participants' view of the situation. The researcher wants to be as certain as possible that "the *constructions* collected are those that have been offered by respondents" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 241).

During member checking, the researcher can check for erroneous understandings of a member's actions or intentions, and at the same time review, summarize, revise, ask follow-up questions, and correct information that has been provided by participants. Crucial additional information may also be provided by participants during member checking sessions. It is suggested that member checking is done not only at the end of a project, but as an ongoing process. If member checking is only done at the end of a project, memory of intentions, and memory of situations can be more difficult to retrieve for both participants and researcher. Member checking allows the researcher ways to strengthen the credibility of the data collected:

> Reason and Rowan (1981) argue that such member checks (recycling analysis back through at least a subsample of respondents) need to become a standard part of emancipatory research designs: 'Good research at the non-alienating end of the spectrum. . .goes back to the subject with the tentative results, and refines them in the light of the subjects' reactions'" (ctd. in Lather, 1986, p. 67).

Member checking also allows for the researcher "to put the respondent 'on record' as having said certain things and as having agreed that the interviewer 'got it right'" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 239). Credibility depends on "collaborative reconstruction" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 244).

CONSTRUCT VALIDITY

Construct Validity or showing that the study is firmly based in theory and rationality of science should also be confirmed through the citing of relevant theories and studies, on storytelling, on schooling, on insider/outsider research, on those ideas that will show the ethnographer to have a strong foundation in research on the content and contexts he or she is studying. The researcher should also give evidence in the writing of the study as to how much and what kinds of interactions he or she had had with the community under study in the past. Some researchers, will, for example, choose to study communities of which they are not an insider, but in which they have spent a great deal of time and perhaps even lived in or studied at another time.

> *Construct validity* :
>
> must be dealt with in ways that recognize its roots in theory construction (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Emancipatory social theory requires a ceaseless confrontation with the experiences of people in their daily lives in order to stymie the tendency to theoretical imposition which is inherent in theoretically guided empirical work. A *systematized reflexivity*, which gives some indication of how *a priori* theory has been changed by the logic of the data, becomes essential in establishing construct validity in ways that will contribute to the growth of illuminating and change-enhancing social theory (Lather, 1986, p. 67).

Knowing from the outset the present study's theoretical and research grounding allows the ethnographer to look at the theory that informs the writing at a later point and also to consider any possible *apriori*

convictions that he or she may have had about the community or the

outcome of the study.

TRACKING APRIORI CONVICTIONS: PROGRESSIVE SUBJECTIVITY

> The tradition of objectivity in the social sciences. . .has insisted that the 'I" who writes the text is not welcome: for the I represents subjectivity and bias. the enemies of truth (Jones. 1997. p. 18).

> Remember that knowing self is not one physical individual. As well as being partial. fragmentary and contradictory, your voice is located in and shaped by the historical/gender/economic/ ethnic/social situations and relationships in which you live (Jones. 1997. 32).

> Some feminists believe that a reflexive strategy is not just politically important, but also a necessary condition for a rational account. Donna Haraway. for instance. condemns earlier versions of rationality and objectivity, which emphasize neutrality and which leave out the knowing/writing subject. as 'fantastic' and 'impossible' views 'from nowhere.' In other words. unlocated objective knowledge is a (logical absurdity, and an explicit self-consciousness about the necessarily partial and limited we (social and other scientists) tell is thus needed as a basis of rational social research/writing (Jones. 1997. p. 27).

> Critics of objectification have not often noticed that the subjects of 'scientific history' are subjects irrevocably and permanently. There can be some counter-transference (in the Freudian sense). empathy or partiality for his subjects in the historian/ there can be no transference. no real dialogue. perceive mutuality or continuity between the historian and his subjects from the subjects' point of view. The historian's subjects are. after all. mostly dead. (This is unlike the subjects of the anthropologist who can show some semblance of defiance or rebellion against the anthropologist's construction of a culture by outliving him and appealing to the next generation of anthropologists. So much so that some anthropologists can hope that the salvation of anthropology—and that of the anthropologist—may well lie in the subjects of anthropology (Madan. in Nandy. 1991. p. 147).

In ethnography, the I is welcome because it is through the I,

what we are, who we are. our past and present relations, that we will

see culture. Our beliefs can not be divorced from the way we perceive

others, or the ways that we are perceived by others: "Historical/

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gender/economic/ethnic/social situations and relationships" (Jones, 1997, p. 32) all shape the research we do, how we look at and perceive others, how we are perceived, what particular questions we ask, what particular aspects of culture are of interest to us, and what we ultimately write about the culture we study.

The ethnographer must track those apriori convictions, and his or her subjectivity or biases throughout the study as part of another credibility check on the data gathered and presented; this consistent confronting or tracking of biases that allows the reader of the ethnography as well as the writer of the ethnography to be aware of how her presence and her influence might have influenced the study is called *Progressive Subjectivity* (Lincoln and Guba, 1989) or *Systematic Self-Reflexivity*. To be "fair" to respondents and to interpret our data "fairly" calls for a tracking of our biases. The researcher must admit that his or her part in the research might change the outcome of the research, and to avoid misperceptions, will need to continuously monitor his or her beliefs, stances, expectations.

Ethnographers believe that interactional research cannot deny the effects the presence of the researcher might have on the data. Ethnographers also question whether it is possible or practical to behave as "disinterested observer. . .above or apart from it all" (Erickson, 1986, p. 9). Feelings and motives are part of human relationships and thus we must continually analyze them in order to

be as fair as possible to participants. Through progressive subjectivity a researcher makes a valid attempt to confront his or her subjectivity and continues to confront or track that subjectivity throughout the course of a research project. To be "fair" or objective, a researcher must write out as many "conscious" biases and judgments about the research community and the society that might sway him or her to feel, react, or write about a community in a certain way.

Subjects also should be freely able to discuss their biases about research, about how/why they presented themselves in a certain way to the researcher or told a certain story or behaved naturally or unnaturally because the researcher was present—because subjects' actions, reactions, biases, role-playing and storytelling abilities, are at least equally as important as the researcher's and just as capable of changing the conclusions made about the data collected by the researcher. In essence, the ethnographer believes that "knowledge is contextual, constructed in relationship" (Dyer, p. 120) and confronting our subjectivity allows us to find what part the "self" plays in this relationship.

As the relationship between the ethnographer and the participants are ongoing and always developing, the ethnographer's constructions of meaning, of situation, of bias, should be tracked in an ongoing, sometimes even a daily process:

> Prior to engaging in *any* activity at the site or in the context in which the investigation is to proceed, the inquirer records

his or her a priori construction—what he or she expects to find once the study is under way—and archives that record....At regular intervals throughout the study the inquirer *again* records his or her developing construction. If the inquirer affords too much privilege to the original constructions (or to earlier constructions as time progresses), it is safe to assume that he or she is not paying as much attention to the constructions offered by other participants as they deserve.... If the inquirer 'finds' only what he or she expected to find, initially, or seems to become 'stuck' or 'frozen' on some intermediate construction, credibility suffers (Guba & Lincoln, p. 238).

Through this continuous process, the ethnographer has enhanced her ability to see and enhanced the opportunity for a more complicated, but also more credible account of the community presented.

TRIANGULATION OF DATA

Studying many different aspects of a factual nature of the culture or community before, during, and after gathering the data in a process called *triangulation of data* will also make the researcher's study more credible, for the researcher will show her knowledge is backed by the facts: "triangulation should be thought of as referring to cross-checking specific data items of a factual nature (number of target persons served, number of children enrolled in a school-lunch program. . ." (Guba & Lincoln, p. 241). Triangulation is also sometimes considered to be the combining of strategies within paradigms or using a variety of different strategies of gathering data, i.e. interviewing, participant observation; cross-referencing of data

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gathered may also be done during triangulation. Lather (1986) also considers triangulation as an important part of establishing data credibility:

> Triangulation expanded beyond the psychometric definition of multiple measures to include multiple *data sources*, *methods*, and *theoretical schemes*, is critical in establishing data trustworthiness. It is essential that the research design seek counterpatterns as well as convergences if data are to be credible (p. 67).

As Lather indicates, triangulation may also refer to the search for both patterns and counterpatterns between the historical documents and the stories or interviews of the participants, and also to looking at data from as many perspectives as possible in order to explain more fully the reasoning behind interpretations of the data.

Triangulation is important because it helps to allow the researcher to present life as complicated and sometimes erratic, and to present "truth as a problem" (Lather, 1986a, p. 27) or as tentative. Surety about results is much less credible than tentativeness in ethnographic studies: not including outliers, or not including *negative case analysis*, can make a study look too easy, and a study that looks too easy is almost always regarded as suspicious. The readers will wonder whether there is any "hidden" data or whether the researcher has only included information or stories that prove her case; readers will also wonder whether the researcher may have had a certain expectation of the "answer" to her research question from the start.

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In studying the data from many different directions, as well as through comparing documents and stories told, and through including outliers, data may be confirmed in a number of ways. Through triangulation, the researcher will have looked closely at data, and attempted to explain why some data do not fit, why some triangulated data will not match a theme or category set up by the researcher, and why some data do.

TRANSFERABILITY

The gathering of "fat data" (Peshkin, 1988) or "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) is one of the key methods that ethnographers have that allows them to work toward finding much rich and detailed information that can be beneficial for others. The researcher is expected to include enough examples of data, i.e. personal narratives, relevant sections of interviews, in the written version so that readers will have enough evidence to judge the credibility of the data and more importantly, of the interpretation. The desire for credibility is thus also related to the researcher's need to gather enough data to inform others. Data that is not considered credible will be less likely to "transfer" knowledge to others. The extent of *Transferability (or generalizability)* is based in the evidence that the researcher provides that is both credible and useful, but at the same time on what the receiver finds is useful:

Transferability may be thought of as parallel to external validity or generalizability. Rigorously speaking, the positivist paradigm requires both sending and receiving to at least random samples from the same population. In the constructivist paradigm, external validity is replaced by an empirical process for checking the degree of similarity between sending and receiving contexts. Further, the burden of proof for claimed generalizability is on the *inquirer*, while the burden of proof for claimed transferability claimed is on the *receiver*. . . ..The major technique in the degree of transferability is thick description, a term first attributed to anthropologist Gilbert Tyle and elaborated by Clifford Geertz (1973). Just what constitutes 'proper' thick description is...still not completely resolved.' Furthermore, it may never be since the conditions that need to obtain to declare transferability between Context A and Context B may in fact change with the nature of the inquiry; the 'criteria that separate relevant from irrelevant descriptions are still largely undefined'"(Guba & Lincoln, p. 241).

To achieve the powers of transferability, others reading the ethnography are able to say that this situation has also occurred in my classroom, or in a classroom I have studied, and the suggestions given here may be transferred for use in my own situation, classroom, etc., or in another situation. Often a variety of solid conclusions based on solid, thick, fat, evidence is necessary in order to make the transfer. The studies of Boggs (1972, 1985); Au & Jordan (1972); Michaels (1981, 1989), and Heath (1982, 1983) have informed other teachers and researchers not only about the interaction of culture in the classroom, but also about the need for teacher awareness of the micro-analyses of the classroom. For some teachers, the knowledge in the above studies can be directly transferred and used in their own situations; in other classrooms, and for other teachers, what was

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discovered in the situations described by the ethnographies can not be directly transferred, but can still be useful. If a teacher transfers the knowledge that observation and understanding of the subtleties of classroom teaching may affect classroom learning and begins to look into his or her own teaching and classroom to effect change, transfer has occurred. The researcher should always be striving to produce a study that is transferable; research for the sake of research does not meet the high standards set up for social scientific research.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: THE QUEST FOR CONFIRMABILITY OF DATA

The study of life is not expected to be "tidy" or to fall into neat little categories. The most credible studies will admit this and will, instead of tidyfying all their data, attempt to analyze or explain as plausibly as possible what these diversions may mean. By following the guidelines for credibility set up by Guba & Lincoln, the researcher will have revealed the accuracy of the data, or confirmed the data as real and not imaginary or made-up data. The researcher will have attempted to make her data worthy of transferability, and an accurate interpretation of the community under study that is useful to both the participants and to society. What we are ultimately striving for is *confirmability*, which:

> may be thought of as parallel to the conventional criterion of objectivity. Like objectivity, confirmability is concerned with

assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator's imagination. Unlike the conventional paradigm, which roots its assurances of objectivity in *method*—that is, follow the process correctly and you will have findings that are divorced from the values, motives, or political persuasions of the inquirer—the constructivist paradigm's assurances of integrity of the findings are rooted in the data themselves. This means that data. . .can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent wholes is both explicit and implicit in the narrative of a case study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243).

The ethnographer's data, when gathered systematically and accurately, checked by members and by peers, informed by theory and experience, triangulated, constructed and reconstructed in relationship must be considered as a viable form of research that can inform educators and society in some very important ways.

CATALYTIC VALIDITY

Ethnographic researchers are also creating new ways of making their research "valid" not only for self and for other researchers and educators, but more importantly, for helping those researched to become strengthened or catalyzed to act in ways that are likely to be more beneficial to them than the act of sitting by as others watch them in the efforts of living and learning; for example, *catalytic validity*

. . . refers to the degree to which the research process re-orients, focusses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms 'conscientization,' knowing reality in order to better transform it. Of the guidelines proposed here, this is by far the most unorthodox as it flies directly in the face of the essential positivist tenet of researcher neutrality. My

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argument is premised not only on a recognition of the reality-altering impact of the research process itself, but also on the need to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ideally, self-determination through research participation (Lather, 1986b, p. 67). (Also see Lather, 1986b, for more on new types of validity).

As research into the methods of ethnography continues, we are likely to see other ways of approaching validity, ones that may further reveal ways that may allow ethnographic studies to be considered not only credible and valid ways of doing science, but also more valuable and worthy types of research. We should always be aware that the way we view society and the way that we uncover the layers of the deep structure of society are also ways of changing the information our research supplies to society about the groups or social systems we study. On the other hand, what is exciting is that new "practices of validity. . . new efforts to multiply new kinds of validity which both destabilize the dominating practices of the same and support the shifting differences in many dissimilar points of view" are being worked on and considered in ways that may help researchers to "vindicate" themselves by actively working together to "recognize, appreciate, and strengthen the multiple differences in the play of the other." (Scheurich, 1992, p. 20). Adhering to the practices of ethics, and validity may help me from obscuring my view, and to move toward producing 'truthful' and valued research. Hope of "the innumerable voices of difference. . . participating together in the conversation of

humankind. . .a clamor of different voices, especially voices made silent and invisible" (Scheurich, p. 20) is returned.

THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION: WRITING IT 'RIGHT'

The question: how does one "write" or represent culture and make it credible both to the scientific world, and at the same time "truthful" and at the same time worthy of the culture represented? Writing the final interpretation is another issue that is related to validity in methodology and is an extremely important step once the researcher has gathered his or her data. Clifford argues that what we may ultimately be striving for is "plural authorship that accords to collaborators, not merely the status of independent enunciators, but that of writers" (Clifford, 1986, p. 140). Although it may be a long time before the researcher will truly allow a subject to explain and analyze the researcher's data, and actually "write" up meaning, some strides have been made in this regard. Researchers who do member checking will be delegating more responsibility to those researched in helping to present a view of their culture to the world. Teams of researchers, often made up of both insiders and outsiders to a community, will now gather data and give more than one interpretation of the data, or a text. And, we must also remember that if the ethnographer does a good job of gathering data, and of presenting the rules, the mores, the texts, the drama, and of checking

the data against the facts presented by the community as it goes about its daily life, that the community will be involved in the negotiation of the interpretation, as the community has together with the researcher created itself and also created not only what was seen but also perhaps what was most important to be seen:

> Stanley Fish makes a similar argument. . . .He argues that all statements are interpretations, and that all appeals to the text, or the fact are themselves based on interpretations; these interpretations are community affairs and not subjective (or individual) ones—that is, meanings are cultural or socially available, they are not invented ex nihilo by a single interpreter. Finally, all interpretations, most especially those that deny their status as interpretations, are only possible on the basis of other interpretations, whose rules they affirm while announcing their negation (Rabinow, in Clifford, 1986, p. 255).

Power and political correctness are also essential issues of the politics of representation:

> The anthropologist listens to as many voices as she can and then chooses among them when she passes their opinions on to members of another culture. The choice is not arbitrary, but then neither is the testimony. However, no matter what format the anthropologist/reporter/writer uses, she eventually takes the responsibility for putting down the words, for converting their possibly fleeting opinions into a text. I see no way to avoid this exercise of power and at least some of the stylistic requirements used to legitimate that text if the practice of ethnography is to continue (Wolf, 1992, p. 11).

> As Susan Bordo wisely counsels: It is impossible to be 'politically correct.' For the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. . .are played out on multiple and shifting fronts, and all ideas (no matter how 'liberatory' in some contexts or for some purposes are condemned to be haunted by a voice from the margins already speaking (or perhaps presently muted but awaiting the conditions for speech), awakening us

to what has been excluded, effaced, damaged (ctd. in Wolf, 1992, p. 13).

What the qualitative social scientist must avoid in order to attempt "political correctness" is playing the "'ritual game of having a self" (Goffman, in Geertz, p. 25) "where the staff holds most of the face cards and all of the trumps" (Geertz, 1983, p. 25). Or, in other words, the researcher/writer must not be the only one with the power to decide what goes into the final text about a community—instead the power of decision of how a social text will read will be collaboratively determined.

Even though the researcher-type is changing, the issues confronting how one writes a text are equally complicated whether an insider or an outsider writes the text:

> Mohanty concludes her essay with this sage observation: 'It is time to move beyond the Marx who found it possible to say: They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented' (1984: 354). And it is reassuring to see that more and more of the 'underrepresented' are now doing the work necessary to 'represent themselves' (and I might add, encountering some of the same resentment and accusations of elitism that white first-world anthropologists have experienced). We as anthropologists can only try to be sensitive to the implications of our perceived status, implications that may be even more troubling for the fieldworker who works in her own society (Wolf, p. 12).

The "politics of representation" debates are important because they have kept ethnographers honest, and ethnography has continued to enlighten and to create change that is often beneficial. That an ethnographer can no longer walk into a tribal ritual, a bar room, or a

classroom without thinking about ethics and representation is the outcome of knowledge of the politics of representation. The political discussions should continue and more evidence of catalytic validity, always with the thought of political ethics behind it, should be offered up to the world:

> No matter how careful, I fear all of us who do research must be prepared to be the resented Other to the 'objects' of our study. . . .The manner in which that resentment is expressed varies across cultures, and even within villages, but it usually involves a desire for a redistribution of wealth. Intellectuals of the culture with which we are engaged are most likely to accuse of misappropriating power, of using powerless women in Taiwan, India, or Africa to make careers for ourselves. They ask what we give in exchange, and we are hard put to give them answers, or at least answers that do not sound defensive or self-serving. Nonetheless, I do not think we need to hang our heads in shame. I do not apologize for the research I have done or the books I have written about Taiwanese women. When I began my research, there were no Taiwanese scholars who were the least bit interested in women's lives. I may not have always gotten it right, but Taiwanese *women* were taken seriously as agents because of my research and writing. Now they can speak for themselves or through the work of a group of young Taiwanese feminist scholars. But note that these new scholars will also speak of a vastly changed society. The question Bordo puts to critics of a similar historical development in feminist theory is equally applicable here: 'Could we now speak of the differences that inflect *gender* if gender had not first been shown to make a difference?' (1990:141) (Wolf, 1992, pp. 13-14).

Hopefully, all of us have learned that research for the sake of research, or research or for the academic community alone is not a valid aim of ethnography. Learning that giving back, or *reciprocity*, is more ethical, more human, and also makes us feel good, is one of the greatest gifts that the debates on the politics of representation has

communicated. And, we need to continue our quest to make ethnography

reflect our "desire for a redistribution of wealth" (Wolf. p. 13).

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

> Now it is a strange thing, but things that are good to have and days that
> are good to spend are soon told about and not much to listen to; while
> things that are uncomfortable palpitating, and even gruesome, may make a
> good tale, and take a great deal of telling anyway (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*,
> p. 61).

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND ITS PARTICIPANTS

I studied a Developmental Reading/English I program at a rural
high school in South Carolina. The research is primarily descriptive
and the process of gathering information has come almost entirely
from observation, field notes, interviews, and reading and writing
samples of my students. I was both teacher and researcher; I collected
writing samples of reactions to the course materials and to classroom
reading and writing assignments. All my students chose to sign the
proper consent forms. Pseudonyms have been given to replace the real
names of participants. The study is ethnographic and, as a result,
changes in the design have occurred as new questions arose and new
discoveries came to light during the course of my observation and
analysis. Changes or additions in the research design have been
reported in writing to the Human Subjects Review Board. The

research took place at Littletown High School in Kingsboro County, South Carolina and covered the duration of an entire school year, beginning on August 18, 1995, and ending on June 1, 1996. Follow-up research and interviews were conducted during the course of the following year as a way to monitor the progress of students and to give students, other member checkers, and peer debriefers an opportunity to read and to comment on my analyses.

The high school I studied had set up a program in which it identified students who were judged "at risk" and even "in danger" of not succeeding, not graduating, perhaps not even reading far beyond the second-to sixth-grade reading level, without some intervention. The Developmental Reading/English I program at Littletown High School involved 52 students in four classes taught by two reading specialists, myself and one other teacher. Each of the four other high schools in Kingsboro County also had several Developmental Reading/English I classes from which I could draw comparisons. The weekly reading meetings with the other seven reading teachers allowed me to discuss what the other teachers were doing with their classes and how students were reacting to these assignments and activities.

The study itself primarily involved my two Developmental Reading/English I classrooms and a total of 23 students who were reading, according to the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test administered in April of 1995, on the second-to sixth-grade levels as

they were about to enter the ninth grade, their first year in high school. 15 of the 23 students in my classes were African-American; 8 students were Caucasian. (Two students, both African-American males, were expelled from school in January and thus were not counted as part of this study.) I had 7 African-American females, 4 Caucasian females, 8 African-American males, and 4 Caucasian males in my classes. From the beginning of the year until the end of the year at Littletown High School, I was searching for ways to make my students better equipped to face the future. While I observed, I was also searching for reasons why they had not so far been able to succeed in the current educational system and for ways to help them to improve their attitudes toward reading and writing.

WHY USE ETHNOGRAPHY?

An ethnographic approach is a powerful way to dig deeply into the innerworkings of a school, its program, and its students. Ethnography gave me the tools to explain situations in depth, to exhibit and to analyze the quality and potential of students' written assignments, and to explain the type of teenager/student who existed in my classroom. In sharing these observations with others, this methodology afforded me an opportunity to delve into students' triumphs, trials, and tribulations, in hopes that I would be able to transfer these insights to other teachers, who, in turn, might include

them in their teaching. I chose to describe methods, conversations, discussions, assignments, and students' written samples to help teachers work with and perhaps understand better their own students, who, whether from a rural or an urban school, were similar in make-up to my own.

My students were complex individuals whose reading and writing was extremely disparate. Their commonalities, such as being placed in a remedial course, would reveal some patterns that might shed some light on the plight of other students placed in similar courses. I chose ethnography because it is only through the wading through the mire of "thick description" that a detailed analysis of the many layers beneath the surface, or the deep structure, of the type of student involved in this study could be rightfully described and given the depth of attention that is needed at this crucial time in a teenager's life both socially and academically. Through ethnographic methods, I would attempt to provide more insights into the workings of the developmental reader than results from standardized tests had heretofore revealed.

Before meeting my students, I had learned that their test scores revealed that they were two to six grades below grade-level norms in reading. I knew that I would need to move quickly to determine what approach to take if I were to assist them in the massive improvement expected of them by the end of the year (Goal 1: Increase reading level

by two grades.) Through close observation during the first months of the course, I discovered that my students were at a crossroads, even a standstill, and that finding direction, motivation, and possibly even hope was an extremely essential need for them. My students had been labelled, or mislabelled in some cases, and many felt that they were not capable of learning or of succeeding not only in high school but also in the future. Many had almost given up on themselves, and I needed to move quickly to bring a spark back, a spark they may have had during early literacy learning but appeared not to have any longer, into their literacy learning if not their lives. I wanted to travel every avenue through ethnographic methods in order to discover as many different possible travel routes which might allow new routes of travel for students to take in the future. For me, the best way to look at a variety of paths was through ethnography.

MY ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD

As I write up the data into its final form, I have followed as diligently as possible the rules and goals and the process of ethnography as discussed in the previous chapter by doing member checking, peer debriefing, journal writing, writing out my biases and checking them against my interpretations of the data presented. I have included as much data as possible, mainly in the form of written samples of student work. I have also included examples of my

opinions of the events in the classroom and the school through citing examples from my journal, which was written before, during, and after class as often as possible.

ISSUES OF VALIDITY:
PROLONGED ENGAGEMENT AND PERSISTENT OBSERVATION

I spent an entire year engrossed in the community and school of Littletown. I lived in this town, and socialized, except for the meetings with other reading teachers of the County, only with those in this small town. My discussions with the other reading specialists and the reading coordinator were all related to learning about the Kingsboro County students and what types of activities, readings and writings, were beneficial to them. I attended football, baseball, and softball games, the prom, organized and met with the Traveling Poetry Club, and daily ate lunch at school with both teachers and students. My duties included guarding "The Smoking Tree" and from time to time, morning (breakfast) cafeteria duty. I shopped in Littletown, called students or parents, met with parents at the school or when I visited their homes, socialized with teachers during lunch, after school, and at staff parties. In the summer, I taught the developmental reading program at Kingsboro High. I was involved in or observed almost every activity at the school in order to provide as

rational and complete a picture as possible of the culture of the school and the community.

I spoke to students both in and out of class. I had an additional forty-five minutes with which to observe those in my second block class because they were all in my academic assistance period (study hall). During study hall where the atmosphere was relaxed, students would talk about their boyfriends, girlfriends, or fights that they had or wanted to have with other students or their parents or relatives. I also was able to have some extra individual work time or conferencing time with students during this period.

The academic assistance period became my advising period. I sometimes advised them on various concerns, both school-related and other. During this period, students also sometimes advised me: on how I should wear my hair, how I should dress, what I should teach and how I should teach. I loved this period, even though some criticism hit hard. I listened to every comment made by a student, and although some did not make sense for me to act on, other comments were immediately acted upon.

Conversations where students told everything were much more likely during the beginning of the year, and were often quite enlightening, when students were building their attachments and learning about the school. Students came in to school quiet and reserved, even shy, but with a need to find out from each teacher what

they needed to know to pass the class. They were also more open because they were still "learning the ropes." Later on, once students knew the school and the "ropes," they became more brazen and defiant about school activities, especially about being in a remedial reading class. This I was able to observe on a daily basis in their comments and in their reactions to reading and writing assignments. I also observed and talked to students during my lunch break or my lunch duty, which was at what I fondly called "The Smoking Tree," an area on the campus between two trees where the smokers met and tried to smoke without being caught.

Although I had hoped that I would have the opportunity to interview students during the academic assistance period, I found that as the year went on, this was not possible. So, I observed students, conferenced with them one on one, and watched their interactions as well as the interactions of the other students in the school. I also had a wall of windows in my room that allowed me to hear and see a great deal.

At the first interim grading period, I met with parents who came to the evening opening house and discussed the students and how they were doing in my class. It was here that I first began learning about the parents and the home life of my students and learning more about my students than what other teachers or the students themselves had said. For example, other teachers had told me that

the majority of parents of the students at this school did not care about their children's education and were not involved at home in pushing their children to succeed. Students often talked about their home life at school, so this meeting with parents was a way to discover whether the students' perceptions matched those of their parents. I found that the parents were often much more open about their situations than the students and that the parents, each and every one of them, said that education was the most important factor in their child's life at present and that they supported their child in every way. It was at these meetings that the parents encouraged me to call them if there were any problems, or if I needed help motivating their child.

Most of the parents were very serious about the importance of education for their children. They told me that they had struggled during school, but that they had learned that working toward their education was more important than anything else, and that they had done their best. They wanted their child to work hard like they did and they wanted more opportunities for their child than what they had been given. Most also admitted that their children did not appear to take their education seriously any more and that many of the parents' attempts at motivating their children had been unsuccessful. Almost all of them indicated that children were much different these days and as parents, they did not always know what to do about it.

I took the parents' advice about calling and I did call parents, for both the good and the bad, as often as I got the chance when I needed to. Parents were also required to pick up their children's report cards every nine weeks, so I spoke with parents every term about their child's progress or problems, or both—the school set up an entire day for this process every nine weeks so there was ample time to get to know the parents, and as students were out of school on those days, my students usually accompanied their parents and were in on all conversations regarding their schooling. I also called each and every parent and had an hour-long meeting with them in January and again in May on the progress of their child in my program and what I expected to be the prognosis for the following year in terms of whether they would be promoted or retained and whether there was more hope for their child's success. I also continued to stress that students might make better progress with the parents' continued help of keeping their children reading, and writing if possible, at home.

I stayed after school every day, normally for at least three or four hours, meaning that I often left school at 7:00 in the evening. That made for almost a 12 hour day, as school began at 8:00 and teachers were expected between 7:30 and 7:45. During this time, students were encouraged to drop in after school to work on their workbooks, other writing projects, or to receive help from me on either personal or school-related issues. It was not until the end of the year that

students started feeling the end-of-year "crunch" and coming in after school fairly often. Before then, students mainly dropped in to say "hi" or to talk while they waited for a ride or to use the phone or sometimes to borrow money.

During my time as a full-time teacher at Littletown, I never missed one day of school. I did not want to put these students at more risk of getting into trouble. I knew how most pupils behaved when they had a substitute—after all I had been one— and did not want my students to have more opportunity to "do nothing" (as they often said, "I ain't doin' nothin', and as I often replied, "Yes, that's the problem"), or to get referred to the principal. Maybe I should have been able to let go for a day or two, but I was too committed to them to do that, no matter how tired or frustrated I became. I lived for these children, and spent more time with them than with my husband (I was in Littletown, he was in Charleston through the week). When I came home on the weekends, my husband often asked me to stop talking shop, or to stop talking about my students. I lived, ate, dreamed them, and many times, I felt they consumed me. My engagement with the school and my students was nothing if not prolonged and persistent.

My living in Littletown allowed me to become a member of the community, perhaps not a full-fledged member as I still held a position of authority and I also had not lived in Littletown all of my

life. Many of the teachers at Littletown had grown up in Littletown or in Kingsboro, some even lived right across the street from the school. I chose to live one block away from the school where the neighbors who lived below me were two former students of Littletown, one the daughter of the present athletic director at Littletown High School. Next door was a present student at the school, a junior who lived with his father and one with whom I often talked to at the "Smoking Tree." My total immersion in the community and my voluntary decision to live in Littletown impressed the students and their parents and helped to make me as close an insider as any outsider could be.

CONSTRUCT VALIDITY AND PROGRESSIVE SUBJECTIVITY

I was immersed in the educational process of my students and the students of Littletown and was immersed in the theories of reading and writing from my graduate work and from choosing to continue to keep abreast of the new theories coming out in my field that were important to making education for students, my own students and those like them in particular, better. In my review of the literature on theories of motivation, reading, the uses of adolescent and multicultural literature, and maintaining optimism, I reveal the theoretical grounding that fed my perspective on how to best teach my students. My fifteen years of prior teaching experience from the high school to graduate level allowed me insight into my theory of practice

and into experiential knowledge of how students act and react to schooling. I believed that an analysis of the rich data that would be found in describing writing assignments about reading and an analysis of students' reactions to challenging reading and writing assignments would best yield information about the program and ways to make it better for these students and other students in similar programs across the country as well.

In the Introduction and in Chapter 6, I discuss my impressions of the assumptions of the program and my expectations of the students, impressions written down before school had begun or before I had even met one student. I reflected on my biases and judgments through taking daily notes and recording them in my journal in order to maintain progressive subjectivity. Tracking my biases throughout the year. I strove to make sure that the data I used was not only that which fit what I had originally expected. I had many surprises, including the tacit disclosures of students about their needs for literacy and their attitudes toward school. That students were such novices of reading and writing, lacked almost all motivation to read or to write, but responded so favorably to selecting their own reading materials were all revelations.

CONFIRMABILITY, TRANSFERABILITY, AND TRIANGULATION

I also saved every piece of writing that each student produced. Students typed most of their writing on the computer and saved them on their own diskettes which would remain in the computer lab as a portfolio until the students graduated. In my class, students were given folders in which to keep their work, and I set up a system where they could retrieve whichever pieces of writing they needed for class out of the milk crates in the classroom where they were stored alphabetically. The original prewritings, rewritings, and final drafts were kept in the classroom for me to look at the work they had done as well as the comments I had made, and for students to look back at their work at all stages whenever they needed.

It is through the use of an abundance of examples of authentic student text that readers will have enough evidence to judge the credibility of the data. Although students wrote so many more pages on a variety of assignments during the year, and only a representative sample of their work could be shared, the examples shared should be ample enough to convey their authenticity and to bring to light the difficulties and the achievements of these students.

The higher the number of credible examples and credible situations or events presented the more likelihood of the occurrence of transferability. When a teacher, researcher, or administrator is able to say, "That sounds just like Anton or Margo" or "I am going to try

this strategy with my students," then a successful transfer has occurred. The extent of transferability (or generalizability) is based in the evidence that the researcher provides that is both credible and useful, but at the same time on what the receiver finds is useful. For example, my peer debriefer, Dr. Michael Wilson, a high school English and history teacher, indicated that he had never thought to use "book tasting" as a strategy for older students until he read my dissertation. He planned to immediately begin using this strategy with his eleventh and twelfth graders—indicating that transferability had occurred. Another teacher could discover another effective strategy or use for the classroom, depending on his or her needs or perspective.

To meet the triangulation requirement, I have included in this study many different aspects of a factual nature in order to ensure that I had examined data from as many perspectives as possible. I reviewed information provided by the U.S. Census, the Littletown Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) 1996-1997 report, memoranda from teachers and the Superintendent. I also included information of a quantitative basis by using the scores from The Stanford Diagnostic Test as administered before students entered my classroom, as well as their pre- and post-test scores while in my course. I spoke to parents, students, teachers, and community members and read the newspaper, The Kingsboro Voice on a daily basis. As much information from as many different outlooks was

considered and provided to ensure that I had searched and researched as many avenues as there were streets in Littletown.

THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION AND RECIPROCITY

What I have written about the Littletown community, the school, and my students, was a collaborative effort. As mentioned earlier, my peer debriefer was an experienced high school English and History teacher who was not a stakeholder in the study but provided many valuable insights about the nature of high school students. As he had already earned his Ph.D., he also provided some much needed empathy.

During the year I taught, I wrote down comments in my journal on events that had occurred. I often allowed students to read parts of my journal to corroborate what I wrote. Jamaica, for instance, read what I had written about the Ritual Denial: The Vivisection of the Reading Orange. as she was the instigator of that event and the student who had made the honorary first slice. It was particularly important for me to discover whether my interpretation of this event was correct, and to determine whether the ritual was connected to - students' abhorrence of the reading label. As students were not told, and I did not want them to know, that they were called Orange Box, I could not present the entire version of this episode to Jamaica. Ned also read his story and was proud to be included in the book, as were

Jamaica and the others. However, not all students were portrayed in a positive light. Chelsea, for instance, did not necessarily like the anecdote about her pretending she was ill even though she admitted that I had written about it factually, nor did she particularly savor the discussion of her tantrums. However, from our discussions of her behavior, she was able to provide me with further explanations of the reasoning behind her actions because, as she remarked, "I wanted to make sure that you understood me."

As I wrote, I had four major member checkers, two students from my class, and two teachers. The two students were Jamaica and Chelsea, with whom I maintained contact primarily via phone and written correspondence, although I also visited them and all the other members of the class on two separate occasions. Nancy, the other reading specialist at LHS, and I discussed our students almost daily, and I also maintained contact with her through letters and personal visits. During the school year, we often compared notes on our students, on activities, defeats, and accomplishments. After I left the school Nancy kept me abreast of how my students were faring in the Reading/Writing Workshop, the follow-up course that she was teaching for students who had not completed the GA level of the Learning 100 workbooks, or in their regular tenth grade English classes.

Another member checker was Jane, the chair of the science department. Jane's opinion was valuable because although she was not a complete insider, she had been teaching at Littletown for five years, and was well-respected. Because she was not an insider, she was able to keep an open mind and to provide valuable insights that I had not always seen about the culture of Littletown and the behavior of students. Jane's two children were attending school in Littletown, one at the elementary, the other in the middle school, so she was not only aware of but deeply involved in the processes of schooling in Littletown. She was particularly interested in the lack of motivation for both reading and other school-related activities she had also seen in her students and now, she worried, in her children. Jane also believed that she saw a similar lackadaisical attitude in the majority of teachers and administrators who had grown up in Littletown, and shared other eye-opening revelations that were for me always "food for thought."

Together, all of the above eyes and ears, as well as my own, have collaboratively worked to provide as accurate a picture of Littletown, its high school, and its Developmental Reading/English class.

My method of giving back to my students, the major participants in this study was to continue to motivate them after I left Littletown. As I had spent an entire year immersed in the school, the community, and the students' lives, I had difficulty leaving all of this behind. I

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was particularly saddened at leaving my students not knowing what would become of them. So, I have made a point of keeping in contact with all of them. I have called each and every student several times to say hello and to find out how they are doing in school. I also correspond with many of them regularly. I send Christmas cards and letters on birthdays and on various other occasions. Each student was given a book the last time I met them in Littletown.

I also made and will continue to make personal visits to each of their homes whenever I am in town. Although students do not live in wealthy homes, in fact only three of my students lived in houses, the rest lived in trailers, I have been welcomed into every home. As this is a rural community, homes are many miles apart—I clocked the miles I travelled just to see my students at two hundred the last time I visited. During the upcoming months, I plan to invite several groups of students to visit my home in Charleston. I appreciate what my students have helped me to do in giving me permission to use them in my dissertation, and I actually believe in them as people and want to continue to let them know that I am available to them if they need me. Each student also has my phone number and several do call periodically to tell me how their lives are progressing. They have become a part of my life, just as I am part of their lives.

THE PLAN FOR LITERACY EVENTS THAT MOTIVATE, CULTIVATE, AND STIMULATE

I would like to move on to discuss what my thoughts were behind the plan for the literacy events that occurred in my Developmental Reading/English I class at Littletown. I originally assigned shorter assignments and those that students could easily begin and finish without much pressure put on them in terms of grades and grammar. Assignments then became progressively longer and more complex as the year advanced.

GATHERING AND INTERPRETING DATA

One of the first assignments I gave was a journal. The reason I assigned the journal originally was to discover what students could do. I also wanted to find out whether giving students freedom to choose what they wanted to write about their first chosen reading assignment would free them to write. With the journal and many of the beginning assignments, I was not concerned about how well they wrote because I only wanted to assess their motivation to write, to find out if they could be motivated to write more than a paragraph or two if free to choose what to write. I was mainly concerned with finding out whether they could write when prompted and given clear directions and whether they would write. In the process, I would then be able to observe their writing strategies, their work strategies, and

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their writing abilities, as well as receive some information on their likes and dislikes related to school, reading, and writing.

To discover more about my students and to get them started writing, first I asked them questions about their reading and writing interests, their goals, their strengths and weaknesses, and their opinions on tests and grading practices. Then, students were expected to write a page a day on the reading they had done in class. They were free to write whatever they wanted about their books. Later, they used the journals for brainstorming, writing drafts, and other process-oriented writing geared toward completing a longer writing assignment on one of the books they were reading. The journals then became an outlet for trying out writings and for thinking about reading. Students were encouraged to let the ideas flow, and were told that their journal responses would be used when they wrote a more formal paper, about their novel or other reading in which they were involved.

On several occasions, following the completion of reading a book and writing in their journals on a daily basis, students were expected to complete a variety of prewriting exercises and then to write a short paper from among their best work in the journals and prewriting assignments.

Not only has reading prompted extensive research of its applications to writing, but also journal writing has been the source of many experiments. James Britton has called this type of writing

"expressive writing" because it is "writing that assumes an interest in the writer as well as in what he has to say about the world" (1982, p. 156). Jana Staton (1981) discusses journal entries as a source of communication between teacher and student. She discovered journals were helpful because "most journals contain significant *themes* which can lead to extended discourse over time about the same underlying propositions" (p. 5).

Ken Macrorie (1979) recommends that each student keep a journal as an act of practicing writing, and as a means for self-expression. He advocates free writing because it releases students from the obligation to write in a stilted, formal style and directs them toward their own "selves." Free writing can also take the form of "fabulous realities" which can be later developed into more sophisticated writings (in Graves, p. 54).

I used the journal as part of another experiment. I wanted to discover if student would respond favorably to work that was not expected to be perfect. Students were told that the journal would not be graded for mistakes in grammar, but instead that they would be given points simply for doing the journals. I did say that, of course, if it appeared that a student had not tried to do the assignment, and had, for instance, only written a sentence or two, when I expected a page, then the points would be lowered. I told students that they all had every chance of receiving high grades just for doing the

assignments. I wanted to boost the students' estimation of their abilities, their self-esteem too if possible, their motivation, and most of all, as I had no knowledge of these students writing, reading, or personalities, I wanted to get to know them. I had no preconceived notions of what type of information I would receive, nor did I have any idea of what their writing would be like.

The journal assignment was presented as an assignment that we would carry out throughout the year if possible. It ended up that students were writing so many different things during the year, that the journal ended up to be an optional form of pre-writing that students could use. Most preferred not to carry the notebook around with them, and instead preferred to write all brainstorming and rough drafts on separate sheets of paper which were then transferred to the computer disk when we went to the Mac Lab.

The journals, however, were a great way to begin the year, and a great way for me to get a sense of how I should proceed with each individual student throughout the rest of the year. During the first weeks of school, I had students answer questions, often in the form of a letter either to me or to a friend about their personalities and their interests in school and outside of school. Students seemed to enjoy the letter-writing process and were perhaps more able to begin writing when they had an audience in mind and because they were familiar with the letter format and how to begin. Sherman (1996) found that

letter writing as correspondence between students and teachers, parents, and friends was an excellent method of moving students to share their literary experiences with others about self-selected text. Leonhardt (1996) also suggests a letter-writing format because it is one strategy for interesting students in writing, informal, sometimes humorous, writing: "Is there any other kind of writing that might easily engage their interest?" (p. 101).

My students originally began writing their letters to me, which helped me to build a rapport; one student wrote, "Well it has been fun writing to you." Later in the year students wrote letters to the authors or subjects of their books. Many indicated that they really enjoyed writing letters. As students always knew who they were writing to, they always had a place to begin, which was helpful for novice writers. The original directions and the assignments that I gave to students are given in Appendix B. What students wrote in their journals is discussed in Chapter 7 and Chapter 11.

ANALYZING READING SKILLS, INTERESTING TEXT, AND MOTIVATION TO READ THROUGH "BOOK TASTING" AND CHOICE

The journal assignment then progressed into a time for reflection on a novel that students were reading. Each student was able to choose his or her own novel to read based on what I called a "book tasting day." This was a term I had learned from taking a tutoring class at Ohio State for mainly school-aged students who were

either reluctant readers or were having difficulty reading or both. What Dr. Sandra McCormick suggested was that we take a sampling of books to our tutee to have him or her decide which one he or she would like to read. I did basically the same thing with the whole class as I had done with my one tutee at Ohio State. I brought out a large sampling of books that I had brought from home on a variety of different reading levels and topics. I then described the story line to students and had students claim the book as their own as soon as they thought it sounded interesting to them. They were of course able to turn the book in for another if they found a book later that they thought would better suit them. They were also able to begin a book and decide to return it for another choice if they found out that they did not like it after all or if they discovered that it was too difficult, too easy, not interesting, or for any other reason.

After having read all the students journals and having had students in my class for a few weeks by the time I began to use "book tasting," I was also able to help students make choices that I thought would be interesting to them if they had difficulty choosing.

Part of the purpose of the "book tasting" experience was for students to have an opportunity for sustained silent reading for a period of fifteen to forty-five minutes per day, and also a time to get focused in order to begin the class. In my mind, there is nothing more calming or relaxing than reading a good book of *your choice*.   I

underline *your choice* to underscore how my plan to allow students reading choices ran throughout the course of the year and throughout the course of the curriculum in my classroom. I was initially trying to discover how students read and what types of materials they liked to read when I began "book tasting," but continued with this strategy throughout the year. Using "book tasting" and allowing students to self-select their readings were two methods that enabled students to consider reading as a pleasurable experience. From student reactions to certain books, and from their writings, I studied the types of texts that motivated students to read.

The reading was set up similar to the "drop everything and read" (DEAR) Program, which other teachers were implementing across the school. Students in most of the other English classes were expected to always have a book in hand. They were to bring a book of their choice to class every day. Another expectation of the DEAR program implemented by the English teachers and in my classroom was that students would learn about what others were reading, and hopefully, want to read the books that they saw or heard others were reading. As students were asked to write both informally and formally about their readings, I was able to assess students' initial writing abilities and to plan the methods for teaching them writing strategies.

I continued the practice of book tasting throughout the year. Sometimes this was done as a class, but other times a student would

finish a book and begin the search for a new one either by perusing the many books in the classroom, asking for a pass to the library, or by asking me to discuss some of the books he or she saw in the classroom. Students were expected always to have a book of their choice on their desk. As all of the writing assignments were based on books and topics of their choice, this demand was easily accommodated. The purpose of this was to keep students motivated to read and to write. My premise was that students who choose what to read and what to write about would continue to read and to write and would hopefully not only learn how to choose books they would like to read but also become excited about reading and perhaps even become life-long readers.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

As I was both the teacher and the researcher, I was teaching, observing, interviewing, conversing, conferencing, and collecting writing samples at various times on a daily basis. Some have questioned the ability of one person to be both teacher and researcher at the same time primarily because it is difficult to perform the intense work required of a teacher and to be an impartial observer who is able to see the culture as a non-stakeholder might (Spradley,1980; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Certainly, as I was their teacher, students would not always share everything about themselves during

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conversations, nor did I always have time to draw them out. I was teaching and not able to be there solely to socialize. However, as a daily participant and researcher, I could return to pertinent questions or insights and search for answers during my free period, after school, or the following day in class.

The teacher/researcher approach suited my purposes best as I could totally immerse myself in the school, and the students. Furthermore, I had access to parents and school records, information that would have been more difficult for someone not a part of the school to obtain. And, as an analysis of student writing samples about their reading was to be one of my major sources of data, I was, as both teacher and researcher, easily able to obtain writing samples almost on a daily basis. I also saw each student grow from the first day of school, and observed his or her daily struggles.

And, as I was a newcomer, although accepted into the culture of the school through my position as a teacher there, I was "new" and therefore not likely to take anything for granted. Every part of the culture of this particular school was fresh and potentially informing and I was not going to discount anything in my search for meaning and understanding of this school environment and its effects on my students. For example, I surprised a great many teachers when I asked them about the phrase, "I ain't know and I ain't care" because most of

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them had heard it so often that they had never thought that it carried any particular meaning.

Students knew that as a teacher, I held some authority which meant that they might not have been as open with me on certain subjects as they might have been with another. However, students tended to actually "forget" that I was both studying them and teaching them because we were constantly involved in our roles as teacher/researcher and learner. As a result, students behaved naturally. In fact, students were always extremely quiet and reserved whenever an administrator, another teacher, or an outside observer was present in the room (this happened fairly often), but were more themselves without "intruders." They trusted me with their writing, something they were ashamed to show others. Furthermore, I was a member of the class whom they trusted would tell their stories in a beneficial way.

In total, through being a teacher, a researcher, and a resident, I was able to socialize and research simultaneously with both students and parents and to see them on the streets, in the few restaurants in town, at the grocery store, the cleaners, the hardware store, the bakery, or at Simpsons, the best little everything store in town. On a daily basis, I could also observe students in their classroom roles as

well. I had situated myself in "the cat-bird seat," able to view all aspects of the culture of the school and the community first hand.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

My methods for analyzing the data were at first, descriptive, but the primary method was close textual analysis for the remainder of the study. Some of my preliminary work is descriptive, for I needed to provide a picture of what the classroom contained: what books and materials, for example ; a picture of what a "typical" Developmental Reading/English I literary experience was; a picture of what high school students were interested in, what they were like; a picture of what the high school under study was like.

Some of the above information also helped me to track my subjectivity because it is information that I reviewed later to determine what I saw when I first arrived, and what I thought about the set-up of the school—the teachers, the students, the administrators—later. My initial interviews were open-ended, with the goal of getting to know students and teachers and their interests, in reading and in general. I asked students to provide information about their reading interests, goals, likes and dislikes in their journals. Students also filled out reading inventories, information about their career choices, and gave me all sorts of introductory data to consider. I began to give students' reading and writing assignments based on choice of reading material

and choice of topic in order to assess students' motivation toward interesting text. I assigned both shorter and longer writing assignments to determine whether students performed better, or were more motivated to finish work that could be completed in a day rather than a week or more. I saved every piece of short or long writing in order to put together as complete a picture as possible about these students' schoolwork.

I continued throughout the year to search for themes, patterns, memorable statements, and cues to help me to define students' reactions to texts or situations. I also analyzed the written literary texts used in the classrooms. I analyzed the content of written samples collected from participants. I compared the reactions of students to reading materials and to workbook activities through comparing the writing they did and the reactions they had for each type of activity. I had access to conversations with students, teachers, and parents to analyze and also to compare to a participant's actions in classroom events. In total, I constantly observed and listened as well as read and commented on student writings in order to "read" and eventually "write" the interactions in the classroom.

From the gathering of rich, "fat," "thick" data, I was able to think and rethink the meaning of data from a variety of directions, from a variety of data sources. I expected to have "multiple, often conflicting meanings and interpretations" that might arise out of the

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data, but I expected to puzzle through the multiple perspectives, by analyzing, comparing, discussing *negative case* examples or examples that did not fit into categories or patterns that I discovered, and through member-checking and peer-debriefing. Having multiple perspectives and loaded data to work with is what I wanted to use to ensure that the picture of the community and the students' reading and writing activities was as accurate and detailed as possible.

I was able to see other sides of students and see more of their lives that went beyond school through residing in the community and also being a teacher at LHS. Through all the avenues I considered, it remained my focus to search for ways to better the reading and educational program set up for these students and to help them prepare for perhaps a very difficult future. I was constantly searching for patterns of life and culture and I saw more as a result of being a part of the community. My main goal became to look into the prevalent attitudes these students had toward schooling and why these attitudes became prevalent for them, and, in particular, to look into how and why their attitudes toward reading and schooling affected their abilities to read, to write, and ultimately, to succeed in school.

Once the pattern emerged that it was indeed school and their previous as well as the predicted lack of success in school that seemed to have caused them the most harm, I began to center in on the

schooling process, the curriculum, and the reading program in which these students now found themselves a part. And once the pattern emerged that students could read and write better than others had deemed possible, I began to center on their written materials and their motivation, or lack of motivation, to read or to write. I continued to search for reasons why students were not motivated toward literacy and for methods from which I could help them to change their attitudes and outlooks.

My joy as a researcher is to attempt to analyze, explain, understand, liberate, interact with, observe, "[describe] and [probe] the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations, and circumstances of action" (Denzin, p. 19), or, in other words, to search for understanding of that deep structure, that magnificent puzzle that human beings present through living and experiencing life. I am idealistic and I want school life to be better for all students, so I was always conscious in my attempt to gather data, and to search for materials and methods that would allow me to be able to reach this goal. My goal was also to find some valuable information that would be useful to both teachers and administrators. Throughout my study, I continued to proceed with these goals in mind.

In the following chapter, I will introduce the community and the culture of Littletown. The factual information as well as what I consider to be the most germane elements of the community life will

be shared to provide a description that may explain some of the reasons why students at LHS did not always give a high priority to schooling.

CHAPTER 5

LITTLETOWN: THE COMMUNITY AND THE SCHOOL

In the following chapter, I will describe the community and the culture of Littletown as I saw it. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the basics of this small, rural town, and its inhabitants. The information provided here may also contribute to an understanding of how the environment and socio-economic factors may play a role in the desire for academic achievement.

A BEGINNING DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL AND THE COUNTY

MEMO
From: Mr. Dylan
RE: **REALITY CHECK**
Date: 4/22/96

The other day my wife, who is also a teacher, brought home a journal entry written by a nine-year-old-little girl from Kingsboro. It touched my heart so much that I would like to share it with you. The topic for the journal was, "If I Could Change My Age":

> *"If I could change my age, I would like to be twenty years old. So I could get a house with my mother and family. And I would like to have a car. And I would like a phone. I would like to get a job. I would be a teacher. I would like to have food like meat. And I would like to have dessert. I would like a party when my birthday comes. I would invite my friends."*

Message to Teachers: Let's love our students and remember that many of them carry a heavy burden.

The town of Littletown, where Littletown High School was located, had a population of 3,050, where approximately 25.7 percent of the population was school-aged (between the ages of 5 and 17), a median home value of $46,400, and a median household income of $15,871 (37.5 percent of the population earned approximately $10,000), the lowest median household income by far in the County (1990 U.S. Census Figures). The school was located just south of the Main Street, which had two stoplights.

The town was a small, torpid, rural, textile community, about twenty minutes from the County seat, but quite separate. The town boasted of being the site of a nationally known t-shirt company and of being the birthplace of a famous African-American rock and roll star from the 50's. This rock and roll star annually gave a benefit for the youth of the community. The County had several steel mills, textile mills, and a large paper mill. Many of the students planned to work in one of the above three types of major enterprises. It was not until November of 1996 that the County's citizens could dial 911 in emergencies. It should probably come as no surprise that the school levy had not passed in Littletown and thus there was no money for repairs or for a new school.

The main textile mill and outlet store in the town of Littletown unfortunately moved its facilities to Mexico during the year I taught, putting numerous parents of my students and many others in the

community out of work in the process. The townspeople, although upset, seemed to take this setback with resignation, as if they were used to being let down and should not have expected more. They were forced to accept what was inevitable; the small town was being passed by as it could not compete in the global economy. Although I have no census statistics on unemployment for the town of Littletown, there was widespread unemployment for the members of this community. Many of my students indicated that their fathers or mothers were out of work. The women often were employed, but usually had only temporary jobs at the factories, jobs which came and went. Some of the women did sewing or alterations out of their homes; one student's entire family ran a sewing business out of her home to supplement the income of a church where the father was a minister. One student's mother was a school custodian with whom I conversed almost every day after school.

The Littletown High School self-evaluation done for the 1996-1997 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Ten Year Study described clearly the status of employment opportunities and the breakdown of professionals and blue-collar workers in the community:

> The Littletown community is traditionally one of blue-collar workers. In 1995-96 three hundred and twenty-five of the male parents/guardians were blue-collar workers. Only twenty-five of the males and fifty-two of the females were professionals. The number of industries in the Littletown area that need laborers enhances the trend toward a large number

of blue-collar workers in the community. (* Information provided through a survey completed by students at school on March 20, 1996).

The profile of Littletown assembled for SACS also explains some of the difficulties those living in Littletown and attending the high school must face:

> In a statistical profile of Littletown and the surrounding area, sixty-six percent is classified as rural. The population of the Littletown area is 9,766 or which 45.5 is black and 54.5 percent is white. Seventy-seven percent of the families are traditional, and seventeen percent have females as the head of the household. Littletown is a poor area. The percentage of people over twenty-five with a high school diploma is twenty-five percent lower than the rest of Kingsboro County. Half of the households have an annual income less than $19,815, and more than one in five residents lives below the poverty level. Almost five percent of all housing units lack plumbing.
> According to community leaders, employment issues are a major concern. The employment rate is low, and the lack of skilled workers deters the attraction of new industries. The leaders also see poor educational structures in Littletown as a drawback. The physical facilities of Littletown High and Littletown Middle schools are inadequate to offer more educational opportunities.

The principal told me that the school had approximately 700 students, evenly divided among African-Americans and Caucasians. He told me that this would presumably be the approximate racial make-up of my classroom. After arriving at the school, I assessed the African-American proportion of the school population to be actually about 10 percent higher than the principal indicated. I also discovered that there was one Asian-American student (1st generation Chinese-American, parents from Mainland China) and one Mexican student who entered school around November and knew no English. The

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actual ethnic make-up of the school as provided by SACS was: "[LHS]

has eight hundred students enrolled. . . .[and] has a student

population that is fifty-five percent black and forty-five percent white."

In my two classes, the ethnic make-up was two-thirds African-

American and one-third Caucasian.

The poverty of these students is also evident in the high

percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunches:

> The number of students at Littletown High who qualify for free
> or reduced lunch averages between forty and forty-five percent
> each year. Factors that contribute to this number are low
> paying jobs and single-parent homes. . . .

The stigma attached to needing assistance in the form of free lunches

created problems for the high school students:

> According to the information provided on the Title One school
> applications, the number of qualifying students should be
> higher. Both of the feeder schools have a higher number of
> students in the lunch program. Littletown Elementary
> currently has 69.3 of its population qualifying for free or
> reduced lunch. Littletown Middle School has 61.1 qualifying
> for the lunch program. Of the number of students who do
> apply for the lunch program, the acceptance rate is high. The
> staff at Littletown High feels many older students do not wish
> to be associated with the stigma that is attached to receiving
> free or reduced lunch; therefore, the number of applying
> students is lower.

Although I agree that receiving assistance of this sort is stigmatizing

for young adults, I might add one more reason to explain why high

school students did not always apply for assistance. The parents were

actually the ones who were required to fill out the forms and to supply

all income-related data. As some parents would have difficulty either reading or completing the forms, the forms were not completed.

For example, Clevon's grandmother was required to complete the form for his free or reduced lunches; however, even though Sister King had some help from the guidance office, she was never able to finalize the work and thus, could not turn it in for him. Sister King could barely read, and was not functionally literate so it was difficult for her to finalize this matter for Clevon. Although Clevon was embarrassed because he needed the free lunch, it was even more problematic for him when he had no money or no lunch at all. So, Clevon often slipped into my classroom right after the lunch bell rang and received his free lunch, with no one the wiser. When Clevon did not visit me at lunch time, he did not eat at all, and as he was a thin and energetic child, this was worrisome.

Most of the students were Littletown natives through and through, having lived in this town all their lives, many having never ventured farther than Charleston, the closest major city, approximately 60 miles away. Most of my students were content to remain in Littletown and seemed unmotivated to leave. Few planned on attending college, and most envisioned finding a job in either Littletown itself, doing whatever work was available, or in nearby Kingsboro, where the steel and paper mills were located. Only a few students indicated that they could not wait to get out of this little

dead-end town as it seemed to them. Since most of the students (and teachers, too) were insiders, an outsider was very noticeable and not easily accepted.

The town had one large supermarket, where a few of the older high school students worked, and several smaller grocery stores, a bakery, a convenience store, a short, two-street row of hardware stores, two typical small-town restaurants, a thrift store, a Chinese restaurant owned by the one Chinese family in town, and an extremely expensive dress shop which surprisingly enough survived in this impoverished community. There was a bar a few hundred yards from this strip of small businesses, right off the main highway. It so happened that one of my students' uncles owned it. She sometimes swept the floor and did other odd jobs for him there.

Littletown had the usual Burger King and Kentucky Fried Chicken franchises and, near the end of the year, a new McDonald's, concerning which the whole town seemed happy—it meant progress. These were additional places of employment for the students—and sometimes their parents. In a town so small, it was amusing to note that so many people, including myself, did not notice that the McDonald's was being built, much less that it was finished. When one student asked me if he could use my name as a reference for a job at McDonald's, the whole class seemed to ask, "Which McDonald's and how are you going to get there?" No one seemed to believe that

there was indeed a new McDonald's planned for their little town. I had driven by the building site on Main Street, just past the railroad tracks, which seemed always to have the crossbar down, and had never seen the McDonald's. Sometimes the closer one is to something the harder it is to see.

Considering the smallness of this town and the fact that most of these kids had grown up together, gone to the same schools, and been in many of the same classes, it should not be surprising that people in this town seemed quite used to each other. The blacks associated primarily with the other black students with whom they had grown up in their neighborhoods but they also mixed together in the classroom with the white students whom they had known primarily through school classes and programs. The white students mostly socialized with other white students, at lunch and after school, and mainly had best friends who were other white students, but they were usually very friendly and familiar with the black students in the classroom. Clevon explained this very succinctly when he said, "Well, sometimes we do our thing and they do their thing, and then sometimes we do our thing together. But mostly we get along."

FINDING A PLACE TO LIVE: TRYING TO BE AN "INSIDER" BY BECOMING A PART OF THE CULTURE OF LITTLETOWN

I wanted to be an insider to the community, at least by living in it. Most of the other new teachers, both those in other programs at Littletown and in the reading program, lived outside of Littletown or outside the adjoining communities in which they taught. Most either found apartments in the city of Kingsboro, or even better yet, although a much longer drive to and from school, in one of the upscale, affluent beachside communities. The principal told me that he definitely did not think I should live in Littletown because there was nothing to do, no nightlife, no culture. I, however, had plenty to do, and if I were to find out anything about "culture," especially the culture of the Littletown community, I certainly needed and wanted to be there. So, I leased an apartment on the top floor of a house that rented for only $200/month and was only two blocks away from the school.

I ended up spending almost all of my time in Littletown, teaching of course, then after school doing my grocery shopping and other errands. I often met and conversed with parents in the shopping aisles or talked to students as they walked down the street in front of the little stores or their places of employment. Littletown was a friendly town. Everyone in the town seemed to recognize and to know by name all the new teachers. They welcomed us and I came to love walking down the street in Littletown where everyone in town greeted me with, "Hey, Miz Baginski."

CHAPTER 6

BIASES, ASSUMPTIONS, REALITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL READING/ENGLISH I PROGRAM

What follows by way of introduction in the following chapter and subsequent chapters is not necessarily a strictly academic analysis of the situation and problematics of teaching reading to lower skill level students. However, it is intended to serve as a sample of the subjective assumptions and biases that underlie my approach to the problem as I encountered it in its real contours.

It is important for the reader to understand that I describe Littletown from my perspective and that the lens through which I view the culture of this small community and this small high school is subjective. For the ethnographer, it is impossible for it to be otherwise for "I" am in the text and "I" am in all that I see in the text which is the community and the school and all of its individual members. I saw Littletown as a village that had been marginalized and I saw the students in my classroom as educationally cheated, if you will, by the limitations of the administration and the monetary assets of the community. I walked into my classroom believing that I would do my best to give these students more than what they had ever been given

before. The best way to describe the situation in this case was to be honest about what I saw and about how these students were treated.

The tone of the narrative about the administrators, other teachers, and the coordinator is not meant to be condescending or patronizing, but instead to be as sincere as possible. My stance is one as student advocate; I have always tried to be a student advocate and thus, the lens through which I "take the picture" of the school and the community is tinted in their favor perhaps. The record of what was said and by whom comes from copious notes taken at meetings and from my own recorded journals and thus, has been carefully documented in an effort to provide a fair and accurate account of the events, attitudes, activities, assumptions, and cultural environment that guided the school community and made the developmental reading program what it was at Littletown High.

EXPOSING MY BIASES: WHAT I THOUGHT BEFORE ENTERING THE SCHOOL AND BEFORE MEETING MY STUDENTS

In order to explain fully my situation and to document accurately my study, I must, as an ethnographer, describe my reactions to the school, to the students, to the situation at hand, from the beginning of the school year. The discussions below serve to reveal my thoughts on the teaching position I had accepted and the early concerns I had about the program and its effectiveness for the students I believed I would be teaching. Once my biases were written,

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I was free to contemplate more openly and honestly the needs of the students, the effectiveness of the program as it existed, and finally, the realities of what I might be able to teach and how I might be able to help my students learn to read and write better.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS: A ROOM WITHOUT A VIEW

I drove by the school once before accepting the job. I saw a terribly dilapidated group of buildings and a row of trailers; later I learned they were to be called "portables." I shuddered. I had never seen trailers used as classrooms before. There were three main buildings; later I learned they were called A-Building, B-Building, and C-Building. The principal had told me in a phone conversation that he hoped that I would not decline the job based on the appearance of the school. He said that the people made the school, not the school building. I told him that it did not matter what the school looked like, and I meant that wholeheartedly. I did not believe that it could be that bad.

But nothing could have prepared me for what I would find. I found out that my classroom would be in B-Building. The next time I saw the school was after the new teachers orientation meeting, a few days before school began. Each of the reading teachers was issued a Macintosh computer for their classroom and, since I had a pickup truck, I was designated to deliver the computers to the school. I met

the principal, who informed me that my classroom would be in the B-Building, in the CCC or computer lab, and that the other developmental reading teacher, Nancy, would be in a portable behind the B-Building. I was thankful at that time that I was not assigned a classroom in a trailer.

I was told that I would be sharing the room (with a teacher's assistant, who would be working with students who had not passed BSAP, or the Basic Skills Assessment Program, the state's exit examination). I walked into my room and all I saw were computers, computers all around the room, and large uneven tables, two large shelves, one filing cabinet, a desk, a tall wooden cabinet, all filled with the other teacher's, or the computer aide's papers. There were no books or other materials for me to use, but I did have one MAC computer, incidentally with only a few games and one word-processing program. The computers and computer-desks extended around the circumference of the room, the other furniture and office furnishings took up the rest of it. I had no chalkboard or whiteboard, no desks or chairs for students, no books, and this was only a few days before school was to start. I was worried but confident that the principal would rectify this.

The day before school started, I still did not have desks or chairs, but the principal promised I would have desks and chairs by the end of the day. Around 3:00 P.M. they appeared, thrown into the

room in complete disarray while I attended a meeting. I returned, and tried to set up some semblance of a classroom, and tried to make it inviting.

There was still no board. Although I was forced to go to the principal almost every day to try to procure one, I did not receive a board until the middle of November. The board I got was found in the corner of another teacher's room and had been sitting there since the summer. I procured a large metal cabinet from the gym for my materials which I squeezed into the room in a creative yet economical way; the two large cabinets now jutted out from the wall in front of the windows.

I felt uncomfortable about my classroom but I had a sanguine attitude. I thought that this room could work as well as any other and I believed like the principal that "The teachers make the school, not the building." I wholeheartedly agreed with him and hoped that I could make the best out of a difficult situation.

Later on I learned that in between the two cabinets and the computers there was a small space where students had just enough room to hide, to quickly open up the window and yell out, or to play with the computers for the other class, all of which they knew they were not allowed to do and all of which they did anyway when they felt restless, which was most of the time, at least in the beginning of the year.

I did not know this yet but the set up of the room, which really was the only way it could have been set up, allowed students to create distractions, and to disrupt the class and their own and the others' learning at a whim. They used this room to their advantage whenever possible. Had I been able to predict all the problems the environment alone would create, I would have tried much harder to change it. We really were at a disadvantage in this room. But, in the end, there was nowhere else for us to go. The school simply did not have a better "learning" space.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS: THE SHELVES WERE EMPTY

There were no books in the classroom the day I arrived to begin setting up my classroom. Although Mrs. Stiehl had chosen a workbook as the main focus of the course, we were not to expect its arrival until mid-September at the earliest. The workbook actually turned up mid-November, almost a full three months into the school year. The day before school, I fortunately had carted in boxes of books and magazines from home.

I had also procured a class set of the previous year's geography textbook from the Assistant Principal, Mr. Jones, because he was trying to get rid of them. After all, the textbook was completely out of date and the geography classes had gotten brand new textbooks this year. Certainly, our reading program was not the only one with

critical needs, as it was August of 1995 and the geography book used throughout the 1994—and through most of the 1995 school year— still had the Berlin Wall in it. Many other changes which had occurred in the 1990's were outdated or unmentioned in these books, but the school had been unable to buy updated editions for years. But, having nothing, I would take anything I could get. My thought was that there might be some way to study the structure of the textbook, or a way to get students interested in finding out more information about a certain country. I ended up using the books in exactly this way, and at the start of the school year in the absence of a real plan or curriculum, these were some suitable introductory lessons. The geography books helped in some ways to get students going on their first paper as some of them read books and wrote papers on a country they would like to visit.

Beyond my books and magazines from home, the geography texts, and a few dismembered dictionaries and thesauruses nobody wanted from the reading coordinator's office, there was nothing but me and my shadow.

INITIAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT STUDENTS' LITERACY, ABILITY, AND PROJECTED PROGRESS

I had several interviews and conversations and one all-day meeting with the reading coordinator for the Kingsboro County before

I ever entered my classroom or met any students. The following discussion will show how the students and the program were defined to myself and the other new teachers of the course at a meeting a few days before the beginning of school.

In the absence of any written document about the program's objectives, I will describe the assumptions of the program from detailed notes taken during all early meetings and conversations with the reading coordinator, Mrs. Stiehl. Mrs. Stiehl informed me that there was no written curriculum for the program.

I accepted the position, not really knowing much about it, even though I had tried diligently to find out as much about the program and the preparations I should make before school began. Unfortunately, one week before the opening of school, Mrs. Stiehl still had not chosen any textbooks but she informed me by phone that during the meeting we would have that week that I would "come home with more materials than I knew what to do with."

Although I am a social person, I was focused on the task at hand that day: I wanted to know what was it exactly that I was teaching on Friday, August 18th. I asked quickly about the books and other materials, wherein Mrs. Stiehl promptly replied, with a cheery smile on her face, "Don't worry, Lee. You'll all have everything you need by the end of the day." Then we played a Scavenger Hunt game to get to know the other teachers better. I knew that I would have to

make up my own mind about how I wanted to approach this class. I realized then that the new program had the potential to be whatever we the teachers wanted it to be. I was not entirely sure at this time whether such freedom would be a positive or a negative.

I listened closely as Mrs. Stiehl explained the program and the types of students we would have. I listened and began to think about how I would approach the class, and I listened for ideas. I wanted so much to do a good job and to help these students. I had not even met a single one of them but I knew that I would devote myself wholeheartedly to their cause and that their betterment would become my purpose.

No grants were written; no money came in for our program. We started out with the large sum of $1000 per teacher, which meant that with only two of us teaching at Littletown we would have a total of $2000 for the program. Being good with money, I thought this could go a long way. The way it turned out, Mrs. Stiehl ordered too many of the lower-level workbooks for our students, who were the least likely to need the more advanced workbooks according to counts made of the placement of students at each site. The students at Littletown High, contrary to popular belief about their deficiencies, were actually the first to get to the highest-level workbook. As a result, $1300 of the $2000 total we were given to spend on books for our classrooms went to buying more workbooks at the higher levels for our school. We

ended up having paid a great deal of money for the lower level books and had far too many of them, but they were *ours*.

Mrs. Stiehl had originally bought most of the workbooks for our students that fit the second, third, and fourth grade level. We were told that the Littletown students were the absolute lowest and would never need the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade books. Preordained failure was implied and accepted. After all, being advanced to the tenth grade required students to, at the minimum, complete the GA, or 7.0-8.5 proficiency level workbook.

I was being told that of the four other schools, my school and its reading participants were the least able and the most in need of assistance. Those students who would find themselves placed into this program were those who had tested on the second-through-sixth grade level. This judgment, of course, was based on only one standardized test, which I discovered later, was not read very accurately as students who placed into the 7th through 10th grade on a subsequent test also ended up in my class for undisclosed and never to be disclosed reasons. Those who tested at actual grade level or above on the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> given in September, including one student in my class whose score read post high school, were retained in the class. For whatever reason, their original placement was upheld.

I was told that I should not expect a written curriculum but also that I could be assured that the administration had anticipated the needs of a new program. I thus accepted what little was known, tried to learn more, and remained open-minded about the program. In the following paragraphs, I will explain exactly what I was told by Mrs. Stiehl about the program and the students.

THE STUDENTS: ACCORDING TO MRS. STIEHL

What Mrs. Stiehl told me and the other new reading teachers at a meeting one week before school started was that our students had been chosen for this program because they had tested on the second-to-sixth-grade levels on the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> (<u>SDRT</u>). We would be giving the <u>SDRT</u> again as a pre-test and then at the end of the year as a post-test to monitor their reading levels. She said that the students needed to be told when we administered the tests that "This is to show us what you really know" instead of "This is what you need. Students are used to the test being used against them."

These were students who had somehow fallen through the cracks of the system, and had such extreme difficulty reading that many could be characterized as non-readers and *all* as very poor readers. She then told us about the origin of the epithet "Orange Box," an amusing anecdote to her but an outrageously callous one to me. This story is recounted earlier, in the Introduction. What seemed

to be a humorous story to insiders about how the program had come to be, and how the students had been given the name "Orange Box" was recounted many times by others during the year but continued to infuriate me every time I heard it.

After describing the origin of the "Orange Box" label, Mrs. Stiehl continued by describing what our students would be like:

> These are students who have low self-esteem, have difficulty looking anyone in the eye. They are the type of student who will be loyal to you and will be your friend for life. They are diverse, street-wise, creative, but not in a structured way. They need to be taught organizational and study skills, might lack social skills, and are emotionally needy, wanting lots of attention. They lack motivation, have low self-esteem, little confidence in themselves, are anxious, and not eager to participate.

Mrs. Stiehl suggested that we build: 1) structure; 2) study skills; and 3) parameters. Giving students specialized folders and structured assignments would assuage their desperate need for routine; it would be something they could count on.

If we did all of the above, she believed that we should "see marked differences by Christmas." Students loved to be successful, and we would be able to make them feel successful and thus *be* successful. She said, we needed to find a way to "connect with these kids" because "connecting is the only thing that matters. If you connect with these kids, they'll do the rest." She told us we needed to be aware of the difference between reacting (or over-reacting) and responding. One introductory gesture we could make would be to

shake hands with each student at the door. I was hopeful that I would be able to connect with my students and that there would be "marked differences by Christmas"; however, I was skeptical about making such a difference in only three-and-a-half months.

Mrs. Stiehl also recommended other teaching strategies. Some small mini-lessons would be to write a quote, a saying, or a question on the board every day which the students could discuss or elaborate in writing on its meaning. Other routine-oriented activities would be to discuss or write about current events through reading the newspaper or listening to the news every day. She also believed in reader-response theories and believed that we could help students access their prior knowledge through teaching them the strategies of mapping and webbing, and the usefulness of advanced organizers.

On a more personal level, Mrs. Stiehl suggested that we call every parent or send home a note if the family did not have a phone. We needed to make sure that we said "at least one nice thing" about each. "When in doubt," she said, "call the parents because the parents will collaborate with you: they want the students to succeed. Sometimes parents have given up, too, and they need your suggestions." "Whatever else," she said, "the positive is preferred over the negative." Giving students rewards was also good for this type of student. She suggested a pizza party perhaps, and during the course of the year, she proposed many other parties for the students, all

involving food. I gave students only reading-related rewards, pens, pencils, paper, books. I had always believed in accentuating the positive in order to help students gain confidence about themselves and I planned to be as upbeat as possible with my students.

All of the above information that Mrs. Stiehl told us, especially the positive comments were inspiring to me. Although I had been let down by Mrs. Stiehl in terms of materials and information about the job, most of what she said about these students and what they would be like turned out to be true.

SETTING UP WRITTEN GOALS

All of us asked Mrs. Stiehl repeatedly and all day long about the goals of the program. What are the goals? What are the expectations? What do you want us to do? How far do you expect us to get with these students?

Near the end of the meeting, Mrs. Stiehl indicated that there were no written goals for the program as yet so we would write the goals for the program together. What she wanted us to think about was what we hoped to achieve this year and what we hoped our students could achieve this year. So, we brainstormed ideas. Not knowing much of anything really about the students or the school system, the majority of us having just stepped into Kingsboro County and having not as yet encountered even one actual student from the

county, we suggested and Mrs. Stiehl selected the following from among our many ideas:

1. Students will increase reading level by two grades.
2. Students will increase use of reading strategies to improve comprehension.
3. Students will increase use of study strategies to enhance performance in content areas.
4. Students will become independent, lifelong readers and writers.

Some of the other suggestions were changed or reworked slightly as some were redundant and because Mrs. Stiehl believed that simple objectives were best. "We do not want to state too many goals," she said, "because then we will have to reach them." To me, these goals were shallow clichés, but Mrs. Stiehl wanted only a few goals, and stated that whatever we decided on that day had to be achievable or the program might very possibly be eliminated.

At the time, the item that jumped out at me most forcefully was Goal 1: Increase reading level by two grades. Mrs. Stiehl repeated that she thought that this would be possible, since students would be working individually and would have individual attention because we would have a great deal of time for each of them since we had such small classes. Not knowing the students at all, not having even surveyed one set of tests results or one writing sample or one glimpse of anything the students were capable or not capable of doing, I doubted whether that was a fitting or possible goal. I, however, did have the attitude that anything was eventually possible, and I also

wanted students to acquire this attitude, but I did not believe that two grade levels higher on one standardized test (The Stanford Diagnostic Test of Reading) was necessarily attainable in one year nor would it mean that students were actually two grade levels more proficient in their reading and comprehension abilities if they did attain such a score. I continued to keep my mind open.

Mrs. Stiehl had decided that Goal 1 would be the main goal. "Setting sights high is good," she said, contradicting herself. She had only just told us that we should not set too many goals, or by implication, set too high a goal, because we would have to reach it. Maybe our sights were too high but then again maybe the sights were not high enough yet, I thought. I had no idea; I had not yet met a single student. But, if all that Mrs. Stiehl had said about these students were true, and they were really that deficient, how could they possibly acquire two standardized grade-levels of reading skills in only one year? The other reading teacher at Littletown, Nancy, also recognized the difficult position in which we were placing ourselves, and asked, "If these students had never in the past moved up one full grade level, then how could we expect them to move up two grade levels in one year? It really doesn't make sense." Mrs. Stiehl was, however reasonably certain that by the end of the year we would be able to do this. "And," she added, again shifting the responsibility for

achieving these expectations to us, "then you will each need to be accountable for what does or does not happen in your classroom."

THE UNWRITTEN ASSUMPTIONS

From the meeting we had that day, from the "reading meetings" we had every week in Kingsboro with Mrs. Stiehl, and from the basic outlines I read from discussions with students, teachers, and administrators early in the year, I will describe what I consider the unwritten assumptions, goals, and expectations of the course. Mrs. Stiehl declared that our goal and the goal of our students was to "get as far as we can as fast as we can." She said that all of the students would initially be two or more grade levels below grade-level norms in reading. The students would earn the same number of units for this class and would earn credit for English I (ninth grade English) if they passed this course according to our regulations. The teachers at this time had no idea what the qualifications for passing this course would be as these had not yet been established by the administration. We actually were not provided this information, or what the qualifications for passing this class vs. the qualifications for moving on to a "regular" tenth-grade English class, until after the May, 1995 testing of the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u>. We were given only a partial set of qualifications in January.

We were told classes would be small; there would be no more than 15 students per course. This implied that students in small classes would learn better. I thought this was an ideal work situation and that with so few students, I could really help them a great deal.

Students would be given a workbook so that they could learn at their own pace on their own level. The levels would be determined through a second testing of the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> (SDRS) sometime in September. Then, students would be given a criterion-referenced test from the grade level we selected after reviewing the results of the <u>SDRS</u>. The criterion-referenced test would determine exactly which skills in their grade levels of their respective workbooks the students needed to reinforce or learn. The representative from the publisher for the workbook chosen by Mrs. Stiehl had told her that the workbook complemented very well the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> and thus, students should be able to increase their scores by the end of the year through using it. I have always had an aversion to worksheets and workbooks because I do not believe that students learn information in abstraction and without context, nor that what is learned from the workbook exercises is transferrable to other learning situations. However, this was how the class was to be handled so I would do my best to make the workbook readings and activities worthwhile to students and be careful not to make my opinion about the workbooks known to students.

What was implied from the above activities was that the program would be set up so that students would have individualized education plans and would be working at possibly every stage or level imaginable at the same time. Normally, when students are working at so many different levels that would entail that the classes would be even smaller than 15 students because setting up individual lesson plans for 15 students per course, for a total of 30 students would require more work and time than any class where students would be doing a great deal more together. However, the program was not structured to allow teachers to have the necessary time to create individualized plans for each student, and left me feeling that I might be pulled in too many directions at once unless a more organized method of management were established. The managerial aspects were left for the teacher to devise.

Although it appeared that a tutoring session for each student would be warranted, there was no possibility of being able to implement this with the number and diversity of students assigned to the class and lacking the proper resources. On the one hand, Mrs. Stiehl told teachers that the workbooks and individual work must be completed, but on the other hand, she left it open for us to decide exactly how it would be possible to do this. I believed that much stronger guidelines were necessary in order for a new program to be truly effective.

Mrs. Stiehl emphasized that these students needed structure, but what structure was possible considering the different activities occurring at once there? I believed a model was needed for our classrooms. Only then would it have been possible for teachers to be more creative in stimulating learning in the classroom. Guidelines that are too restrictive or guidelines that are too vague cause confusion.

We also learned that students would not use literature texts. Literature books were assumed by the supervisor to be too difficult for the students in my classes to read, so they would read from workbook selections and complete accompanying skills and drills. Teachers would be expected to supplement these workbook readings and activities with readings that they would personally select. Possible extensions of this assumption were that: 1) students in my classroom would find "real" literature too difficult to read; and 2) these particular students would learn better if not exposed to literature, the literary canon, and if not challenged. These assumptions run contrary to the research (Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Walp & Walmsley, 1995; Allington, 1994; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Slavin, 1991; Levin, 1987, 1990) which supports the claim that challenging students and giving them access to the same materials as their peers rather than giving them the easiest assignments is a much better way to help students work toward literacy.

As students in our classes had scored well below reading levels of the average ninth grade student, they would not be granted the opportunity to read the literature that other students in the County were reading and, in turn, would not be allowed to be like the other students. According to this assumption, even the simplest fictional or non-fictional writing that might be included in a ninth-grade literature class was deemed too imaginary or too deep, in any case not straightforward enough for our students; such literature, it was assumed, would have hampered students' progress in this program. Allington & Walmsley (1995) believe, as I do, that not teaching students what others are learning slows down rather than accelerates students' literacy progress:

> Slowing down the pace of instruction ensures that children will always remain behind other children whose instruction proceeds at a normal pace. If we design instruction so that one group of first graders completes only the preprimer and primer levels of a reading series, we should not be surprised when the scores of these children on achievement tests fall below grade-level standards. If we have fourth grade students whose pace of instruction has been slowed to the point that they are still reading only easy-to-read trade books series, we again should not expect demonstrations of literacy proficiency comparable to peers who are reading more complex texts (p. 8).

According to conventional wisdom, poetry, too, was something for which these students simply did not have the requisite background and thus, simply would be unable to understand or enjoy.

After all, what they would be tested on in the workbook levels and the major standardized tests the school would be administering

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during the course of the year (and in years to come) was based on mastery of skills, comprehension of short reading passages, understanding of vocabulary, and handling of the ever more important and abundant, multiple-choice questions. Workbooks have been regularly described as promoting empty, unconnected, repetitive, and mindless skills that not only provide little learning but may also cause students to lose interest in reading (See Rose, 1989, Allington & Walmsley, 1995, Roller, 1996). Having students read and respond to critical, far-reaching questions would be not only non-essential but would not help them on standardized tests—the same tests that had brought them.here in the first place. This assumption and its corollaries, along with the other unwritten assumptions described above, served to outline the extreme importance that the standardized test had come to play in this County and in this program.

According to this plan, the teacher would decide on readings that the students would read together and the teacher would supplement that reading with a particular lesson on, say, Main Idea or Cause and Effect because that is what we would be teaching at various levels through the workbook readings and workbook exercises.

Reading aloud was one activity that Mrs. Stiehl indicated the students would enjoy and the teacher should do every day if possible. Even though students were all on different individual levels, real literature could be read to them by the teacher who could decipher the

difficult words and perhaps help to provide an explanation of the story. Reading aloud was assumed to enhance magically and mystically the students ability to read, and because all people love to be read to, reading aloud would magically and mystically teach all students to come to love literature. I have no argument with the claim that reading aloud to students enhances a variety of skills, including vocabulary, listening, comprehension, exposure to and understanding of higher level texts, and has been well documented (see Anderson et al.,1985, Chomsky, 1984).

Anderson et al. (1985) has produced convincing evidence that reading aloud has a strong effect on reading achievement gains; their research also supports this claim as a large part of the reading improvement was shown to have occurred through tests of comprehension, including written work. I did not, however, ascribe to the belief that reading aloud would necessarily incite a student to be motivated to suddenly "love literature"; I do concede that students who are being exposed to "real" literature as the teacher or students read aloud are participating in a unifying classroom experience by reading and discussing a piece together. The strength of students' learning through oral reading would also be effected if accompanied by writing activities that would allow the student to explain his or her understanding of the works read. I wanted to take this one step further and to have students do more writing about what I read aloud

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to them but it was suggested by Mrs. Stiehl that there would not be time for this during the day as there would be too many other activities that were more essential. Hence, oral reading was suggested in our program for its own sake as purely a motivational technique, and one for enjoyment.

I planned, therefore, to read to my students. This was an activity I always included in my teaching, and something I remember enjoying and still enjoy. The time set aside for reading aloud would be strictly for pleasure, for relaxation, for a change in routine before students would need to do their own reading and writing, in other words, as a motivational strategy to entice student-initiated learning. If the other benefits of reading aloud also followed from this, then even better.

Writing, and writing about reading was expected to be an important part of the program. The research of the past ten to twenty years has promoted attention to writing and reading connections (Langer & Applebee, 1987; Applebee, 1984; Graves, van den Brock & Taylor, 1996; Flower, 1985; Purves, Rogers & Soter, 1990; Corcoran & Evans, 1987; Blount, 1973; Mertz, Petrosky, & Farr, 1983) I had always had students write about their reading and had also had students answer critical questions about their reading through essays, journals, and other assignments.

The crux of the program then would center on the workbooks, which for the most part attempted to teach students reading strategies such as main idea, inference, comparison and contrast, persuasion, and other comprehension strategies through short reading passages and multiple-choice questions where a certain percentage needed to be answered correctly before they could move to the next skill or the next level.

Students also needed to learn a modicum of basic grammar. Mrs. Stiehl indicated that students would be quite deficient in their knowledge of grammar and spelling, but with all the other aspects of the program, and especially the workbooks and daily oral reading, there would be minimal time to spend on grammar. We were each given a copy of the 6th grade Daily Oral Language (DOL) book from which we could write sentences on the board.

Games and other motivational strategies were good, according to Mrs. Stiehl, but should not be used too much because students needed to spend at least 45 minutes per day on the workbooks, the other 45 could be spent doing any of the other activities. Writing about the oral reading or other writing activities would also need to be included in the curriculum.

SUMMARY: THE ORANGE-BOX KIDS WERE DEFICIENT IN EVERYTHING

In total, what I surmised from Mrs. Stiehl's unwritten assumptions and her analysis of these students was that there was not much that "The Orange Box" *did* know how to do, and as a result, they would need to be taught everything on the most simplistic level. She had told us that 1) the students could not read 2) the students could not spell 3) the students did not know basic grammar 4) the students could not write since they could not read 5) short, easy reading passages in the workbooks were better than other readings that might come out of novels, or short stories, or poetry because students would be unable to understand anything more. In effect, what she was saying and assuming, was that they were virtually deficient in everything. It was unfathomable to me that this entire group of students, all presumably diverse individuals, who had passed into the ninth grade could truly be that academically needy. I needed to see for myself before I would make the determination that these students were so utterly deficient in all basic skills. In the following section I will explain my earliest first-hand observations of the students that I would teach.

REALITY: THE FIRST DAYS

"Hey, lady, is this a resource class? We're in a resource class."

"We're retarded."

"I don't belong in here."

When I first walked into my classroom I had very little idea of what to expect. I had been told very, very little about the type of student enrolled in my classes. The first comments I heard from the students were: "Hey, lady, is this a resource class? We're in a resource class" and "We're retarded." "I don't belong in here." I did not know what my students were telling me at the time because I thought that a "resource class" was something similar to a library class. I thought that I would be teaching students about how to use the library and to use "resources" so I did not understand what my students were telling me. I did not know that "resource" was the term that the state used to describe special education classes.

Later in the week, a student who was not in my class came to the door and asked me in front of a group of my students, "Is this a resource class?" Still not knowing what this term referred to, although I had asked the students, I told the student who asked me that I did not know. That was one of my first mistakes. Once I found out what the term meant, I realized that the students wanted to be assured that they were not in a "resource" class and that they were

not "retarded" or special education students. I missed an early opportunity to set their minds at ease, and as a result, I had to try to convince them for the rest of the year that they were not, absolutely not in a special education course.

Before I tell my story, and the story of my students, I must say that I believed very little of what little I was told about my students, and refused to label them or make jokes of them.

Before I even met any of my students, I was *certain* that I would have some very good students who would defy the odds, some students who had been misplaced and did not belong in my classroom, some students who could do much more than they had ever shown if they were challenged, and some students who would have difficulty reading and writing but would also benefit from individual instruction and challenging assignments.

Mainly what I was told was that all those students chosen for the developmental reading/English I program were ninth graders reading on the second-to sixth-grade level. They were being given one year to boost their reading scores. Once identified by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) as scoring below expected performance levels, students were required to attend this course.

I also had very little knowledge as to how they had been selected for this program or how they had come to find themselves reading at such low levels. I knew that the main reason for the placement of

these students in the developmental reading course was based on one administration of the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> the year before. I learned much later that "questionable" students had been pulled out of their lunch hour one day during the Spring semester and that the group of students who received the lowest scores on this one administration of the test were routed into our classrooms. How these students became "questionable" to begin with was a question I could never completely answer. I had no access to scores of students who were not placed in this class.

The reading coordinator also indicated that she had no information on how students were placed into our classrooms. She told us that she particularly questioned the placement of the students from Littletown Middle School because the administrators of this middle school had done the paperwork themselves and had not asked for any assistance from Mrs. Stiehl. She told us that she thought that some of the students had been placed in our classrooms because they were discipline problems at Littletown Middle School. These students who were discipline problems might also have had low reading scores on the <u>SDRT</u> and thus, have been correctly placed according to the standards for placement into the program. However, that information was not accessible from Littletown Middle School, nor from the new principal there, nor from our guidance counselors or our own principal at Littletown High School.

I was considered part of the English department at Littletown High, so I attended the weekly department meetings and was an active part of the conversations about English and about reading in our school. The consensus of all the English teachers, including the chair, and all the other teachers I spoke to during the course of the year was that all students could benefit from such a class, all were weak readers and writers across the board, in every class, in every subject at Littletown High School.

I did not know this at first, but some of the students, approximately five of them, were definitely misplaced as they were ready for a "regular" ninth-grade English course in comparison to the other ninth graders whose work I saw. Three of my students had also scored very high on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test but were placed in my classroom anyway. I learned later that some of the students were considered to be major discipline problems that the middle school administrators wanted to "dump" somewhere. Other students seemed to fit quite well into the program in terms of their reading "actions."

However, those students who really did not belong in my classroom and who felt cheated, pigeonholed, and slotted, were often the most difficult to deal with in terms of discipline and, as a result, helped to consume in some ways the time and energy that was necessary to devote to those students who did need extra attention.

time working on phonics sometimes, or vocabulary, or writing, and, most importantly, making sense of their reading. The other students, those I discovered had been correctly placed according to the standards set up by Mrs. Stiehl, were angry and embarrassed about being in a remedial class and also often behaved childishly and acted out their anger about their placement. In fact, all the students placed in this class in some way resented their placement—they were pained, embarrassed, and extremely self-conscious about their segregation from their peers.

I originally noticed a few students who were extremely weak. And I thought that these students perhaps would have been better "served" had they been held back a grade. Starting a specialized reading program so late, during the first year in high school rather than in elementary or middle school, in a student's career is problematic in itself as some students have the potential to be extremely far behind. Although the major basis for selection into this program was only one test, students were administered the test again by their own developmental reading teachers in September of 1995. Notice that the majority of students who took the test could fall anywhere in the gamut from second through sixth grade. Notice also that three students on the second administration of the test surpassed the sixth grade level, two placed in the ninth and tenth grade (see Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test results, Appendix C).

As a result of this second testing, however, no students were placed in a regular English class even when their scores were at the ninth or tenth grade levels. One student, however, was moved to a regular class before taking the reading test for a second time because her parents complained to the principal. I was pleased to see Michelle moved because she was the best student in both my classes. Our principal told me that the reason she was moved was because they had made a gross error in placement. I was given no further information regarding this transaction. I personally questioned the placement of four other students who would have been better served in a "regular" class, but no further adjustments to my roster were made. The results of this test were to be used solely as pre-and post-test guidelines. We were to administer the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> again in the spring. From the end-of-year results, we would then determine whether students had met goal 1 which was to progress two or more grade levels in reading.

"Social promotion" was cited as the major reason for the placement of many of the students who were now in the developmental reading program by numerous teachers from various departments within the school and the County. Allington & McGill-Franzen (1995) explain that although social promotion is normally the preferred option over failing a student, social promotion is still problematic if students are promoted but not assisted and because it "carries a

stigma and seems to locate the learning difficulties in the child" rather than in "the failure of the educational system. . .for the failure to design early school educational environments that accelerate the literacy development of children who begin school behind their peers." In addition, students who are socially promoted "usually remain among the lowest-achieving members of the group (only retained children perform less well)" (p. 49). Although I could not delve back into the elementary and middle school data for these students, I did find a few students who were so weak in every skill of literacy, that some intervention, years earlier, probably would have been helpful, appropriate, and even necessary.

I also had only three students who were still 14, the age of the majority of ninth graders who had followed a normal path, when they arrived in my classroom. The others, between the ages of 15 and 17 must have been held back in the past but the County appeared not to believe that a 15-, 16-, or 17-year-old could belong in a middle school at these ages and the accompanying levels of adolescent maturity. As a result, the weakest students in my class appeared to have been "socially promoted." My estimation is that the school officials were as worried about the esteem of the older individual taking classes with the younger students as they were about the safety and moral well-being of the younger students being subjected to the attitudes of the

older students. All of the above indicators placed my students at-risk

of dropping out:

> The question asked: What are the relationships among school
> and individual variables that place most students at risk of
> dropping out of high school?. . . .Having been left back in
> elementary school, overage upon entering ninth grade, and
> behind grade level in reading and math, all serve as solid
> predictors of dropping out (Fine, 1991, pp. 237-238).

Students placed in this program all accepted their placement in

class by attending the class, so none of the students had dropped out

before at least trying the class. Students had been told that if they

passed the class that they would be able to receive credit for English I

and for one elective, and most importantly to them, that they would

be able to continue on to tenth grade (possibly another form of social

promotion for some) if they passed the requirements. Students at

least were assured that they had an opportunity not to fail ninth

grade. And, the program did thus serve to keep students in school.

Well, at least, I thought, the County superintendent, Dr. Tomlin, who

had by accident invented the appellation Orange Box, had come to

some sense of urgency about the reading and writing skills of these

students and had begun a program to remediate. I knew that the

Superintendent and the reading coordinator also planned to set up a

similar program in the elementary schools, at the sixth-grade level the

next year, using the same one-test approach, and thought that this

was at least a small step in the right direction, because it could serve

to keep these students in school, to give them necessary extra help,

and most importantly, to keep them learning. This was valid, however, only if I could find ways to move students forward, and away from an obsession with their abhorrence of the stigmatizing label and the "ability" grouping.

MY EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS

Setting goals was helpful for me once I learned more about what my students might be like. I decided that I needed to set high standards for myself and for my students in order to help them to progress. I also decided that I would be positive about my hopes for these students and my hopes for them to succeed. By writing down these goals, I was also committing myself to working toward these goals. I had many goals for these young people that were shared with both parents and students in the first few days of class. The specific motivational goals I set up are as follows:

MOTIVATIONAL GOALS OF ENGLISH I PROGRAM:

Students will:

- Set up reading and writing goals.

- Learn ways to actively and immediately begin tackling those goals.

- Learn how to begin reading, writing, studying tasks from the day they are assigned.

- Learn how to complete reading, writing, and other high school assignments.

- Always try to do their best work.

- Learn to work hard and to be proud of their work.

- Receive rewards, praise, positive reinforcement, and good grades for tackling and completing difficult assignments.

- Attempt to consider all learning activities and assignments as learning opportunities.

- Learn that they can be successful at whatever they want to do if they try. Trying and doing the best one can is the best model for success.

- Have a positive attitude toward reading, always do his or her best at attempting all assignments, and as a result, discover that reading can be enjoyable, relaxing, and fun.

- Read, write, study in a nonthreatening manner, and a comfortable atmosphere.

The above were mainly general statements of mine about what types of goals I would like to see students try to reach. These goals were also meant to be positive and uplifting, or motivating. I was always conscious of the above goals as I planned student activities and responded to them about their reading and writing, and future school success.

Although I certainly wanted to accomplish all of the above goals and to strengthen the curriculum by giving students a variety of challenging reading and writing assignments, I did not know how much material I could cover in one year, nor how students would react to the materials, the workbooks, the literature, and the writing tasks. However, I was committed to assessing the situation of each and every student on an individual basis and to finding assignments that would prove to the outside world, which included anyone outside the

immediate classroom—administrators, teachers, parents, other students—that my students were extremely capable. I was going to find a way for them to reach down deep inside themselves and come up with their best work. Some of my commitment is revealed through the letter I wrote to parents during the first week of school:

Dear Parents:

All of us at Littletown High School are excited about the upcoming year. We welcome your child to the ninth grade class and to our high school community. Through parents, students, and teachers working together, we hope to make this school year the best ever for your son or daughter. I look forward to working with your child and to getting to know him or her.

In the first days of class, students were instructed on classroom rules and have signed a contract stating that they will follow the rules set up at all times. Students were informed of the consequences for not following the rules. I have enclosed a copy of the class contract, the consequences, and the rewards for good behavior.

Students have been given a list of materials they will need for this class. The Homework To Do file will be an important file for your child to share with you every evening. Although your child may not have homework every night in every class, he or she will be likely to have some homework every night. For next week in my class, for example, your child will be writing a short journal assignment each night. It would be a great support to me and to your child if you could urge him or her to come prepared to class, with all homework already done and ready to be turned in.

In my Developmental Reading/English I class, students will be reading both technical and non-technical material or both textbooks and novels, short stories, and poetry. Students will also be keeping a daily journal about their reading and study habits, and about the reading assignments they have completed; students will respond according to their own opinions about fiction and other reading assignments, and will answer specific questions about reading through their journal writing. The students in my class will also be learning effective study and note-taking strategies, organizational skills, and methods to help

them begin an assignment and to follow through and complete that assignment by the due date. Students will be given daily motivational tips to keep them on track throughout the day. Some of the beginning tips are: 1) Take notes in all classes 2) Listen in class 3) Begin all assignments the day they are given and complete them by the day they are due, and most importantly, 4) Have a good attitude.

I know that you will agree with me about the importance of your child's education. This year has started out on a very positive note: so many parents came to the ninth grade orientation and to the general meeting about this Developmental Reading/English I course. Let's continue with this positive thinking and good attitudes throughout the year for "this is the stuff that dreams are made of." All students need to be given the opportunities to follow their dreams. Let's keep reaching for the stars, setting those goals, and dreaming those dreams. If there is any way that I can be of help to you, please contact me at the school.

Sincerely,

R. Lee Baginski
English I/ Developmental Reading Teacher

The letter was a true reflection of what I hoped I could do with my students, and also a true reflection of how much I hoped they would succeed. In the following chapter, I will specifically describe my students' opinions on literacy and schooling as expressed through their written comments and tacit routines. In a subsequent chapter, I will discuss, through the presentation of students' written assignments, how the students and I strived collectively to help them achieve the above goals.

CHAPTER 7

STUDENT READING AND WRITING INTERESTS AND ATTITUDES

It is . . .because of the many children I have seen who technically *can* read, albeit slowly and haltingly, but refuse to read. . . . Many of the children I work with simply hate reading, and they will say quite readily that they hate it. Who wouldn't hate something they have spent years trying to learn and still do not do very well (Roller, 1996, p. 33)?

In the following chapter I will explain my students' motivation and attitudes toward reading and writing activities as well the reasons I discovered for why they had failed to succeed in the current educational system. The data, mainly in the form of students' written documents, will be used first to reveal how their motivation, or lack of motivation, hindered their progress in reading and writing activities performed at school. Following this discussion, students' written products and the teacher's written comments will be used to demonstrate that: (1) choice of reading materials as well as writing topics (2) the use of adolescent literature and multicultural literature and (3) the use of motivational strategies (for example, giving praise as well as good grades for work completed to the best of a student's current ability or providing ways to begin a project) are techniques

that work for students labelled "at-risk" or "developmental" or "slow readers" or "below grade" or "Orange-Box."

Equally important, these techniques work also for the average student, the everyday student, the ones who simply do not like to read or write, and who also lack the conviction that they can read or write well. Students who once experienced only failure, can find themselves successful at reading and writing. Not needing to expect perfection from the outset of a student's high school career, a teacher can instead convince students both subtly and honestly that they can read and write better than they had ever imagined. Boosting confidence in self, not allowing students to continually attribute blame to self or to consider themselves failures, and "getting the engine started" through positive comments and helpful nudges and suggestions to push students to begin assignments are some of the methods that will be discussed in the pages that follow.

THE 'SYMPTOMS'

> The theoretical and pedagogical model that was available for 'corrective teaching' led educators to view literacy problems from a medical-remedial perspective. Thus they set out to diagnose as precisely as possible the errors (defects) in a student's paper—which they saw as symptomatic of equally isolable defect in the student's linguistic capacity—and devise drills and exercises to remedy them. (One of the 1930s nicknames for remedial sections was 'sick sections.' During the next decade they would be tagged 'hospital sections.') Such corrective teaching was, in the words of one educator, 'the most logical as well as the most scientific method.'

Though we have, over the last fifty years, developed a richer understanding of reading and writing difficulties, the reductive view of error and the language of medicine is still with us. A recent letter from the senate of a local liberal arts college is sitting on my desk. It discusses a 'program in remedial writing for. . .[those] entering freshmen suffering from severe writing handicaps.' We seem entrapped by this language, this view of students and learning. We still talk of writers as suffering from specifiable, locatable defects, deficits, and handicaps that can be localized, circumscribed, and remedied. Such talk carries with it the etymological wisps and traces of disease and serves to exclude from the academic community those who are so labeled. They sit in scholastic quarantine until their disease can be diagnosed and remedied. (Rose, 1989, p. 210).

The students in my classes were all so individual but at the same time they displayed some commonalities in their attitudes toward reading and writing. I learned about my students' interests, disinterests, fears, and failures through their journals, reading and writing questionnaires filled out in class during the first weeks of school, and through discussion with students about their work in my class.

The majority of students indicated through their various writings that they hated reading and writing or that they did not think that they did well in either of these activities:

"When it comes down to writting I don't have an earthly idea of what I be doing. Yes at times I consider myself as a good writter. I like to write about those things that interesting, or romantic. I hate to write about someone dieing or anything sad. I really don't know. I hate Math and Reading."

"The last experience I had on a book report was in the 6th grade and it was kindea boreing."

"I feel good about reading aloud because I love to read."

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"My favorite subject is social studies. The thing I hate most is language arts."

"I think I write fine and some times I write sloppy. Sometime I can write so good the it looke bad too me and other people think look good."

"One of my accomplish is that I would like to read better but sometime I just hate to read."

"What can [help] me to be more interesting in reading is to enjoy more books. . . .I'll found some fun book to read."

"What would I like to accomplish is to read more & to study more and to do better in my classes. My goal in English class I would read more & write more and listern more carely. What can I do so thing can interest me more pick Fun books to read. Try to enjoy the book some. . . ."

"Yes I just want to say that I am working hard to read alot some of the books look fun to read and some are boring."

"What I wont to do better on is Read."

"I don't really like reading aloud in a class or during a presentation in front of others. But I will do it to make a good grade. I really don't like to read. If I don't have any thing else to do I might pick up a book and read a little. I have done a report on alot of books in school. I have been writing Journals since the fifth-grade, but I'm not to good at it."

"My writing is not to good. I don't like to write. I don't write to much. I don't consider myself a good writer.

I hate to write. But if I write regularlly I will learn to write better. I can not hardly write in cursive and barley in print. I like to write about things I have done, letters. I hate to write reports."

"I hate reading when I am reading my mind is not in it."

"Well you want me to describe my writing abilities, I describe them as I dont like writing.

I consider. . .myself as a good writer when I want to be. I hate writing.

I really dont like writing about anything, but [what] I dont hate [about] writing [is] I really like writing letters. . . . My strongest skill in English I am not aware of yet."

"I hated reading books and writing book reports."

"I hate reading and writing and school. I havent read a book sence 1st grade and I hated it."

On the subject of writing in particular, to the question "When you are given a writing assignment, how do you approach it?," all but two students circled the response, "I don't know how to begin." The two others circled the response "With a feeling I can do OK." Although none answered, "I look forward to it [writing]," it is promising to note that none circled the response, "I'm sure I will fail."

Students in my classroom, however, did have a fear of failure that they had perhaps harbored for quite some time about their reading and writing abilities at school. On the "Student Motivation Information Form" students filled out, to the question, "I'm very proud that. . ." ten students made comments similar to these: "I pass my grade," "I made it to the ninth [grade] (3 students answered exactly this way). That three students wrote, "I made it. . . ." indicates some possibly very real fear of "not making it to the ninth grade."

One student who indicated that "an important goal" was "to finish school" also wrote: "One of my better accomplishments" was "to get to the ninth grade." This student was 16 years old, intelligent, and ended up running away from home, then being transferred to another school where his personal problems continued to plague him. He

ended up having to repeat ninth grade again the next year for absenteeism and for not completing enough courses. Another student, one who had a great deal of difficulty with school and needed the extra help that a reading teacher could provide, and who subsequently failed ninth grade for absenteeism and for not completing the work expected, wrote: "I wonder about . . ." "finishing school." This student dropped out the year after this study was completed; however, he told me that he planned to start ninth grade again the following year, the year he would be 17. Students wrote "Sometimes I worry about . . .": "passing a test," "my grades," "going to jail," "my future," and "If I be failing."

What students indicated that they most wanted out of school from their teacher was for her to be proud of them. To the question, "If I did better at school, " I wish my teacher would. . .": "be proud of me (3 students)," "tell me what a good job I did," "give me no more homework," "give me an award," "give me a reward," "give me a good grade," "give me a passing grade, "tell me," "always let me know," "congradulate me."

To the question, "A good thing my teacher could do for me is. . ." students responded: "help me more in school," "give less work," "teach me," "give all A's," "help me with something I don't understand," "pass me (3 students)," "teach me the best she could," "encourage us like she's doing."

Beyond hating reading and writing and not feeling particularly competent in these areas, students indicated above and in conversations with me that they had for the most part not done much reading or writing. Others admitted that although they had been assigned reading and writing throughout their school years that they had not done their assignments most of the time. On a reading inventory that I administered to students early in the year, the majority of students had not been read to by their parents when they were children. Much research has shown that the more successful readers were read to often at home (see Teale, 1984; Clark, 1984; Morrow, 1983; Durkin, 1974, 1975). Only three students indicated that they chose to read books beyond those assigned for required reading, although many students indicated that they liked to read magazines. One student wrote, "I don't like books so much. But magazines are my Favorites." The favorites were *Jet, Ebony, Seventeen, Teen, YM,* and *Sports Illustrated.*

In conversations, four students indicated that they loved to read at home, but did not like to participate in reading and writing at school. One student's mother told me that her daughter often stayed up almost all night to read novels and then complained that she was too tired to go to school. From the work that Chelsea had done in my class, I knew that she was very capable and that she could read and write better than the majority of other students; however, this

student normally, at least in the beginning, did very little on her reading and writing assignments in my class and tried, on almost a daily basis, to undermine the other students' educational time, by causing a variety of distractions, from feigning illness to creating distractions to having tantrums. I wondered why this student had no problem reading at home, but every difficulty with reading at school.

When students were asked about their reading habits, all but one indicated that they read "less frequently" now after entering junior high school. Some of the reasons given for reading less were: "because I got lazy," "[b]ecause I wanted to get out and meet new People and have fun," "because I had alot of things going on in my life, "I just didn't feel like reading at all sometimes" and "I read less because it seemed like reading was less important."

One student who said that he now read less frequently indicated that "[i]n the 3rd grade I loved to read." What had happened to make these students who remembered reading "Little Red Riding Hood," *The Cat in the Hat,* "The Three Little Pigs," *Winnie the Pooh,* and nursery rhymes like "Mary Had a Little Lamb," "Gorgy Porgy" "Jack and Jill" lose interest in reading? One of my ninth graders wrote that his favorite book of all time was *The Little Train That Could.* Was there not a way to help this student find another book that he would like that might interest him and motivate him to read and to remember fondly?

CHAPTER 8

PROTECTING SOCIAL IMAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM:
OBSCURING THE TRUTH ABOUT ABILITY AND EFFORT

> It is no longer a matter of difference between teacher and student that
> derives from intergenerationally transmitted communicative traditions. It is
> also a matter of cultural intention as a medium of resistance in a situation
> of political conflict. As students grow older and experience repeated failure
> and repeated negative encounters with teachers, they develop oppositional
> cultural patterns as a symbol of their disaffiliation with what they
> experience (not necessarily within full reflective awareness) as an
> illegitimate and oppressive system. The more alienated the students
> become, the less they persist in doing schoolwork. Thus they fall farther
> and farther behind in academic achievement. The student becomes either
> actively resistant—seen as salient and incorrigible—or passively
> resistant—fading into the woodwork as an anonymous well-behaved, low-
> achieving student (Erickson, 1993, p. 41).

The classroom cultural vignettes to follow will describe the ways

that my students behaved and felt about themselves, their reading,

their writing, their memories of past failures, their placement in a

remedial class, what they called a "class for dummies," a "resource

class," a "class for retards." The stories and descriptions below will

also describe my students as loath, disinclined, unwilling, hesitant,

averse, reluctant, inhibited, antagonistic, and even at times hostile

toward the classroom activities and others conspiring, in a real or

imagined way, in the plot against them. At virtually no time did

students place the blame for their education solely at their own feet,

because they first chose to blame administrators, most specifically Mrs. Stiehl who, they all knew had instigated the new program and also their previous middle school principal (for three of these students this was also Mrs. Stiehl) Mr. Leduc, who was now their current high school principal. Equally guilty was their current teacher, primarily because I was unable to devise methods to move them immediately to a regular class, where all but a few of them believed they belonged, and because I was unable to immediately turn their failures into successes. Students wanted immediate gratification for everything, were unable to understand why reading and writing would need to take so long to learn, and even seemed to question why literacy seemed so important to others.

Although I do not assign sole blame to any of the above, nor to the students themselves, if blame must be assigned, and I'm not at all sure that this is helpful, then all of us must share it. I am also reluctant to blame students for their inability to succeed in the current educational system because these students had not received "equal opportunity" for success as proposed by law. Their perception of a societal conspiracy to deny them success may have been very real because they had been labelled, denigrated, and denied the same opportunities to read literature and perform the same activities that the other students in regular English classes were given. The psychological damage of this blaming and fingerpointing was most

detrimental to these students and had a profound effect on both their present and predicted success. The adjectives that I used to describe students' motivational detachment, if you will, traverse the course of the anecdotal evidence below.

CREATING OBSTACLES TO THEIR OWN LEARNING

I gathered a great deal of initial information on my students as I observed them and read their journals in the first few days and weeks of the school year. Many of these students admitted freely that although they could read they never did. When a teacher gave them an assignment, they rarely read it. Even when the assignment was given in class, they would instead instigate some kind of trouble, talk, sleep, or write notes instead.

My observations led me to believe that one of the reasons why my students had not succeeded in the current system had to do with their own attitudes toward reading, toward writing, toward school, and especially toward placement in a remedial class. Another reason for these students' inability to succeed was that their beliefs about their own abilities, derived not only from placement in this class, but also from their need to protect themselves from others' beliefs that they lacked academic aptitude in reading, writing, or any school subjects. The latter perception caused them to convey the impression to others that their lack of success was related to their lack of effort rather than

to their lack of ability. This phenomenon is explained by Covington & Omelich (1979):

> Why do others hide their effects and refuse to admit that they study hard? [This results from] . . .a pervasive tendency in our society to equate the ability to achieve with human value. . . . From this self-esteem perspective, expending effort becomes a potential threat to the ascriptions of low ability. . . .In effect, effort can become a double-edged sword for many students. On the one hand, they must exert some effort to avoid teacher punishment, but not so much as to risk public shame should they try hard and fail (pp. 169-170).

According to Weiner (1995):

> the presence of low effort may suggest that the person is uninvolved in the activity and is indifferent to the outcome. Conversely, the expenditure of effort indicates the desire to succeed. Hence, failure ascribed to a combination of high ability and low effort may be 'preferred' precisely because the failure is construed as not meaningful or important (pp. 44-45; see also Weiner, 1985, 1986).

Furthermore, although students may actually not make an effort on assignments that are not meaningful to them, adolescents are very likely to act in ways that bring social approval of their adolescent peers, and act in different ways to help them to avoid punishment from teachers or parents or to actually receive assistance from parents or teachers if it is needed. All of my students indicated on a questionnaire that their attitudes toward reading and writing had nothing to do with their peers because they did not allow others to influence their behavior; one student wrote to the question of whether she had any students with whom she could converse about books: "No one. Because all my friends hate reading too." Although I believed in

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the honesty and value of my students' responses, I also believed that students could be in some ways naïve and unaware of the effects of their peers on themselves; their responses were also part of the defiant attitude of teens who desperately want to be in control of their lives and who express pride in any independence they can espouse, whether real or imagined.

Adolescents are, despite their protests, profoundly affected by their peers. Weiner (1995) explains four "chains of inference" that reveal that reasoning behind adolescents' placement of responsibility for failure in either lack of ability or lack of effort:

> 1. Adolescent fails > Adolescent communicates lack of effort > Adult ascribes the failure to low effort > Adult assumes that effort is controllable > Adult perceives the adolescent as responsible >Adult is angry >Adult will punish.
>
> 2. Adolescent fails > Adolescent communicates lack of ability >Adult ascribes the failure to low ability >Adult construes low ability as uncontrollable >Adult perceives the adolescent as not responsible >Adult feels sympathy >Adult will help and not punish.
>
> 3. Adolescent fails > Adolescent communicates lack of effort > Peer ascribes the failure to low effort > Peer assumes that effort is controllable > Peer perceives the other as intentionally violating adult rules > Peer expresses admiration >Peer accepts fellow adolescent into social network.
>
> 4. Adolescent fails > Adolescent communicates lack of ability > Peer ascribes the failure to low ability > Peer assumes that ability is uncontrollable > Peer perceives fellow adolescent as not responsible > Peer feels sympathy > Peer may help but not admit the 'different' fellow adolescent into the social network (pp. 49-50).

Considering the above chains, the normal adolescent would never attribute failure to lack of ability to their peers if they wanted to be accepted. However, students would admit or sometimes feign lack of ability as the cause for failure in attempts to manipulate parents or teachers in order to receive help or to prevent punishment. Manipulations about lack of effort and actual lack of effort, however, have a way of catching up with students, and is ultimately intolerable in society; as a result, a person who does not work hard is punished and is expected to change:

> . . .[L]ack of effort may be punished because trying is instrumental to the survival of society. That is, it is functional for all persons to work and contribute to the common good; intolerance of those who do not try, then, decreases the likelihood that this behavior will continue, teaches others a moral lesson, and provides some retribution (Weiner, 1995, p. 52).

One student, incidentally a student that I felt had much higher than average ability over the other members of the class, told me at the end of the year, after I had once again prodded him, pleaded with him, and even begged him to try harder to complete the work I knew he could do: " I always do that. I never do any work until the end of the year, and then I just do enough to pass. It always works. I pass and that's all I want." Regardless of my realistic beliefs about his intelligence, his ability, questions about his ability, most likely set off by his being placed in this class, led him to protect his image with his peers by showing a complete lack of effort on assignments with the

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proof of his actual ability in his quarterly and final grades which revealed that he passed with little or no effort, thus revealing to others that he was after all intelligent and that his placement in a "class for dummies" was unjustified. As time went on and his effort did not change, or changed only minimally, the fact that he did not do much work obscured my ability to determine what his true ability was.

How many others in the class displayed such attitudes of defiance in light of their placement in this remedial class? And how could one discern whether a student was not working hard, or not even trying in some cases, because of purposeful lack of effort, which also manifested itself in the form of disciplinary disruptions, sleeping poses, and pretending to work gazes, or because of lack of ability.

Had pretending become the norm that had led to this reality? Had the students pretended to read or to work for so long that they could no longer catch up with their peers, and until they had indeed lost the ability to learn? Were they being punished by a society's "intolerance of those who do not try" (Weiner, 1995, p. 150) or had they begun a practice of manipulation that had backfired and now become habit, a habit that had led to students falling irrevocably behind in their schoolwork, a habit that now might be almost impossible to break, although still considered as under the control of the student? How could students' volition or lack of volition for trying, for working hard, be changed for the better? Peer pressure, fear

of failure, lack of effort, not finding classwork important, disruptive behavior, sleeping in class, feigning illness, loud interruptions, all contributed to students successfully creating obstacles to their own learning. The more obstacles that could be placed in their own paths by themselves as well as by other members of the class, the less likely that the teacher—or perhaps more importantly the other students—could attribute their failure to lack of ability.

Pretending or hiding behind pretense or manipulations obscured accurate assessments of students as well as the time needed for students to complete work and for the teacher to help students who did need help. Students, however, only wanted help when no one else was watching, which was impossible in this classroom setup, and thus, the need for social approval overcame the students, and the teacher's hopes for a successful learning atmosphere were violated.

However, students were able to protect their social image inside the classroom by creating those obstacles. They were, unfortunately, unable to learn successfully in this atmosphere, but their peers would not be able to assess lack of ability as the reason. Everything revolved around protecting that image, and image became the be-all and end-all of their classroom activity; the most important sensation for students was pride, not in the value or importance of learning to become better readers and writers but in methods of distracting others from realizing what was their greatest fear: that others might believe

they had low ability. The fear of not being intelligent, or of not being considered intelligent had, I suspect, always been and continued to be a nagging suspicion these students held about themselves that, without a work ethic, might end up to be true. Whether students actually had low ability or had only had the idea implanted in their psyches through repeated negative experiences did not necessarily matter to students anymore, for the majority of students now believed that they had low ability and even that they "were dumb" and would do anything to prevent others from finding out. How could this vicious cycle be stopped?

In the following section, I will explain the shields students wielded to protect themselves from being considered by others as lacking in ability.

CHAPTER 9

SHIELDS TO PROTECT SELF-IMAGE

Students put up a variety of shields to protect themselves from performing activities at which they might fail. Many of these protective shields manifested themselves in student behavior. Awareness of such defenses in students who have low self-esteem is the first step in discovering methods of breaking down these defenses. The following chapter will also begin to reveal the relationship between low literacy and low self-esteem and will in part explain the reasons why some students did not value the education provided to them. The effects that negativity, passivity, and resistance to their education had on these students' attitudes toward literacy and schooling will also be discussed.

PRETENDING TO READ

I noticed early on in the year several students who did as much as possible to make it look as if they were reading. One student, the student who ended up working the hardest throughout the year, admitted in one of my preliminary questionnaires that she had practiced the pretense of reading for quite some time; she wrote,

"When I was told to read I would just sit and stare at the book, to make me look like I was reading." Apparently, previous teachers had not noticed this before or had chosen to ignore it.

I was aware that students might be pretending to read, and I decided that I would work to discourage this from happening. On one of the first days of school, I walked over to one student who was not reading and whispered into his ear, "Nobody ever died of reading." I had caught on to his trick of "pretending to read," although I am sure that he had no idea that I knew. After my subtle revelation to this student, Marvell laughed and did actually read a little bit that day, which was more than he usually did, he admitted later. And, although I cannot say that my comment to Marvell on that day got him reading and loving it, it was a comment that broke the ice and one that got Marvell started, knowing that I was not a teacher who was about to let him sit there all day pretending to read. I wrote in my journal on that day:

> Marvell was lying on his desk with his head and book completely immersed beneath a t-shirt. I walked over, where I saw him open his eyes and pretend to be reading under the shirt. I knew he wasn't reading and he knew I knew he wasn't reading. He said, "I ain't sleepin'. I like to be comfortable when I read and it's cold in here." I then said to him, "No one ever died from reading." He laughed and started reading. Some of the other kids heard what I said to him and they laughed and also started reading. Others students besides Marvell were also pretending to read but weren't. I walked around the room to keep an eye on all of them and noticed they were watching me too. After a time, everyone settled in and read but it took them some time to "get comfortable."

I hope that I can somehow do enough to get all of them reading and not pretending to read every time they are asked to. I hope they're not pretending because they really can't read the books they've chosen. Certainly other teachers must have noticed students that don't read when they are given silent reading time. Should I ignore them? Would that make them more comfortable? Am I observing them too closely? No, I don't think so. I think that most of these students have been ignored for too long. It would be too easy to ignore them. I hope I can discover what it is exactly that is causing such an aversion to reading for so many of them and that I can figure out a real plan to change their habits so that they can become better students. I am determined more than ever to discover ways to make this program work for my students or to develop a better one that will!

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AS EDUCATIONAL DISTRACTIONS

Before I started teaching at Littletown, I had worries about discipline and as a result of my discussions with the teachers, I had worries about my ability to be firm enough. One of the assistant principals, an African-American woman, gave all the new teachers to Littletown some beginning advice on how to deal with discipline. She said, "Never take on a student. You'll never win." Although I did not completely understand this comment at the time, it did prove to be good advice. The students were very good at verbal argumentation and at continuing the argument. Other students would always come to the aid of their schoolmates if a teacher tried to spar back with a student and the situation could change very quickly from a seemingly insignificant episode to a major confrontation to a situation out of control.

On the whole, though, the students, male and female, in my classroom during the year committed only minor infractions of the rules. A group of males in my first period class had moments of childishness where they needed to shoot rubberbands at each other, or throw pencils at each other. One student in my second period class one day decided to make a water balloon in the classroom sink and throw it on the floor. Another student in the second period classroom threw tantrums from time to time which were often directed at another student who had made a comment she did not like and culminated in the former student throwing books or chairs on the ground, and in a trip to the office. I deem that these were minor infractions because none of the discipline problems involved direct violence against another person.

There was only one event that could truly be designated as violent between members in my classroom. Two students, Margullis and Devon, cornered a third student, Clevon, during first period, wherein Margullis promptly knocked Clevon out. The fight happened so quickly and there was no prior evidence that a fight was about to ensue that most of the members of the class were dumbfounded by its occurrence. I rushed to Clevon's side, while others went to summon help. Clevon stood up, and calmly walked to the principal's office with the other two; Margullis and Devon received two days worth of after-school detention and Clevon was suspended for three days for starting

the fight before school began. I told Margullis and Devon that if their case had been decided by a court of law, their aggressive behavior would be termed "assault and battery" and that they would receive more than two half-hour sentences. I spoke to each of their parents and the parents agreed with me.

There was one other disturbing event in January where a student who had been in my classroom for only a few weeks threatened to put me in the hospital. When the principal came to discuss this with the class, the other students corroborated my story, and the student was promptly expelled.

I did not like to write disciplinary referrals to the office in the beginning of the school year because I did not feel that anything they did was really so bad that it needed outside attention. But, as time went on, I no longer hesitated to write referrals, whenever a student was infringing on the rights of other pupils to learn. I knew I had one year to get these students going, and I did not want them to waste their time, another's time, or their own or another's chances to go on to a non-remedial class and a brighter future.

Unfortunately, although their acts of disruption might well have been considered "minor" in some respects, disruptions of any magnitude also derailed, at least temporarily, the educational process for themselves and others. I wrote in my journal at the beginning of the year:

Well, goofing off is normal for kids this age. I wonder if this is part of the reason why many of them are considered to be so far behind or are so far behind. I know that I am giving them enough to do, so their acting up is not because of lack of work, or because they are finished with everything. I need to look into whether they are doing this because they don't like reading, or don't understand what they're reading, or don't like this particular assignment, or if it's because they are holding me accountable for their placement in this reading program. I need to find a way to stop this negative attitude toward assignments, toward reading, and toward this class in general from destroying all of my attempts to help them and from destroying their own abilities to learn. I discussed one Tip of the Day: Have a good attitude: and told them that I thought that having a good attitude about learning was to me a guarantee for better grades. I do not want the extreme negativity of a few of the students to bring the other students down either. The discipline problems will get better if I am able to help students accept their placement in this program, and if I am able to get them to believe that they can do something well.

Before I began teaching, I had no idea of the extent to which disciplining the students would consume my time and energy, nor did I have any firm idea of the actual reading and writing skills of my students. I discovered fairly early that the students would cause disruptions every chance they got in order to keep themselves from reading or from doing the work expected. Although I learned that there were a few students who actually had extreme difficulties reading and writing, the majority of students were of average ability in reading and writing for ninth grade students at this school, regardless of what the test scores indicated. Students also acted out because they simply did not want to be in a class entitled "developmental reading." In the next section, I will attempt to explain how the culture of the school

contributed to widespread negativity, fear of failure, and "seeming" lack of energy and ability on the part of the student body, and my students more specifically.

PERVASIVE NEGATIVITY AND IMMOBILIZATION TACTICS: I AIN'T KNOW AND I AIN'T CARE

Another eye-opening characteristic of the culture of Littletown High School was what I have termed the "I ain't know, I ain't care syndrome." Teachers were frustrated across the school due to the half-completed, shoddy work that students did in class or turned in as homework assignments. Students were known to do a little, then quit, or to do a little but never bother to turn in the finished product. I would not let my students quit. I gave them guidelines, or directions, to get them going and to keep them going. Otherwise, nothing would ever get done. What I realized early on was that my students were not used to following through and, more importantly, had been used to getting away with it.

Another early revelation for me was that when students in my classroom were asked a question, they often—in fact extremely often— answered with either "I ain't know" or "I ain't care" or both. Besides the obvious unusual grammatical construction, the attitude of not knowing and not caring about not knowing was endemic in the school. I heard this litany frequently from students all over the school. This

answer could come both in the classroom as a response to a question about a reading assignment or other assignment, or to an informal query outside on the campus grounds. From the moment I first heard these phrases, I knew they were symptomatic because they conveyed an attitude of extreme negativity and passivity. What tangle of pathologies were concealed beneath these facile claims of indifference? Did students who made this comment really mean that they did not know and that they did not care or was this statement made because perhaps they cared *too much* about protecting their image and esteem?

The comment was sometimes uttered in frustration because a student had been asked a question in front of his or her peers to which he or she did not know the answer. That was a way to beg off the question, have the attention diverted elsewhere, and also a code that revealed to the other students that he or she did not care about not knowing. Sometimes a student made one of the above comments to make other students believe that the student being asked the question really knew the answer but was being deliberately belligerent to the teacher and proud of the deception. Sometimes a student was simply not energized to give an answer, simply did not feel compelled to answer, sometimes it was simply the nature of the question, sometimes it was the student's nonchalance. Other times, the student was too shy to answer and this was a sure-fire way not to have to say much. But, students said this both when they were in

small groups, and when speaking alone to the teacher. They repeated these formulas as a joke, and just as often, when they were serious. As it was not always possible for the teacher or for other students to determine exactly why the student had made the comment, the student was able to "save face"—no one would ever know whether the student knew the answer or not, or whether the student cared or did not care about his or her education.

These phrases may seem of minor importance, but they permeated the culture of the school, and were of major significance and of lasting impact on the attitudes of the students there. Students would fall back on these formulas again and again for whatever reasons and as a result it was extremely difficult to get students to explore any issue in depth. Students also, for the most part, refused to share their opinions or to be critical or to analyze any piece of reading or writing or current event, at least in the beginning of the year. I was not the only teacher who had this problem. The phrases were used in every area of their schooling, and, according to students' parents, at home as well.

Teachers all over the school were giving up on their students. They said that the group of students they had were the worst they had ever seen. They showed me projects or portfolios that students had worked on for months that were turned in with only one or two pages of information or a few assignments completed.

But, looking at the prospects that the town of Littletown and the county of Kingsboro had to offer, this prevalent attitude of "don't know, don't care" was not at all surprising. This attitude was bound to suffuse the academic enterprises of students in my class and students at the school as a whole.

STUDENTS' CAREER CHOICES

> Correlation studies (e.g., low scores on reading tests and low socioeconomic class) can be amplified by ethnographic work. For example, the ethnographic study of a specific low socioeconomic group may reveal that reading scores correlate not only with economic level, but also with the degree to which reading is relevant to group membership, status achievement, work opportunities, and retention of cultural values for the group as a whole. Ideally such contextual evidence for specific communities helps educators reexamine school values for literacy in terms of how they can be related to home and community values. (Heath, 1982, p. 44).

Another component of the attitude of the school was the lack of desire of many students to do anything with their lives. Some students spoke of going on to college in a noncommittal way, others talked about working as engineers, for example, but never about going to college, others talked about working but were often not responsible enough to maintain their after-school jobs for very long, still others had no ambition for school or a career and unfortunately, they tended to be the largest group and the most committed of all.

Students' career choices were also indicators of their lack of motivation for enhanced literacy or their lack of understanding of the

need for literacy in their choice of profession. One student wrote that he wanted to be either an "NBA Player," an "NFL Player," although he was neither on the basketball or football team, and lastly, if these ambitions did not pan out, he just wanted to "have a job," indicating that any job would do. Another student wanted to be a "farmer, construction worker, or construction owner." Although this student loved hunting and the great outdoors, he was not enrolled in the agricultural education course the school offered; he also was not enrolled in the building education course nor the business education course; these were courses specifically designed to help students learn about the trades in which he had indicated an interest. Many of the women chose cosmetologist as their first choice, second choices often were teacher, secretary, or nurse. Two women indicated that they wanted to be doctors as their first choice; neither were taking science courses. One woman wanted to be: first, a body builder, second, a nurse, third, a choral director; she was neither taking physical education, science, or music, nor was she involved in the choir. The student who did the least amount of work during the school year wanted to be a teacher although she had no plans to attend college. One male student wanted to be a "Train Driver, work for steel[e] plant, work for paper company, work for River Run (Sanitation)," which indicated more realistic career aspirations, as all of these industries were based in the County seat.

Although students' career goals for the most part seemed unrealistic, considering that the means of attempting to attain such goals were basically nonexistent for them, I had to remember that they were only in the ninth grade and did not really know what they wanted to do nor what they would be able to do. I also would never denigrate any what-seemed-to-be-unrealistic goals because I believed that these students as well as all others could do anything they set their minds to; however, I knew that I would need to try to motivate them to work harder to get what they wanted out of their education and to help them to understand what they needed in order to reach those goals. Students unmotivated to do work would not do work, and hence, those same students might be unsuccessful at attaining the jobs of their choice, or even any job at all. Even the paper and steel companies nearby expected students to have at least a high school diploma, and some of these students were at risk of not receiving their degrees unless they began to do their schoolwork, the reading, the writing, the building, the business, the science and the math.

Many of my students believed that schoolwork should be easy and that one should be able to move quickly and effortlessly from ninth grade to graduation to a job of their choice (See examples of this on the Graduation Day writing assignment in the next chapter); after all they had moved from first grade to ninth grade without having hardly read a book; why couldn't they continue to do the same once

in high school? Students needed more reasons to find schoolwork enticing, and/or they needed changes to be made in the curriculum that would allow them to learn the types of things that would help them in settling into their profession of choice. For the majority of students, what we were teaching did not appear to be particularly relevant or important.

CREATING DISTRACTIONS: TRICKS AGAINST THEMSELVES

The students at Littletown and those in my class were experts at sitting without moving, pretending they were working, finding ways to get out of class, or causing a distraction or disruption to get out of doing their work or participating in class. One teacher made up a list of the students' top ten excuses to get out of class:

1. May I use the restroom?
2. May I get a drink of water?
3. I left my book in my locker.
4. I feel sick.
5. May I go to the nurse?
6. I need to go to the guidance office.
7. I have to do a report in another class.
8. I need to call home.
9. I need to take my medicine.
10. I left my coat in another class.

This list may appear to be a list of conventional tricks that students all over the country use to try to get out of class and that would probably be correct. I know that in the beginning I fell for every single one of these excuses and even at the end of the year I could still fall for the one, "I feel sick."

One student, late in the year actually went to the extent of causing everyone in the class to think that she was about to faint. As she was unable to walk to the office to have them call either the emergency room or her mother or both, another student ran down the hall to get a wheelchair for her and to inform the office of the problem. When the student got back to the classroom with the wheelchair, the student promptly stood up and walked to the office. She turned and grinned as she walked down the hall. Half an hour later, she was in the cafeteria eating two slices of pizza. She and her friends invited me to join them, where Chelsea, the student in the above episode cheerfully admitted that it was all an act. Her little act took up over half an hour of everyone's educational time.

The problem with the list of top ten excuses, aside from its lack of creativity, was that many teachers had given up on their students and thus, would allow students to use any excuse they wanted. And, as a result, during regular class time there were a great number of students walking around in the halls, always on their way to the computer lab or somewhere other than where they were supposed to be: in class.

Many students who were on their way to the computer lab to supposedly write a paper for another class or even those who were sent specifically by their English teacher or history teacher to write a paper would walk around the halls, peer into classrooms, run down the

halls, or find other ways to disrupt classrooms, doing anything but actually sitting down and working on their assignments. Strangely enough, the group of meandering students included a large number of seniors. This was quite surprising to me because I had hoped that the older students had begun to care about their education, or to think about their futures a little more than the younger students.

My classroom was right next door to the computer lab and both the student restrooms so my students and I were distracted daily by students milling around, some even obnoxious enough as to knock on the door to create the ultimate distraction. All of the wandering students had actual assignments to do, I knew that, but instead of using the time given to them during class time, they chose to wander the halls, often not turning the assignment in at all. Students at all grade levels were doing their best to get out of class and to get out of doing work. It was amazing to see how many students thought that they had nothing to do or did not care whether they had schoolwork to do or not.

In so many ways, I observed what seemed to be very little drive in the majority of students. Negativity was so overwhelming that many teachers were ready to throw up their hands in defeat if they had not already done so.

The students of Littletown High School seemed to have been born into a culture of not knowing and not caring, even though deep

down, if I could ever get that far, I knew that they understood and cared about things much more deeply. Daily, I had to push students (1) to get started and (2) to do their work, to follow through on even the simplest of assignments.

It was amazing to me to see so many students per day who assumed the sleeping pose immediately upon entering the classroom. I told them on the first day of school that I did not allow students to sleep in my class. I told them that I realized that some of them might be tired but that none of them could be more tired than I was since I had stayed up all night the night before to write my syllabus and to prepare for class. I often said to them on days that I had stayed up late or all night grading or preparing, "Have you ever seen me sleeping in class?" They always told me that I was not allowed to sleep in class because I was the teacher. I told them that the same rules applied to them because they were the students. I also talked to them about always having a good attitude and about being alert in class so that they could understand and follow through on their assignments.

Students all over the school, and in my classroom in particular, appeared not to have a "learning orientation" (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). This might be defined as simply knowing "what reaching a goal means" expressed in student statements like these: "'It means I decide what I really need to do, and then do it!'" or "'doing what I need to do,' 'getting my work finished,' and 'being the first to get my work done'"

(Bruning & Schweiger, 1997, p. 159). Students were choosing not to get their work done, and as a result, time was catching up on them. They were falling farther and farther behind and now becoming either defensive or passive about their education, of which neither strategic pose was successful.

My students appeared to be more "performance oriented" (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, in Bruning & Schweiger, 1997, p. 159), an orientation toward learning which is characterized as "learners. . .more concerned with how they compare with others or with external standards." Furthermore:

> students who adopt learning orientations tend to me more adaptive, strategic and persistent. In contrast, a performance orientation tends to lead to maladaptive behaviors such as lack of persistence and learned helplessness (Bruning & Schweiger, 1997, p. 159).

All but one of my students appeared to have some of the above-mentioned characteristics of the performance-oriented student the majority of the time. Some students were intermittently persistent, and were most persistent when the reading or writing they were doing was selected by choice, readings on African-American history or about African-American characters if they were African-American, if they believed they were capable of completing the task, or if they believed they would receive a good grade, if the writing had a purpose to them, and if the reading or writing had some meaning or connection to their lives.

CHAPTER 10

YARDSTICKS AT BOTH ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM: HOW ATTITUDE AND PROGRESS ARE INTERTWINED

Before I describe the literacy events that occurred in my Developmental Reading/English I class, I would like to recount what I consider to be the benchmarks or yardsticks which demarcated very clearly two of the extreme directions that students in my classroom could take. Both are true accounts of events that occurred in my classroom: one I have entitled: "The Ritual Denial: The Slicing Up of the READING Orange"; the other "Convincing Students the Sky's the Limit: The Ned Story."

Both stories demonstrate how attitude and progress are intertwined: students' reading and writing progressed only when the attitude they brought to class allowed them to perform: to work, to write, to read, to do assignments without rebelling against the idea of the program itself. Without a barrage of continual positive comments from the teacher, or a way to steer the class away from an obsession with the "Reading" portion of the class (the course was listed on the students schedules as Reading/English I and the students were given two credits for their successful completion of both courses, taught by

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me, meeting for a total of an hour and a half every day). Students did not want to be in a Reading class—to them that brought them only shame vis á vis other classmates who were in the regular program of English I. The students often would balk at assignments, for the work they had done in the past had only gotten them into this program, which, to many of them, was almost the worst thing that had ever happened to them. I told them daily that I knew they were bright, I knew they could do more, I knew they could do a great job at just about anything if they tried. The extreme positive or the extreme negative were very often the only roads that students took; and in the beginning, as I was attempting to have students read and write their first assignments, the majority of them were heading down the negative road.

BENCHMARK 1: NEGATIVITY AND THE STUDENTS' SENSITIVITY TO LABELLING: "RITUAL DENIAL: THE SLICING OF THE *READING* ORANGE"

On the one hand, students could react very negatively and take very personally their placement in a class entitled "Developmental Reading." Students were aware that they were in a remedial reading class, even though they were unaware of the epithet "Orange Box," and were embarrassed enough by this placement to take the position that something was wrong with them educationally—so why do any work? They could also take the position that there was no way out of

this class because they were so deficient and that they might as well prove the system right by not trying, by not showing others what they could do. A student who assumed this attitude would need extreme amounts of attention and continuous positive feedback and would need to make an attitude turnaround in order to survive in this classroom or any other.

The first anecdote which follows details the extreme negative side of the coin, and the problems that could ensue if a student became so caught up in the label of "Developmental Reading" that he or she could only seek revenge against the label, against his or her placement in the class, and by rebelling against the material presented in the class, the teacher, and more importantly, him or herself, by refusing to learn. I have titled this syndrome, "Ritual Denial: The Slicing of the READING Orange."

A more positive anecdote will follow, one in which a student moved beyond the stigma of being placed in a remedial reading class and demonstrated his true potential by trying, by not being a quitter, and more importantly, by trying to do his best. I have entitled the positive benchmark story, "Convincing Students the Sky's the Limit: The Ned Story." It was the "bench" that I wanted all of my students sitting on by the end of the year if possible.

RITUAL DENIAL: THE SLICING OF THE *READING* ORANGE

One event that occurred in my classroom with the second period class served to open my eyes to how debilitating and degrading placement in the Developmental Reading/English I program was for my students. One day during the first few weeks of class, I found in my mailbox a picture of myself taken the day before school started stapled onto a piece of orange construction paper cut into the shape of an orange with black lines on it dividing it into sections making it look like an orange.   This photo and photos of all the new teachers had been hanging on a bulletin board display in the library for all to see since the beginning of school; the librarians were anxious to set up a new display so they gave the photos back to the new teachers. I only noticed then that the paper was orange, and the shape of the border was like an orange, meaning that the librarians who had made the display were already in on the joke about the "Orange Box" long before the school year started and, of course, had chosen an appropriate color and design for my pictorial introduction to the faculty and students. It is worth mentioning that the heading over the picture indicated in bold-face that the subject I taught was "READING," not English and Reading, but simply "Reading".

The day I received the photo in my mailbox, I took the picture off the border and took the orange-shaped, orange-colored design and placed it on the display board in my room, without giving it a thought.

I do not know why I did that as I had always told students that they were getting credit for English I and so this class was called nothing but English I. I had also told them that I would never call this a "reading" class and that they did not have to either; they simply needed to tell their friends that I was their English teacher. They would be getting credit from me for both English and reading but nobody needed to know this. I knew even at the beginning of the school year how sensitive these students would be concerning this label. I do not know why that day I was so insensitive or casual about placing that word, in bold-face, and in capital letters, right in their faces.

The first period that day went without incident. The second period students, however, were for the most part older, and were also angrier about their placement in this class. And, in my opinion, there were more students in this class who were incorrectly placed. The second period class began with Jamaica, a student, asking to borrow my scissors, something she often needed for one reason or another. All the other students had taken their seats as Jamaica walked over to the display board, removed the orange design marked READING, and with the scissors made a small slice in the orange and simultaneously, the word READING. She then walked over to another student, handed her the scissors, and without comment, the next student removed a slice of the orange with the scissors. This continued from

student to student, and not a word was spoken, until the entire class had participated. When this part of the ritual was complete, Jamaica carried the orange READING symbol, now totally shredded, over to the wastebasket, where she crumpled it up and threw it in the trash.

That was the end of the ritual and the end of the orange symbol which stood for "reading"and "remedial" and "resource" and all of the other labels they abhorred. The class was silent during the entire ritual and not a word was spoken after the event. We all understood exactly what had happened; this experience was both one of bonding and renewal. Once the symbol was destroyed, it was dead, at least figuratively in their minds, and they could symbolically let go of the burden, the weight, the embarrassment that being in this class brought with it and they could find hope in themselves anew.

This one event did not, of course, erase all of these students' worries or the embarrassment about all the labels or burdens this program laid on them, or eliminate the teasing they read in the eyes of their friends and fellow students who were in regular English classes, nor did it erase all the years that these students had felt a low sense of self-worth, the years they felt they were deficient and not like the other adolescents. This ritual did. however, if not open my eyes to, then at least remind me of the anger and sensitivity of my students to their placement in this developmental reading class.

During the year, I constantly needed to remind them of the great work they were doing, and to keep boosting them, to continue to show them how good their work was compared to those in regular, to them "real," English classes. Often I actually could convince them that their work was even better than those in regular English classes because in some cases it was.

This ritual dissection also served to remind me of how weighty the label of reading was and how much the quality of their work depended on my helping them to get around the label. My students never forgot where they were: they never forgot all year long that they were in a remedial reading class; the work they did or did not do was always tied either to my reactions or sensitivity to their needs; my students were moody about being in this class—they could choose to rebel against the program by not doing any work at all or they could work harder to dispel the myths surrounding them and the quality of their work. I labored constantly to keep students on the "working harder" side of the fence, but I was not always successful, or was successful one day but not the next.

BENCHMARK 2: THE POSITIVE SIDE: CONVINCING STUDENTS THE SKY IS THE LIMIT: "THE NED STORY"

One of the best examples to show how underrated some of these students were by teachers and administrators alike is what I call "The Ned" story. I retold this story to administrators, other teachers, other students, Ned himself, and Ned's parents.

Ned was a student who, when I first met him the evening before school began at the ninth grade Parent-Student-Teacher Night, seemed to be a nervous and unpredictable pupil. He was very tall, but seemed very immature. His mother told me that he was very shy and that I would need to draw him out. She did not tell me anything about his learning abilities except that he had some trouble with his reading and his spelling. Ned looked at me as his mother was talking and made a peace sign behind his mother's back and he smiled in a way that made me think he could be trouble. After the meeting, I put all of this aside however and began teaching my classes the next day. When Ned walked into my second period class the next day, dumped his books on the floor, threw himself into a chair, and propped his big feet on the desk, I saw Ned in exactly the posture in which he remained for almost the entire year. He was very casual about sitting in his chair, about putting his feet all over the desks, and about his work, too.

But this is not really the point of the story. When the reading coordinator, Mrs. Stiehl, walked into the room for the first time, she

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immediately noticed Ned, head down, body sprawled all over the desk, a book underneath his lanky arms, his eyes open but looking at the book, then looking at the ceiling, but certainly not reading. I had already spoken to him earlier that period about the book he had chosen and had asked him whether this book might possibly not be a good choice for him. That was the reason why he was not reading. He had argued that he could read the book, though, and started poring over it again. When Mrs. Stiehl walked in, he had stopped reading and I knew that he had not really read much if anything that period.

Mrs. Stiehl told me that I really had to watch him because his test scores on the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u> (<u>SDRT</u>) had been so low, she estimated that his results were somewhere on the second or third grade level, and offered the opinion that she did not think that he could read. I told her that I thought that he could read but that he simply had not selected the right book and that I would work to help him find one that he did like and would read. I also told her that he had written his requisite journal entries and that his written journals indicated that he could indeed read. His test results were actually quite low—an average of grade level 3.1. The second time he was tested he scored grade level 3.7 on Comprehension, 8.0 in Vocabulary, and 5.2 on Scanning, with an average of 5.4 (see Appendix C). Regardless of the standardized test results, this nonetheless was a student who could read and I knew it.

Later that day, after Mrs. Stiehl had left, I took Ned over to the book cabinet and said, "Let's find a book you would like to read." He had told me before that he could read, but that he had not actually read a book cover-to-cover since the first grade. Although I believed that Mrs. Stiehl was relying too heavily on the Stanford test results, I made the decision to suggest that Ned select some of the easier books in the cabinet. He chose *Sign of the Beaver* and *My Name is Davy: I'm an Alcoholic.* As he had not been reading much and as all the other students had been working toward completing a second book by now, he was already behind in his reading assignments. He had not been able to write much in his journal about his first book because he had not enjoyed it and thus had not read very much of it. I suggested to him that he take the books home with him to catch up and to eliminate the distractions he might have from being in the classroom rather than in a more comfortable reading setting. He liked that idea and immediately began reading in class, and, from that day on, reading also at home. Ned loved the books he had chosen this time. He wrote a good paper on *My Name is Davy: I'm an Alcoholic* and also suggested this book to others. Shortly after reading the latter book, Ned began reading several books on archery, one of his favorite pastimes.

Ned nevertheless always had trouble getting started on his reading, his writing, and his workbook activities. In December, he

totally stopped working again. He had not been moving very quickly through the workbooks even though I suspected he could do a much better job; he also often did a careless job on his other written assignments, definitely not his best work. Ned simply found the workbooks boring, and did not try very hard. He would walk into class, sit down, put his head or his feet on the desk, get comfortable, and quit. I had a long talk with him about this behavior one day during the academic assistance or study period. I told him how smart he was and that I wanted to see how well he could do on the workbook activities.

Students in my classes were assigned a workbook level that matched their test scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) Students who tested on the second grade level began at the BA level, students who tested on the third grade level began at the CA level, and those who started on the fourth grade level began at the DA level. Although some students did test higher than the fourth grade level on the test, the coordinator did not allow the Littletown teachers to begin students any higher than DA, or the fourth grade level. The coordinator had decided that all students must complete the GA (7th to 8th grade) level in order to pass the class and to go on to a regular tenth grade English. Ned had started in CA (3rd grade level) as a result of his Stanford test scores and had hardly moved upward since.

Ned was now finally ready to move on to take the DA test. I told him before he took the DA criterion-referenced test, a test that specifically tested students on certain skills or criteria that a student reading passages on the specific grade level should be able to answer, that I wanted him to try, and that I wanted him to really show me what he knew and what he could do. I told him that if he was bored with the Learning 100, or the workbook activities, that he could cut out some of the work by doing a better job on the test. The fewer questions he missed, the fewer assignments in the workbook he would have to do. Ned jumped at the opportunity to move more quickly through the workbooks—he subsequently took the criterion-referenced test, missing so few items that he did not have to do even one workbook exercise in the DA (4th grade) level workbook. The next day during class he then was able to take the EA level Criterion-Referenced Test. He did well again, needing to only complete a few of the workbook exercises. I asked Ned what it was that caused the turnaround for him and he said, "You told me to try and I did."

Ned continued to work, although sometimes still sporadically, throughout the year, showing that he could read novels, non-fiction books and articles, workbook readings, and do very well on tests if he put his mind to it and tried. His writing often had quite a few grammatical and spelling errors, but his writing assignments became better written as well as more interesting as the year went by. Mrs.

Stiehl had counted him out from the first day but I had not believed her.

What Ned needed was to be given simple tips on how to get started; he needed some prodding, needed a great deal of encouragement, and needed to choose his readings and his work style. Ned was one of the first students to complete the workbook exercises and one of the first to be able to move to a regular English I class for a few weeks as a reward. I never counted him out and he knew it; he also knew that he was doing the work not only for me but also for himself and he was extremely pleased with the results.

Other students who heard or observed first hand "The Ned story" could not believe how well Ned was suddenly doing in class. They, too, knew that they could do better in class, in reading, and in writing, with the right attitude and with persistence and the willingness to try to do their best. I had been advocating these principles for my students all year long and, little by little, they began to feel more secure about their abilities. But, nothing could be as effective and uplifting as a real-life example to show students how rewarding effort, and even more importantly, believing in themselves and their own abilities could be. My students all thrived on extra attention, positive feedback, and positive results; they needed all of these things in order to grow in this environment; and they needed a model to show them they did not need to be embarrassed by doing well.

HOW ATTITUDE AND PROGRESS ARE INTERTWINED

Both stories, as well as some of the others in the previous chapters, show how attitude and achievement are intertwined; students' reading and writing capabilities improved only when the attitude they brought to class allowed them to perform: to work, to write, to read, and to complete assignments without rebelling against the idea of the program itself. Without a barrage of continual positive comments from the teacher, or a way to steer the class away from an obsession with the reading portion of the class, the students often would balk at work, for the work they had done in the past had only placed them into this program, which, to many of them, was the almost the worst thing that had ever happened to them. I told them daily that I knew they were intelligent, I knew they could do more; I knew they could do a great job at just about anything if they tried. The extreme positive or the extreme negative, however, were very often the only roads that students took; and in the beginning as I was attempting to have students read and write their first assignments, the majority of students were heading down the negative road. When Ned began working and proving to me and to others just how good a student in our Developmental Reading program could be, I saw just how important accentuating the positive could be.

The following chapters will reveal how my students progressed. Continue to keep in mind the obstacles, the hurdles that needed to be

surmounted in order to overcome the attitudes of the students of being unwilling to read, unwilling to write, unwilling participants in a class entitled Developmental Reading, unwilling to believe that they could do anything, the culmination of which had for most students been the unwillingness to ever do any real reading or writing before.

CHAPTER 11

MOTIVATING "THE ORANGE-BOX KIDS" TOWARD BETTER READING AND WRITING

I was initially trying to answer the questions of how I could help students to become better readers through writing or better writers through reading. One of my original and immediate concerns became that of motivation, or the lack of motivation on the parts of most of my students after I noticed repeated patterns of lackadaisical attitudes toward most activities in my class. I was also informed by these students' other teachers, from math to physical education, that they behaved similarly in these classes as well; for example, many students did not even bother to dress for gym class even though that was all they needed to do in order to pass. However the attitudes of my students will only be discussed in the context of my classroom.

In the previous chapters, I analyzed events in my classroom that revealed, at least in part, the sources of my students' motivational problems. I then devised a plan aimed at rebuilding their motivation toward school in general, and toward reading and writing specifically.

I wanted my students not only to be motivated to do the work but also to believe that they were and would continue to be successful at it.

As discussed in Chapter 6, one of the students' motivational problems was related to their placement in a remedial class; their opening remarks to me were all similar to these: *"Hey, lady, is this a resource class? We're in a resource class." "We're retarded"* and *"I don't belong in here."* They were indeed bitter about their placement.

Students also had an inability to get started on work, especially on reading, which almost all of them indicated was boring. Also on the first day I walked into the classroom I found that during the course of the hour-and-a-half that I watched my students, more than half of them in each period, put their heads down on the desk and proceed to sleep. This occurred sometimes while I was talking, but more often during the time set aside for them to write journals, complete short informational assignments, or read. Later in the year I saw students, both my students and those in my homeroom, actually fall asleep in the middle of school-wide standardized tests. I wondered about my students when this occurred and suggested that they try to remain alert and interested. One student's response is particularly memorable: immediately upon my admonition against her resting her head on the desk, she lifted her head, sat upright in her chair, and remained, at least most of the time, throughout the year alert and ready to participate in class. She told me later that this was an

important moment for her too: "You told me to sit up and to participate and always have a good attitude and I thought about it and decided you were right and I did it." Although a single intervention will not always have such dramatic results, students needed to be awakened through positive, uplifting comments, as well as through books that they would perceive not as boring or tedious, but instead as interesting enough to keep them awake and alert enough to discover just how much a good book (here, a good book equals *one that will be read* from cover to cover) had to offer.

MOTIVATIONAL GOALS: COMMITMENT TO THE POSITIVE: POSITIVE COMMENTS, RESPONSES, GOOD GRADES

I had made a decision at the beginning of the year that I would work as exclusively as possible with positive comments, positive responses/reinforcement, and good grades for work completed. I knew that students had been thoroughly discouraged in the past with disparaging remarks about their work. I believed that students might not do the work, or their best work, unless they believed that it would be accepted without severe criticism. Although "constructive" criticism is often beneficial, I had the intuition that students in this class might consider "constructive" criticism as "destructive" criticism and made the assumption that they were likely to quit if responses to their writing were not more sensitive. I believed that students who did not

feel good about their work or about the reception of their work were less likely to do the assignment, and more likely to quit altogether. I needed, of course, to be mindful that too much praise and too little blame or accountability could have adverse effects:

> [A] teacher's reluctance to criticize her pupils [may] reflect a genuine desire to protect their self-esteem. . .[T]here may be unintended messages communicated by [a] teacher's generous use of praise and minimal assignment of blame. According to our analysis, the student might use such feedback to conclude that the teacher views him or her as low in ability (Graham, 1990, p. 23).

All students were given praise for jobs completed and jobs well done, but the praise was not excessive for small assignments or unworthy assignments. Students were, however, given the impression that if they wanted the teacher to be proud of them, that they had to work hard and bear responsibility for the quality of the work that they did, the time they spent on work, the choices they had made along the way, and for turning in their best work. As I believed that the students' abilities were much greater than what their standardized test scores had indicated, I also believed that I was not making them feel that their ability was in question when I gave them positive responses on work completed well. I also knew what they were capable of, and thus, also knew when the rewards in terms of positive comments and suggestions were warranted.

The negativity surrounding "Ritual Denial: The Slicing of the READING Orange" as opposed to the contrasting positive story, "The

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Ned Story," reinforced my opinions about the relative merits of criticism and praise, and convinced me even more of the impact of positive reinforcement on my students. I strove to remain positive in both my spoken and written comments to students and to remain forever sensitive to the humiliation and shame resulting from their placement in this reading program. There was always a fine line between the two directions a student might take on any given day, but I vowed to help the students cross the bridge from the negative to the positive through my encouraging remarks, through challenging them to write interesting responses to chosen reading, and, more importantly, by allowing students to believe that they could finish an assignment and do well on it. It was only as time went on that more and more students slowly began to believe in themselves.

My goal became to push my students beyond their self-established limits, to find out what they cared about, to ask the right questions, questions that demanded more than simple answers, not to accept "I ain't know" or "I ain't care" and the cloud of negativity these phrases carried with them. But how could this be reversed? How could I work to turn a negative attitude into a positive one? How could I help students to view school work, in particular, reading and writing, as not only worthwhile activities but also as activities at which they could be successful? In the following sections, I will reveal

some of my strategies for working with students who were when I first met them so negative and hopeless.

MOTIVATION THROUGH READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

One of the reasons I daily assigned my Developmental Reading/English I students writing to accompany their reading assignments was my belief that reading and commenting on good writing helps unskilled, as well as skilled, writers learn to produce meaningful and purposeful writing. In their writing about reading, students could do a variety of things: (1) practice writing in a variety of modes; (2) do prewriting and writing in stages geared to longer paper assignments; and, (3) comment in writing on ideas sparked by reading assignments. The reading which was used in the writing assignments were primarily assigned to give students the opportunity to choose readings that they liked and were motivated to read. As a result, students would be able to produce in writing ideas they considered meaningful to them about their reading.

Although the major focus of the class was expected to be on the development of reading skills, a meaningful test to discover what students had learned from their reading was to have them write about the readings. Students in my class wrote every day and their written materials reflected their best work and revealed their progressive abilities and motivations toward reading and writing.

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And, although students' writing was not perfect, and was at times extremely flawed, even replete with error, students were experiencing reading and writing, something which they had not done in the past. The belief I held about enabling students to read and to write without excessive criticism is that students' literacy "cannot be acquired unless it is experienced" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, p. 9). Through my students' varied reading and writing activities, they progressed from students unwilling to read or to write to students who were much more independent and skilled at those activities. Students who came to me saying, "I haven't read a book sence first grade. . ." now begin anew to read and to write.

MOTIVATIONAL METHODS: CHOICE

One of the major components of my plan to inspire students to read and write was based on choice. As my students were all so highly differentiated in terms of both their reading and writing abilities as well as their interests, students would always be reading different materials so as to be working at their own pace and with their own individual interests and goals in mind. Everyone was reading, and everyone was participating, even if on different, individualized assignments. More importantly, allowing choice created an avenue for me to be able to accommodate the extreme diversity in my classroom:

> The structure allows everyone to participate: everyone can write something...and everyone can meet with the teacher. . . .

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Yet the structure allows for differentiation. The choice that forms the base of the workshop assumes that everyone will read *different* stories and approach classroom themes in their own way. Choice is a powerful mechanism for accommodating variability (Roller, 1996, p. 135).

Students read at their own pace and read what most interested them and actually motivated them to read. And, my students *did* read when given the choice of what to read.

BOTTOM-UP STRATEGIES: GRADUALLY LEADING INTO MORE DIFFICULT TASKS

To get students started on writing, I often gave them short assignments that could be completed in a small portion of the period. These assignments often gave me information about students' lives as the majority of these shorter assignments were autobiographical in nature. These shorter pieces of writing were assigned by me as motivational moments, or times when students could reach a goal by completing a project and reaping the rewards: satisfaction, praise, higher motivation during one class period. Goal setting and the opportunity to reach short-term goals are significant motivational stimuli: "Goals can by distinguished by how far they extend into the future. Compared with temporally distant goals, proximal short-term goals are achieved more quickly and result in greater motivation and higher efficacy" (Shunk & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 39).

JOURNALS: STUDENTS' BEGINNING STAGES OF WRITING AND ADVICE ON WHAT STUDENTS WANTED FROM THEMSELVES, FROM THE CLASS

One of the beginning projects that students did was to write a journal (see Appendix B: Journal Assignments). Much of my reasoning behind assigning a journal is discussed in the Methodology chapter. Making students feel successful on short-term tasks such as the short answer journals was part of the purpose of the assignment. Students could write the journals in a short amount of time, and would receive full points for completed journals. In the previous chapter, I utilized the comments that my students made in their journals to explain how my students felt about reading and writing. Indeed, finding out about what students felt about reading and writing was one of the main purposes of the journal. I wanted to take into consideration what students wrote in order to decide how to plan the class. I believed that one of the best ways to make my class better for these students was to give them some power of decision in what we did. Thus, I made a commitment to listening to their comments with the aim of tailoring my educational efforts to their interests.

I believed that the students themselves could provide some clues through their writing on what might motivate them to read and to write. So, I asked them questions that would help me to provide a better class atmosphere for them to read and to write. I also allowed students to write in epistolary form, either to me or to a friend, and

promised them I would not correct their writing. What they wrote on the first days of class were samples of their beginning writing ability in its truest form.

Although my students were not very articulate in these journals, some recurring ideas came through. First of all, the majority of them despised reading and writing, and had not had much experience or success with either, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, they had some ideas about what they needed in order to read more and to take the risk of writing. One of the main ideas that came through about what might motivate them had to do with having interesting or, as my students phrased it, "fun" books to read. One student indicated this very clearly: "What would I like to accomplish is to read more & to study more and to do better in my classes. My goal in English class I would read more & write more and listern more carely. What can I do so thing can interest me more pick Fun books to read. Try to enjoy the book. . . ." To my follow-up questions, "What types of books do you like to read? What is a fun book?" she answered, "Peom book Sounder Old Yeller." She also made a comment about what she thought about the variety of books she had seen and heard about during "book tasting": "Yes I just want to say that I am working hard to read alot some of the books look fun to read and some are boring." What she indicated here was that she knew she had a choice of a broad selection of books, some of which she was not motivated to read, but some

books she was free to choose that she thought would be "fun to read" rather than "boring." In sum, she told me that reading was meant to be pleasurable and that it could be if she could find more books to enjoy: "What can [make] me to be more interesting [interested] in reading is to enjoy more books."

Brittany had a very negative attitude about reading and writing in general; she had hardly read a book, indicating to me that she had only read one book before, cover to cover, in her entire life. The book discussed here was one that was not only required but also one that she absolutely hated. In a letter to a friend, she wrote:

> She wanted me to write about the types of books that I like to read the types are Mystery books, but I realy dont like reading. She also wants me to tell you what subjects are most interesting to me and they are Math. What is a good book that I have read recently and that book was called Summer Spy. What I liked about it was nothing. I would not recommend this book to a new student because it did not make any since [sense] and it was dumb.

What Brittany needed in order to be motivated to read would be books that did make "sense" and that she would like. As she had freely chosen to read the book, *Summer Spy*, for her summer reading assignment, and she had not liked it, she seemed to need some assistance in choosing books that were better written that she would like. She also needed to be motivated to read for other reasons than to satisfy the reading requirement. Brittany had had a bad experience in her language arts class the previous year: "Hey you want me to write about what activities I loved and hated. I hated reading books

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and writing book reports. I realy did not like doing anything because I did not like her [her previous teacher], and her class." However. she had not given up on trying to do well and on trying to read books, indicating that there was hope that she could be motivated to read more if she was given meaningful assignments and a better choice of reading material. She was definitely willing to continue to try to do better:

> Hey you would like to know what I want to accomplish in this class. I would like to accomplish to try to make A & B's in this class and also my other classes. Another thing is to read at least 2 books.
>
> Strengths
> 1. That I can read.
> 2. I can pronounce all the word [words].
> 3. That I am trying to like reading.
>
> Weaknesses
> 1. My vocabulary.
> 2. Trying to stay awak while I read.
> 3. Starting to like reading.
>
> I would like to approve [improve] in all areas.

What Brittany wanted was books that were interesting to her. books that would keep her "awak[e] while [she]read" and then perhaps she would be willing to read.

Another student told me that she liked Romance novels and also books on African-American history and culture:

> I'm just writting you to tell you the kind of books I like to read is about Romance. Subjects I think that's most interesting to me is Social Studies because you get to learn about your culture and country and you get to study about black history.

The best book I have recently read was Scarlette. And I Recommend this book to you.

Within the selection of books in the classroom, there were plenty of books for Queshana to choose. Queshana was one of the few students who indicated from the beginning that she loved to read, but she also indicated that she might read more if the choices were more specifically suited to her interests. She did not like writing as much as she liked reading, however, and indicated that she did not have much experience with writing, especially with writing about books, as she had not written about a book since sixth grade and she was now in the ninth grade: "The last experience I had was on a book report was in 6th grade and it was kinda boreing." My hopes were that if she wrote about books that she really loved and practiced writing more, she would become more comfortable with, more skilled, and more interested in writing.

Queshana also had some specific grading expectations: "I would like to get good grades and always try my best." For her, one way to feel successful was to get good grades, and to be graded on assignments that she felt she could have at least a hope for a good grade:

> Things I like to be graded on is easy things like an open book test and when you come to class on time. When you are quiet. When you take notes in class and when you use you're time wisely to read a book. The Things I hate to be graded on is when you forget your pencil and when you eat candy in class the things you wear to school. How you act at school. and your attiude and thing like that. . . .The type of test I wanna

be tested on is an open book test. I hate a 2 question test because you only get 50 points for each when and that's wrong [you fail].

Another student echoed these sentiments, wanting "easy" work, which may have simply meant tests or grading on work at which she felt she could be successful:

> . . . what I like to be graded on is what I do good and what I try on. The things that I hate to be graded on is the things that I don't do good on and if we had to read. I dont like being graded on that.

Again, another similar comment revealed that students indeed had aspirations for achievement, but were extremely diffident about their chances for success: "I like to be graded on mostly what I do best. I like to be graded on how I write in my Journal and the things I don't have trouble in." Failure had definitely been a part of many of these students' educational pasts.

From what my students wrote in their journals, it was not difficult to read between the lines; what I assumed and what I witnessed directly by students and what my intuition told me was that if they liked it, they would read it, and if they felt they would be successful, they would make an attempt at the task. I believed what my students had said about themselves and I believed in them. I also felt that I owed it to them to try the methods I believed they had suggested. Below, I will describe some of the reading and writing assignments that I gave to students and some samples of their writing and how it progressed throughout the year.

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ACHIEVEMENTS FROM WRITING ABOUT SELF: GOAL-SETTING, THERAPY, MOTIVATION FROM SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

Autobiographical essays were assigned as one component of the short writing I intended to use to motivate students to read and to write. Before students wrote, we read aloud different autobiographical stories from the literature textbook; students then would be able to reread the stories to see, for example, how the authors added details or used dialogue. The students seemed to enjoy this activity of writing about themselves and were all able to write many different stories on the topics of their choosing. I gave them a list of suggestions such as a major turning point or major decision, the most influential person, a prank or trick, a fight, a trip, a time when a person was judged wrongly, a lesson. What was most interesting about these stories was that students who normally took a great deal of time to warm up to a longer assignment would jump right in and write. Some pieces were shorter than others, but some students, when only expected to write a page would continue writing for two, three, or four pages on a story once they had discovered after starting to write that it was one that they really wanted to tell. Students were also given the opportunity to type their stories on the computer and all but one student typed and rewrote their narratives.

One reason students may have been so eager to begin these short autobiographical writings was because they knew more about their subject—themselves—than just about anything else. Students

were also able to choose the topics about which they wrote, which perhaps gave them the freedom to write. In the introduction to Dixon's (1993) book, *Writing Your Heritage: A Sequence of Thinking, Reading, and Writing Assignments*, Blau discussed the importance of choosing writing topics that the student is interested in, with which he or she is even "intimately familiar," and "personally invested," as well as the reasoning behind the sequence students followed for their writing:

> Her own observations of her own students. . .suggested not that her students lacked thinking skills or academically acceptable ways of organizing and presenting their thoughts, but that they more essentially lacked a commitment to the topics or ideas they were dealing with, and lacked as well the kind of intimate familiarity with the subjects. . . .

> Her experiments eventually became a carefully constructed sequence of assignments. . .that had three powerful instructional virtues. First, the sequence insured that students would be researching and writing about subjects in which they were personally invested and to which they were therefore likely to attend with serious, engaged, and concentrated thought. Second, the sequence was designed to build and draw upon funds of knowledge which would allow the students to move in steps to increasingly more demanding kinds of discourse. . . (p. vi).

An interesting outcome of students' autobiographical writings was that students used their writing for purposeful reasons, including goal setting and therapy. They were also able to write didactic morals to their stories or to succinctly state the lessons they learned from their experiences.

Through the autobiographical writing, I also discovered that these were tough students who had indeed been through much in their

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young lives. One student below writes about his father coming home

drunk and how frightened he and his brother were:

> Something that happened to me and my family a few years
> ago. It happen one night when my father came home drunk.
> When he came into the house one night he started makeing
> loud noises. That's when every one started wakeing up. My
> and my brother left the room the same time. When we got to
> the front we saw my father breaking things thats when me and
> my brother was wrestling with him. After everything was over
> everything was broken. Livan

Another student writes about how she helped out at home with her

mother who was in a wheelchair and needed constant supervision, but

unfortunately, there was not always enough money to pay someone to

help her:

> An major decision came up into my life this last summer.
> Last Summer my mother was in and out of hospitals when she
> came home we had to hire someone to keep her so I gave up
> my job this summer and stayed home with her instead of
> hiring and giving someone that money that could be more
> money for us to life off. So other than that my summer was
> great. Lakeisha

These students had to overcome much more than the difficulty of

doing well in school; as indicated in the introductory chapters, most

of my students were from low-income families, who had already faced

much hardship in their lives. Considering all that I knew these

students had been through in their lives, their negative attitudes and

limited expectations of themselves and their futures were not so

surprising.

One common theme that appeared in students' writing was that

of a motivational, influential person who convinced them that they

did not need to fail, and that school was important. What these writings told me was that students did need boosts from adults who reassured them that they were intelligent and that they could do more with their lives and their schooling. Their parents and grandparents were trying to motivate these students. Students also seemed to gain an unaccustomed energy, a boost after writing about someone who had believed in them. After transcribing the encouragement given them, students seemed to feel more committed to standing by the promises they had made to their mentors and themselves. Writing down goals appeared to have the effect of substantiating the goal and, also the possibilities of reaching it. Below are a few samples that reiterate this common theme:

> The person who influnced me the most was my step-father. The way how he influnced me was when he would always tell me I shouldn't belive what people say because if I know it isn't true that's all that matters. He always belived in me no matter what I did. He taught me how to drive and to play basketball. When ever I wanted to give up he never let me and when ever I thought I failed to him I succed. Queshana Taylor

> A turning point in my life was this year. I have changed my life alot. At one point I was on my way to a girls home, because all I did was get in trouble at home and in school. My mom and dad do not influence me to do anything. My grandmother and I talk about things that I do that could get me in trouble. I could tell her anything, and we could talk about it. I do tell her everything. I left home and went to live with my grandmother, and that is where the turning point came. The reason was because she cared, and she talked to me about what I was doing. Just about every weekend I would go out and get drunk and come home about 4:30 in the morning. She would wait up on me and talke to me about what I was doing, and where it was leading me. She talks to me about my attitude and it has changed. She told me that if

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I kept on doing what I was doing I was going to either end up dead or in a girls home, where I could not do anything. Now, every week, I don't go out and get drunk. She knows where I am, who I am with and what I am doing. Whatever she wants I will do, because I love her, and want her to be happy. She has been there for me whenever I need her. When she needs me I will be there for her. So now I have changed, I ask them instead of just leaving. That has helped alot. That was my changing point. Brittany Lambert

When I was in the Fifth Grade I was doing really bad in school. So I told my mom I hate school and I said it's to hard. So she sent me to my Grandmother's house. She talked to me For a long time. She said never Give up on school because If you quit school you'll never be nothing in life but a dummy. And she said I know you dont wont to be a dummy all you life and she said I'm right arent i. I said yes mam. And she also said "When you go back to school make Good Grades. Make your mother and Father Feel proud. Especially me. So my Grandmother had Gotten [me to] where I am today. And [I'm] Glad she had to talk to me are [or] I still would of been in 5th grade. From day on [one] I'm In the ninth grade. Antwain Jones

I think the person who has influenced me the most was Susan Thompson because she would pay me to make good grades and that worked for a while. Then alot of stuff went wrong and everything got messed up. She has influenced me not to drink and not to smoke. Susan has told me that if I ever neded anything that I could always come to her. Like if I went to jail I could call her and she would come and get me. So Susan Thompson has influenced me the most by telling me or helping me understand all of this her stuff I have talked about.
Chelsea Logan

The person who influenced me most was me. One of the major decisions i made was to make better grades this year than I've ever made before. Every year until these [this] one i have had failing grades on my report card. Because i never did hardly any work. But this year i decided to make better grades. I intend to pass every thing on my report card and so far i haven't failed any. And from these [this] year own [on] i plain [plan] to do the same. That is my turning point or major [decision].
Ned Norton

The person who has influenced my life a great deal is my uncle who has thought [taught] me a great deal on things that I need to survive in and out of school. He showed me that I should be able to read so I can learn how to do certain things has [as] I grow up. When I was not in school he showed me that I should know certain people just in case people start trouble who could help me out. He has thought [taught] me a great deal on things that I need to survive in the real world of today's time. He teach me things that I need to survive on the streets and how to get people to remember my name where ever I went. Devon

The person that influenced me the most is my grandfather. He has his own construction company and he told me if [I] want something in life that I would have to work for it. I really took that to heart after I thought about it the next day [I] started working for when I was 9 years old and now I am 16 years old and I still works for him. Me and my grandfather have the same hobbies our favorite hobbies are
hunting, fishing, football, working, and driving tractors. Thats why I love my grandfather very much and he is a very good roll [role] model. Love, Marvell

Influence means—'an ethereal fluid held to flow from the stars and to affect the action human.' To me influence means—someone that pushes you to do your best and for a reason. My father influences me. He influences me to be all that I can be in society. He wants me to get out of school and go to college. Each year that I am in school he keeps asking me questions about school.
      My father is a nice and easy going man. He tells me that if I don't get my work in school I will never amount to anything, and that's one of reasons that makes him the best father in the world. Margullis

The person that [has influenced me] is Mrs. Baginski. She tells me not to go with the wrong crowd. She tries to tell me that I'm going to fail but i don't cair. But one day when I herd that I had a zero I said "I'm going to do my work and work hard until the end of the year. She is now telling me "Marquez do your work and i sit down and I do my work. Her name is Mrs. Baginski and she's my teacher.
      she's smart, intelligent, good [to] all of my [classmates, us?] and give us all the love and respect we need. She comes to school sick just to be with us and we aren't all glad to she [see] her. but she gets us to do our work. If we don't we get a

one way pass to the office. Well that's all [I] can say for write [right] now but I like her.

The writings above were extremely revealing about the students. All of the above examples reveal students' admissions and coming to grips with their own failures as well as their hopes and their significant others' hopes for their success. One reveals a rebellious student with a serious drinking problem who declares she has changed because of her grandmother; another student indicates that his grandmother had kept him from dropping out of school.

Students were indeed quite fearful of failure and had, upon the verge of resigning, indicated this to their parents or grandparents, wherein those relatives immediately found ways to boost their confidence, ways to make them feel like winners instead of losers:

"When ever I wanted to give up he never let me and when ever I thought I failed to him I succed."

"So my Grandmother had Gotten [me to] where I am today. And [I'm] Glad she had to talk to me are [or] I still would of been in 5th grade. From day on [one] I'm In the ninth grade."

Other students came to understand the value of work for advancing in life, admitting that before being motivated by discussions with their loved ones they had not worked hard enough to attain their goals:

"Every year until these [this] one i have had failing grades on my report card. Because i never did hardly any work. But this year i decided to make better grades. I intend to pass every thing on my report card and so far i haven't failed any."

"He showed me that I should be able to read so I can learn how to do certain things has [as] I grow up."

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"He has his own construction company and he told me if [I] want something in life that I would have to work for it."

Sometimes these lessons were delivered harshly but were nonetheless successful exchanges that were received attentively:

"He tells me that if I don't get my work in school I will never amount to anything, and that's one of reasons that makes him the best father in the world."

"She talked to me For a long time. She said never Give up on school because If you quit school you'll never be nothing in life but a dummy. And she said I know you dont wont to be a dummy all you life and she said I'm right arent i."

"She tries to tell me that I'm going to fail but i don't cair. But one day when I herd that I had a zero I said "I'm going to do my work and work hard until the end of the year. She is now telling me "Marquez do your work and i sit down and I do my work."

Students had internalized the motivational messages delivered by their relatives and friends but simply were not always able to follow through on their promises to others. Although Chelsea was motivated by what her mentor, Susan Thompson, did for her, including Susan's good-grades-for-cash incentive, she needed more than money in order to work harder in school:

I think the person who has influenced me the most was Susan Thompson because she would pay me to make good grades and that worked for a while. Then alot of stuff went wrong and everything got messed up.

Chelsea was similar to the other students in my classroom in many respects. Like the other students, Chelsea's life as an adolescent was complicated. She needed constant motivation to work because of her complete lack of confidence in herself, and her strong

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belief that she was "stupid," some of which may have resulted from her placement in my developmental reading class. In a separate autobiographical entry she wrote:

> These days I realy don't care what my grades are because if I don't know how to do something I don't know how to do it that just means I am stupid, and can't do it so I don't care about my grades anymore.

Until Chelsea wrote this comment, I had not understood her behavior in class; after reading this, I knew that Chelsea was much more insecure than I had suspected. Her tantrums, and conversely, the relative ease with which she set herself to work once her ego had been stroked, all made sense now. In response to Chelsea's complete resignation, and to others' similar expressions of inadequacy, I always responded with as much uplifting, but pragmatic advice as possible. This is the comment I wrote in response to Chelsea's earlier tragic remark:

> Chelsea,
> You are so smart that you _can_ do anything. I know that, and deep down, you know that too. I find it hard to believe that there are some things you won't even try to start. That is usually half the battle. Give me some writing or some work to look at and I can help you more. You need to ask questions if you don't know how to do things. Don't ever give up again. You also need to be _patient._ I can only help one person at a time. You know that.

Also symptomatic in my comment above is that Chelsea needed so much attention that I was at a loss to mollify her at every moment even though I might have wished that I could have done more. What was curious about her behavior was that Chelsea was indeed able to

read and to write very well and without much difficulty, if she could be convinced to try. Without my personal attention, Chelsea would often become erratic, displaying tantrum-like behavior. Although Chelsea was the only student to have tantrums, she was not the only student who needed constant attention with every aspect of an assignment. The majority of students needed constant uplifting, placating, and rebuilding of confidence. I worked daily with every student to the greatest extent possible to provide them with the positive motivational stimuli they craved; I also tried to instill confidence in them through the individual critiques I made on their papers.

The autobiographical writings were interesting in concept, and informative. I learned a great deal about my students' complex lives and knowledge on how to motivate them. Furthermore, when students had completed their various self-writings, students were proud of what they had accomplished, and for the most part, actually sounded hopeful about themselves as they came to their conclusions about the decisions and events in their lives. The writing they completed was also more writing than they had ever done before in their lives, as they themselves admitted. My positive responses to them and the good grades they received for assignments completed also helped to raise their confidence levels. Raising their confidence in their own abilities was a helpful start toward moving students toward more difficult reading and writing assignments.

HOW THEY HOPED: THEIR WISHES AND DREAMS: GRADUATION

Another short goal-oriented, confidence-building assignment was the "Graduation Assignment." I originally planned this assignment because I had heard the principal tell the parents at the ninth grade meeting, the day before school started, that "Ninth grade is a very important year. More students drop out in ninth grade than any other grade. We need to keep students in school." What I wanted to effect through this assignment was how students felt about graduation, and whether they believed that graduating was important to them. I also wanted to discover how they felt about their abilities to attain a long-term goal, specifically, graduation from high school. Additionally, I wanted to give them the opportunity to project themselves to the point of graduation, and to actually imagine the big day happening to them. By projecting themselves into the role of graduate through the process of writing about the event, I hoped that they would actually believe that graduating would be possible. Every student was, on the surface, positive about his or her prospects of graduating. They could envision themselves at graduation and see the pride on their own as well as their parents' faces. They could feel the excitement in their racing hearts as they walked up to the podium to collect their diplomas in the South Carolina sunshine.

Another reason that propelled me to give this assignment was because I knew that my students were considered to be at-risk of

dropping out of school, and that, according to the principal, they were more likely to drop out at Littletown High in the ninth grade than at any other time. The Littletown High School SACS report explains exactly how serious the drop-out rate is at this school:

> By the end of 1995-96, enrollment had dropped to 707. The largest concentration of students is traditionally in the ninth grade. By the time these students reach the twelfth grade, the size of the class has decreased by almost one-half. Students repeating grades, entering alternative programs, dropping out of school, transferring to other schools, and being expelled cause this noticeable decrease.

In my review of the literature, I discuss reading and writing deficiencies as well as the other major factors that contribute to students' dropping out of school. My students fit into all of the worrisome categories, including overage upon entering high school, poor readers, retained in previous years of schooling, and placed into a remedial program, and thus were high risk of dropping out. As students in South Carolina could legally drop out at age 16, and many of my students were already 16 but also seemingly unhappy with school, I took the statistics above very seriously. I wanted to look into their insights on themselves through the guise of having them write about graduation and what it might mean to them.

I learned some interesting particulars about my students through these writings. Many casually made self-deprecating comments about their abilities. Jamaica believed that she would graduate, "I would like to gradutate because that's the most important part of

my life," but also, "I probaly won't gradutate ahead of the class but I still will be speacial because it will be my special day." Through her writing, she indicated her belief that she was not the most intelligent individual in the class but that she would graduate nevertheless, which meant both that she was not very confident in her abilities, but that she would persevere to reach the "happy" end she contemplated: "And I will be so happy." Billy Thompson also made a similar comment about his graduation ranking: "I will provable [probably] graduate 99 in my class." In Billy's comment, there was a sense of pride commingled with shame, anger, and defiance.

Even Shaquetta, a student whom I considered a top student in the class, was also not very confident in her abilities. Although she planned to go to college, she questioned whether she would be accepted to the college of her choice, and admitted that she would go to any school that would give her the opportunity: "After I graduate I want to go in the services or go to Spillman college in Georgia, or any college that would take me. To me graduation is very important. I would be so happy to be out of school, and going to college." Her last line is a contradiction, because if she goes to college, she will, of course, still be in school. Shaquetta was not a hard worker except when she wanted to be. She appeared to be very certain of her capabilities in our class because she had no difficulty completing any of the workbook assignments or any other assignment; she was able

to finish assignments quickly and able to accept the first draft as "enough." It was indeed difficult to get her to put much time and effort into an assignment, or to rewrite, or add to a piece of work; in other words, she did not push herself to do her best work because she did not feel she had to, especially in a class for poor readers.

Shaquetta fought the idea of being in this class and she refused to work hard for reasons that may have been connected to a variety of factors, including previous years of schooling, the school culture of negativity and its belief "there's nowhere to go, so there's nothing to do," her placement in a remedial reading class where she did not feel she belonged (and neither did I), and the lack of a work ethic as part of the cultural norm. She was usually mature, however, and often acted as if she felt she were better than the rest of the members of the class. However, as seemingly confident as she was, being placed in this class made her rethink her status as a good student, as a student who would have the confidence and abilities to get into a specific college. She also began to think more seriously about joining the military instead of going to college.

Other students wrote about celebrating with friends and family, rappers, and alcohol. Several wrote that they expected a new car from their parents upon graduation. A few spoke about going to college, but most marked high school as the end of their school careers. Marvell had no use for school after graduation, and admitted that he

found high school difficult; he had goals for his life but education beyond high school would no longer be necessary: "When I graduate I want my mother and father to buy me a new truck. After I graduate I don't want to go to college because high school is hard enough, but I want my own construction company, to travel all over the world, to build things." Devon also wrote about graduation from high school as being the end of his schooling. Once done with school he believes that he can do whatever he wants: "On the day that I plain to graduate is going to be the biggest of my school days. It is the last day that I will have to stay in school, and I don't have to listen to any of my teachers. I can do what ever I feel like doing." Chelsea writes: "I will be happy when I graduate because that means no more school." Marianna proffered yet another similar comment about how great it would be to be "out" of school: "I can't wait until my Senior year. That year will probably go by fast. I only have (3) three more years to go then I will be out 'Thank Goodness.'"

Billy makes his hatred for school, the teachers, indeed the entire system, perfectly clear:

> When I graduate Im not going to college because I do not like school because it the worst place to be. you have to get up early and you have to stay all day and when you get home the whole day is gone. Some teacher gets on my nerves I could slap some of them. When I graduate my whole family while [will] be there and when it's all over I'm going to the beach and I'm going to get so drunk I might not even come home. P.T. will speak at my graduation I will most likely say i have beer for sale. I will provable graduate 99 in my class. People say school is best part of your life but that's not true.

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The anger, the threat of violence, the defiance in his tone is frightening. Although I did not feel that any part of this comment was directly aimed at me because Billy and I had an understanding and a good student-teacher relationship, I knew from this writing that something had gone drastically wrong with Billy and his attitude toward education. Actually, Billy represents many of the other students' attitudes toward school. Others revealed their anger through other means than writing. In this way, writing was beneficial for Billy because it provided an avenue for him to vent his anger. I chose not to comment on the grammar, the writing style, but instead on the ideas that are presented and how telling they are about the authors and about the culture of the school and the attitudes of the specific students.

How could Billy feel that he had wasted every moment of every day in school? Had there been nothing of any value for Billy in all of his years of schooling? What were his goals? What would be the best part of his life if he dropped out of school or graduated from high school last in his class? A negativity toward high school this deep might only worsen and certainly would not help him advance toward any goal, except perhaps that of dropping out. This was always the primary worry for "at-risk" students. As indicated earlier, being placed in a remedial class was one of the factors contributing to the drop-out rate. Ironically, labelling students "at-risk" as if to place them where

they might receive more help actually made them more "at risk" of dropping out. On the positive side, Billy had an opinion and he had written it down. He had imagined himself graduating. He had written about his anger, his violent tendencies, but through his writing, he had vented this anger without needing to act it out. This was a small step forward, but a step nonetheless.

Something was missing from these graduation writings that was also very telling about these students. Only one student mentioned "hard work" as part and parcel of the path toward graduation: " I will be happy because this is what I wanted for a long time of hard work and it finally paid off." This was the same student who told me later in the year that he only did enough to get by, enough to pass every year, so I have trouble believing that he meant what he said here. Jamaica fatalistically based everything in her life on whatever was God's will; she believed that she would graduate "if the lord spell my life to be living this day." (Tiki also made a similar comment in her writing.) Jamaica did not believe that whether she graduated or not had anything to do with her strength, courage, or hard work. It would either happen according to divine predestination or it would not. If she did not graduate, there would be nothing she could do about it. One student could easily picture the time just flying by until she would receive her diploma, almost magically: "My cousin and I have

been waiting all of our lives to graduate and I am getting closer and closer every day. It will be here right before my eyes."

Everything was expected to be easy—ninth grade to graduation to new truck—easy effort. As long as they were still alive, they would graduate and their lives effortlessly proceed as they fantasized, no more schoolwork, jobs that would be easy; few were motivated to continue their schooling. Although students did not specifically write about this, my knowing these students and my reading between the lines served notice that these students were envious of others who seemed to get through life and school much more effortlessly than they did. They believed that everyone else had it easier. They especially envied those in regular classrooms. They did not seem to value nor understand the concept of assiduousness or they were so overwhelmed by the many assignments they were not sure how to cope. The culture of the school and the community made certain of that as well. Students seemed to want life and school to be unchallenging, for they were overwhelmed by apprehensions of failure in competition with others. Underneath, they told a story of how they have been let down by the school in particular because they had not been given the extra help and positive push that might have made them believe differently about themselves and their hopes for the future. All of the above may help to explain students' performance in school: they were afraid of failure and made self-deprecating comments; they had not been

encouraged about their abilities or hopes for success; there was no communal work ethic at the school for them to emulate; hence, they not set many goals for themselves, whether realistic or unrealistic, high or low.

One student appeared to have professional aspirations but they were unrealistic; she planned to be a doctor after a couple of years of college:

> I plan to go in to service before I go to college because if I go in college first I will not be able to go in service because I am going to school to become a doctor. I will be in college for a couple of years becoming a sucessful doctor, making something out of my life.

Although her dream of becoming a "successful doctor" was unlikely to be fulfilled by attending college for only "a couple of years," having a goal and a tentative plan was much better than having almost no plan at all, and I did not fault her for this. Lakeisha was a determined student who was only in the ninth grade and may not have understood yet how long it might take to become a physician. Determined as she was, I would never take that dream away from her, and I believe that there was hope for her to join the armed services and also become a doctor.

Another student also seemed quite sure of himself; Margullis seemed to have major plans for himself:

> When I get out of school I will have achieve one of my goals. My mother and father put me through school all my life and now there sending me to college. They know I have something to look forward to. Putting me through college will be a

pleasure for them. When I get out of school I want to be an engineer.

Peaches was also very unsure about her skills, her grades and her ability to achieve her dream, although by the end of her composition she expressed a will and determination to change her ways and to succeed:

> *If* [emphasis mine] I graduate I want to go to a college in Atlanta, Ga. I hope I have good credits so I can get good classes to become an registered nurse. If I do not become that I'll try to major in law or try to become a lawyer. I'm not getting the grades I should be getting to go to college. I hope to graduate from college and live in my own house, have my own car and try to become somebody in the world. It seem like all girls think about [is] getting married or having kids or having a boyfriend; but those should not matter; not yet you need to try to get your school work. So I hope my future is that I finish high school; and to find the right job for me. Still and all I have to graduate from high school and I'm [a] long way from that I'm only in the nineth grade. I do belivie I have to study hard; read more; and have a good mind to my work. So I have to do these things to be able to go to the tenth grade so I well [will] try to improve and I want [won't] say I can't because I will do it so I say I will. So this is what I hope for the future.

Although I have cited a few examples of students who appeared to have strong goals, wills, and the motivation to reach them, the majority of students, however, did not write about what they had learned or how hard they would have to work in order to graduate or succeed in life.

Their dreams were for the most part simple and not undifferentiated; they would do what everyone else in the school talked of doing:

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"When I finish school and Graduate, I'm Going to Get a Job a house. Get a car. Get Married have kids. Im Going move out of South Carolina."

"When I graduate I hope I get a new car. Two weeks after I graduate I am going to find a good job. I don't know exactly what I'm going to be yet I just know I am going to go get a good job of some kind."

"I will be wearing what everyone else is wearing."

Most also wrote about getting "out" of school for the sake of being "out." Many indicated that they wanted to leave South Carolina or Littletown; however, the fact was that not many did ever successfully get "out" of Littletown, in part because change is difficult and they were "comfortable" with the way things were there, but more importantly, because they ended up being unable to take skills with them that would match what others had to offer. The energy, the strength to persevere to reach a goal was virtually nonexistent. Those who were part of the world of business in other, larger towns might have difficulty accepting the views of a Littletown graduate, and even less of a Littletown dropout. The Littletowners who graduated from LHS might discover that the world outside was passing them by, and they were not prepared.

Another telling writing about the culture of the school was submitted not by an "Orange-Box Kid" but by a twelfth grade African-American student in the school poetry club (I was the adult supervisor who organized the club) who did actually graduate from Littletown later that same year:

> In 1996 there will be a prime Graduation. For
> the people who don't walk across the Stage it's
> going to be a bad situation.
> For 12 whole years I had to exploit my Intellect.
> Male prop's and respect is what I'm out to get.
>
> Littletown High School was a corrupt Learning Station
> Just another obstacle before I face the Nation.
> A decent Life and lots of Money the dreams
> I'll be forever chasin.
> L.M. (Senior in Poetry Club about to graduate. Note: L.M.
> did graduate as planned).

He spoke about Littletown High School as "a corrupt Learning Station" and an "obstacle" but also indicated that, as a consequence, all he expected from his education might elude him: "A decent Life and lots of Money the dreams/I'll be forever chasin." His poem is similar to my own students' writings and unspoken thoughts in the sense that he therein revealed his awareness that something had gone wrong with his education and as a result, those dreams of easy money and success might be unattainable, and that he was leaving school still unsure of his capabilities in the outside world.

Another poetry club student, also revealed an acceptance and understanding of the Littletown High School culture that he had been a part of his entire life and now had to leave, still feeling less than optimistic about the situation and believing that others shared his despair about his future also:

Getto Poetry: On the Occasion of My Gradution

Why should I be treated Like I'm incarserated
I don't like it So I hate it, Why should
people act like my mind is desecrated.

As I face the nation on my special occasion
you expect to see anything except cultivation.
Peace and harmony is nothin but a apparition
Spreadin love peace affection in every Home
Should be the Mission. But instead deprivation
leads to Murder, Madness, Mayhem and World
insubordination. Cause in the ghetto there
is NO constitution only Smoked Out
Crack heads and Inner City pollution.

So take a look at the reality of the situation
that I apprise. So keep your eyes on the prize
And you will Rise.

By Leon King, Travelling Poetry Club President, 1996,
the year of my pending graduation.
(Note: This student did graduate in June of the year
the poem was written.)

He speaks of negativity and withholding: "anything except
cultivation," "nothin but a apparition," "But instead deprivation," and
even describes Littletown as "the ghetto." His last line is the only
positive one in the poem: "So keep your eyes on the prize/ And you
will Rise," indicating perhaps that he still has dreams, although he
feels that much of his hope has been taken away. Incidentally, this
student did graduate. And, at the graduation ceremony, as he walked
up to accept his diploma, his mother screamed out several times so
that all could hear, "Now you're on your own. Get your own place and
get a job! I've had it!" Neither his life in school nor his life at home
had helped him to feel good about himself. His teachers had apprised

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me that they did not expect him to pass because he spent more time walking around than working and he had not turned in the majority of his assignments all year. But, he did graduate, and there was, considering the statements of his teachers, something 'corrupt' about that.

Two other poems were more positive; the first one was written by two African-American juniors; they both had passed the exit exam with high scores, skipped school as often as possible, were suspended from school on numerous occasions, and both also dropped out of school at the end of the year:

> 13 years have passed and I've
> always been in school.
> I've done some bad things
> thinking it was cool.
> the time has come, that now
> I must leave. I can assure
> you teachers there is nothing up my sleeve.
> I've learned a lot about reading, math, and gym,
> I've also learned that learning is within.
> This dream I've been working for has
> finally come true. Mom, Dad, there's
> no fool made of you.
> The time has come for me to say Goodbye
> So many things that I could almost cry.
> T.J. and A.J. (Juniors in Poetry Club)

Another more positive response came from an African-American senior, who graduated but did not go on to college as he did not receive a scholarship, nor did his family have the money to send him:

Since the first grade I have,
acquired knowledge after 12 grade I going
straight to college. In school for years
about 12 of them. I have been here
for 4 years and on May 31, 1996 It
will be time for the ultra fix.
Graduation is the key and maybe in a few
years you will see.

Motivation
Dedication all the way to
Graduation.
J.K. (Senior in Poetry Club about to graduate. Note: J.K.
      did graduate as planned).

Perhaps the mere completion of this assignment would not serve

to hold students in school until graduation, but it might have allowed

students to dream, to set a goal, and to propel themselves into

believing not only that they could, but that they would reach it. All

students contemplated reaching their objective and all students clearly

wanted to reach it. Many made comments that expressed the

excitement and the joy they anticipated they would feel if they

accomplished the task and graduated:

"My Graduation Day I will be so happy and cheerful."

"I will be happy when I graduate because that means no more
school. When I graduate I am going to have a big party at my
sisters house. . . .I am going to buy five kegs of beer and six
bottles of liquor. The party will start at 7:00 until whenever.
Everybody is invited to it."

"My graduation is going to be one of the greatest moments in
my life. It will be a treasure to remember for a life time,
something to tell your kids, and something to be proud of."

"I have planned to see this day come for a long time. On my
graduation day everyone will be so excited. It will be
astonishing and a fulfillment to see everyone on this big day,

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everyone with there gown and cap on waiting to recieve their diploma. The field will be big and bold with the astonishing chairs and the lights flashing on them."

"As I walk across the stage to receive my diploma, I will feel very happy and pleased with myself."

"I am kind of shy right now but when I get on that stage and get my diplomona I will yell for joy."

"The day of my graduation, I will be happy, because I would have waited for that a long time. I will be wearing what everyone else is wearing. Everyone will know that I am graduating. The day after my graduation, I am going to through the biggest, get drunk party you have ever seen. I am going to be drunk out of recognition. . . ."

"My mom will be there and I am ready for that day to come. Because it will be the best day of my life because I will be proud because I did what I wanted to do."

I just can't wait until my graduation. I can see it now. All my friends wearing nice, glamrous clothes. All the girls in beautiful dresses. My mom looking proud when I get my name called. Reaching my hand out to get my deploma. Looking around one more time, telling all my teachers good by, hoping to see my friends again. Planing toward the future. Shaking Mr. Leduc's hand as he hands me my deploma. . . .

One student, Marquez, also paid me a compliment that indicated that I was an important part of his pending graduation when he projected that I would be the speaker at commencement: "I will have Miss Baginski as the speaker and when the show is over I will Be taken hom [home] in the fatest [fastest] lemo [limo] on earth."

To me, this assignment was a positive achievement and a positive indicator, even though the majority of students simply wanted to graduate to be *out* of school and many mentioned drinking as their primary method of celebration. Perhaps they had not succeeded

because they had never imagined themselves succeeding. After all, they had not been given many encouraging pushes in their educational life.

When this project was finished, we hung the graduation day writings on the display board and students spoke about graduating for days. The students then typed their responses into the computer and kept this writing on their permanent disk so that they could retrieve it later, even years later. Some of the written responses were childlike but they were positive and they were attempts at communicating their not-yet-extinct hopes: "that would be the goodest feeling in the world when you graduwait from school." Although many of my students never learned the proper spelling of the word graduation (which was not the purpose of the task), this assignment was in many ways an overwhelming success: (1) the students wrote, (2) I learned a great deal about the students, and (3) the students imagined a positive event occurring in their lives. I wanted more than ever to help them to attain their goal of graduation, and I wanted to make the program work for them so that they could be more confident about their potential for success, about their ability to become more literate in the ways that they needed to be literate, about their opportunities to be happy not only on graduation day, but also in the future, no matter what they decided to do with their lives.

CHAPTER 12

THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENT OF MOTIVATION AND SKILL IN READING AND WRITING

BOOKS GALORE AND SEARCHING FOR KNOWLEDGE

Certainly students needed more than dreams in order to graduate, and in order to be successful in life. Knowledge that derived from books and the knowhow to search for the information they required was also crucial. Learning how to find information and choosing what information they most wanted to learn was in itself motivational.

One of the most important aspects of a program to motivate reluctant readers is access to books: providing so many choices that students would always find a book to interest them, a book with which they could connect personally, emotionally, and intellectually. Sherman (1996) discusses the importance of having as many books as possible available not only through the library but also in the classroom:

> A school library will work, but I never realized what impact a classroom library would have on students. Does it make the media center happy? No, but it makes magic for my students. My collection numbers about 450 titles now, thanks to a generous principal and my sharing my own allowance. . . .My

principal says he get more return on his dollars in my classroom collection than anywhere else he spends money, and the presence of the books in the classroom creates a fantastic atmosphere (p. S8).

As indicated earlier, there were no books in my classroom when I arrived at the school in the beginning of the year, so I brought as many books from home as I could. The majority of these books were adolescent literature, multicultural literature, stories for all ages and levels of reading maturity. I also brought magazines, including *Sports Illustrated, Ebony, Jet, Seventeen, Time,* and *Newsweek.* Students were free to choose any of the books I had in the classroom for pleasure-reading time or for assignments, and they were also free to go to the school library or the Littletown Public Library to choose books to read. Approximately every two weeks we would visit the library so that students would have the opportunity to look for particular books, or books on a certain subject, or simply to go through the shelves to skim through a variety of books in order to find one, or often more than one, book that they really wanted to read.

As many students had not visited the library often during their previous years of schooling, and as they had only begun high school this year, they had never been to their school library until I took them during class in the first weeks of school. I taught students how to use the computer which listed all the titles under category, author, and title. Students loved to go through the books both in the library and in the classroom. Remember that these were students who, either

through their own refusal or their feeder school's inability to provide a large variety of reading material, had not had much access to the "right" books, or to books that they would actually read.

On one of the first days of school, I informed the principal that I intended to set up a reading center in my own classroom, filled with all sorts of books that students could look at, hopefully get excited about, and read, read, read. We did not have much money to spend on these books, but with the approximately $500 I had for the program, I bought some fiction and non-fiction that the students could not wait to delve into. Students' written reactions to some of these books will be shared later in this chapter. What can be learned from this is that regardless of what students might have said earlier about the importance of reading and their feelings about books, these students *did* like books and they *did* like reading. However, it was apparent that they liked reading on their own terms, meaning that they liked the books and the topics that they selected, but were *not likely to read unless they did the choosing*. Reading then indeed had the potential to become a more important part of their lives.

THE BOOKS STUDENTS CHOSE

The majority of students wished to read adolescent and more particularly adolescent multicultural novels, as all of the students were teenagers and all but eight of them were African-American. Many

found adolescent novels that related very closely to their own lives—Timmy read a novel about a child who was not accepted by his peers and had no friends at camp, writing in a book report later, "Hey would you want to my friend[?]," "and he cannot get any friends at all. . .so he wants to go home" to characterize the misfit he was writing about; unfortunately, his own life closely resembled this character's. When he wrote, "One day he get to Leave camp, and go home," he also drew a huge welcoming house below his caption. Two other students read a book on the problems of being male, living with a single mother, and suddenly having the absentee father come home to form a relationship—this was their real-life situation.

Another student read a novel about a male living with a single mother who allows her boyfriend to move in with them—this student's mother married her boyfriend during the period that he was reading the book; at first, my student seemed very happy about his new family, but two weeks later he ran away from home. The student himself told me how beneficial it was for him to read a book that was so much like his life; he felt better knowing that someone else was in the same situation and he wanted to find out how the character would deal with the situation. I spoke to his mother who told me about the many problems they had had recently and that they might need to send him to a teen home—and that was exactly what happened.

When he first ran away, two of my other students who were very close friends with him told me that they knew where he was and that he was alright, but he would not go home because of all the family problems When this student eventually did come home three days later, he was sent away and thereafter attended another school in the county.

His new teacher and I conversed regularly and she remained continually worried about him—she told me that most of the time he simply slept in class and he was extremely depressed. Neither of us could understand why he would throw away so much—he was incredibly intelligent. He did, however, request the book, so that he could continue reading it in his new class, and according to the other teacher, he did finish it. I do not have any information as to whether he wrote about this book, or any of his compositions since the time he transferred. But he was, according to other students, an alcoholic and a drug abuser, and he was incredibly depressed. He dropped out before the end of the year.

What this story is meant to explain, in part, is the complicated life of the teenager, and in this case, the tragic consequences that sometimes come from depression, and subsequent drug and alcohol abuse. But, this story also reminds us that although books cannot save a person from every problem, they can sometimes help to provide an individual with some solace, and some advice. This student opened

up to me about some of his problems, problems of which I might otherwise have been unaware, because he was reading this particular book. This student's situation also made me increasingly more aware of the many problems that my students had to deal with, both in and out of school. A teacher had to be sensitive to all of these realities: sex, drugs, alcohol, family problems and even abuse could very well be part of even my best students' private lives. As is evident from the examples above, students often chose books with situations resembling their own lives that would help them to deal with their problems. The reason for this may well have been that they believed they could receive help with personal trauma through reading. Reading books could help them to deal with, or at least in different ways, think about some of their problems, and more importantly, allow them an avenue along which they could traverse certain topics that were difficult to open up about or to discuss.

Brittany, a white female, chose to read *Scorpions* by Walter Dean Myers as her first novel. She was interested in African-American culture, and she liked the description I gave of the book during "book tasting"—something to the effect that the story was about two teens who get into trouble with a gang. From my description of the story, she assumed that the story would involve drug abuse because she thought that "all gangs do drugs." As she was highly interested in the drug subculture, she chose this book. The book, however, did not

contain any graphic discussions of her major topic of interest, but she loved it anyway because it was about teenagers who became involved in trouble both on the school and home fronts.

When presented with the choice of what non-fiction works to read, students again chose topics of concern to adolescents, and often, if students were African-American, books related to African-American or African culture. Every African-American student discussed at one time or another his or her interest in finding out more about black history. Some students, particularly the males, expressed a heightened interest in African-American sports figures, and wanted to read about them almost to exclusion. However, white students were also interested in black culture and black writers, and did also read books by African-American authors about African-American characters.

The female students were also interested in stories of romance and sometimes mystery. Male students generally preferred stories of adventure or sports, and one white student even became interested in Hitler (fortunately, he found Hitler an abominable man) because of a book he found in the library. Many students also became interested in stories about teen drug culture; this movement was spearheaded by Brittany, who told others about the great books she was reading about drugs. I will not include lists of books that were student favorites, as each individual class will be different and because a good English

teacher will already be aware of the immense variety of titles from which to choose on every conceivable topic. Articles in the *English Journal* and the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* are regularly published that discuss books of interest to young adults and how to teach these books. (Also see Nilsen & Donelson, 1985; Cullinan & Galda,1994; Sims Bishop, 1982; Lindgren,1991; Harris, 1992; and Sherman,1996.) Some of the selections students read will also become evident through my discussions of their writing about certain books. I accepted their choices—I wanted them reading.

A CAUTIONARY NOTE ON THE WRITING LEVEL OF STUDENTS

The curriculum in Developmental English breeds a deep social and intellectual isolation from print; it fosters attitudes and beliefs about written language that, more than anything, *keep* students from becoming fully, richly literate. The curriculum teaches students that when it comes to written language use, they are children; they can only perform the most constrained and ordered of tasks, and they must do so under the regimented guidance of a teacher. It teaches them that the most important thing about writing—the very essence of writing—is grammatical correctness, not the communication of something meaningful, or the generative struggle with ideas. . .not even word play. It's a curriculum that rarely raises students' heads from the workbook page to consider the many uses of written language that surround them in their schools, jobs, and neighborhoods. Finally, by its tedium, the curriculum teaches them that writing is a crushing bore. These students traverse course after remedial course, becoming increasingly turned off to writing, increasingly convinced that they are hopelessly inadequate. 'Writing,' one of the students tells me. 'Man,' I've never been any good at writing.' 'English,' says another, 'is not my thing.' (Rose, 1989, p. 211).

As indicated earlier, I wanted my students to experience writing without feeling that I was the pedantic English teacher who would always be searching for the 'defects' in their writing. On the contrary, I was trying to free students to express themselves with fewer restrictions in hopes that they would write. Many of my students had never written much of anything at all before they came to my class and so, they were extremely inexperienced. They did not know much, if anything, about proofreading, or grammar, and were often poor spellers. I decided that as long as I could understand what they were trying to say, I would accept what they wrote. I also planned to help them learn how to revise and to proofread, and to instruct them in the rudiments of grammar, but I decided that these were not the most important things for a beginning writer. Most students wrote exactly as they spoke and so they had much to learn about matching writing to purpose and audience as well. It would, of course, not be possible in a single year to teach them everything about writing—so I would merely attempt a sampling of grammar and proofreading exercises, although the focus of the class would be on getting students started and moving them in the direction of increased confidence about their writing. Students wrote something every day, whether in their journals, or on short or longer writing assignments that accompanied their individually selected readings; they wrote about fictional as well as non-fictional works. What was most important for these students

was that they wrote—that was the only way that they would gain experience and learn methods with which to tackle future writing assignments. Being overly critical about their writing would not enhance their motivation to write:

> My students needed to be immersed in talking, reading, and writing, they needed to further develop their ability to think critically, and they needed to gain confidence in themselves as systematic inquirers. They had to be let into the academic club. The fact that they misspelled words or wrote fragments or dropped verb endings would not erect insurmountable barriers to the benefits they would gain from such immersion. A traveler in a foreign land best learns names of people and places, how to express ideas, ways to carry on a conversation by moving around in the culture, participating as fully as he can, making mistakes, saying things half right, blushing, then being encouraged by a friendly native speaker to try again. He'll pick up the details of grammar and usage as he goes along. What he must not do is hold back from the teeming flow of life, must not sit in his hotel room and drill himself on all possible gaffes before entering the streets. He'd never leave his room (Rose, 1989, pp. 141-142).

Furthermore, I did not find my students' writing any more disconcerting than that of Mina Shaughnessy's (1971) remedial college students. They made similar mistakes, in subject-verb agreement, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, omitted words, run-ons, but they responded to lessons on grammar and proofreading. I was able to categorize my students' major errors individually, as Shaughnessy suggests, and to discuss their basic errors with them individually as well. My many years of experience as an English as a Second Language teacher, a remedial writing teacher, and as a composition teacher afforded me an understanding of the logic of language errors,

made by both native and non-native speakers, and the methods of trying to help students overcome them. Correcting such errors that often derive primarily from writing as one speaks, and without the habit of rereading and proofreading, often takes a great deal of time for a student; to actually move from being able to notice errors in others' writing to noticing and being able to correct errors in one's own writing takes longer.

Although teaching students how to make their meanings clearer was a part of what was attempted in the classroom, this was not the focus of the class nor is it the focus of this paper. As I describe the writing samples below, although I could have, I have chosen not to analyze (as Mina Shaugnessy has done) the errors and the reasoning behind the errors, nor my method of teaching students about basic writing skills. If one is interested in this, see Shaugnessy (1971), Labov (1969), or any of a number of grammar books, including Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1983); Steer & Carlisi (1991); and Greenbaum & Quirk (1990).

Allowing students the opportunity to experiment with their writing, to make mistakes, and to continue to work on their compositions is more effective for beginning writers:

> Kate Friedlander. . .noticed the tremendous satisfaction young children derive from reading stories related to an Oedipus situation. . .but she sharply distinguishes this satisfaction from 'a literary response,' which, she seems to feel, must somehow have to do with art rather than life. I am sure she is wrong; these responses are unsophisticated. . .but they are the

stuff from which, with refinement and development, literary responses are made. Again, at quite a different level, teachers using the 'practical criticism' method sometimes introduced passages of literature paired with sentimental or otherwise second-rate writing, inviting comment leading to a verdict. Is not this an attempt to drive out bad currency? If, as I believe, satisfaction with the second-rate differs in degree but not in kind from the higher satisfaction, teachers should surely be concerned to *open* doors; as the pupils advance, other doors will close behind them with no need for the teacher to intervene (Britton, 1968, pp. 3-4).

Perhaps we, as English teachers, have become too obsessed with writing errors, especially since, as a result of our obsession, we have often led students to feel that everything they do is wrong and that the only good piece of writing is a perfect piece of writing. Perhaps an obsession with error stifles the student writer and makes him or her feel that writing is not worth doing because it is almost virtually impossible to be successful at it. Mina Shaugnessy (1971) did not choose to think of her students as failures because of their lack of writing prowess, nor did Mike Rose (1989) or James Britton (1968). They chose instead to work with them in order to teach them—they chose to endeavor to understand the reason, the logic in their errors, without judging them as failures. I chose to do the same, but through analyzing their ideas, their potential, and especially the clues they left behind in their compositions about what motivated them to read, to write, and to want to succeed academically.

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WRITING ABOUT NOVELS/BEGINNING WRITING AND READING

Langer et al. (1990) discusses the role of reading and of attempting to understand a literary text as an important aspect of learning: "the process of understanding literature is a natural and necessary part of the well-developed intellect" (p. 1) Langer classifies reader's steps toward understanding literature and calls each step a reader's stance, according to what a reader goes through in the process of understanding a text; notice that the reader of a literary text reads, rethinks, thinks critically often according to personal experience and personal theory, then objectifies, or distances him or herself from the situation in order to make generalizations, analyses, transfers of knowledge that might be useful in the future; notice also that literature brings out thoughts about the human situation and emotions:

> When they approach a text, there are four broad recursive stances readers adopt to carry them through their experience. These are: 'being out and stepping in,' where readers make acquaintance with aspects of the piece with which they are unfamiliar, 'being in and moving through,' where they use their envisionments to inform their growing understandings; 'stepping back and rethinking what one knows, 'where they use their envisionment to reflect on personal experiences, ideas, or knowledge; and 'stepping out and objectifying the experience, 'where they look critically at their envisionments, their reading experiences and the text itself. Across the reading of an entire piece, understanding is in the act of becoming, as readers use their past experiences, the text, and their growing envisionments in different ways as they move in and out of the various stances. . . .
> . . .[D]uring the reading of literature, they treated their growing understanding more openly, raising possibilities about the horizon as well as about their momentary ideas, focusing

on the human situation, seeking to understand interplays between events and emotions and eventualities—toward an understanding of what _might_ _be_ (p. 19).

Students began reading a novel of their choice in approximately the second week of school. They were expected to read daily during silent reading time, which commenced usually at the beginning of the class and lasted from fifteen to forty-five minutes. After reading, students were expected to either write in their journals or to work on one of the creative writing projects related to their books (see Appendix B: Novel Assignments). In the following section, I will discuss some of their writing samples and how their attitudes toward reading and writing improved through the experience.

When students began writing about the books they had selected, normally they only summarized "what happened" or rehashed the plot, in very simple words and simple chronological order. Brittany chose _Scorpions_, by Walter Dean Myers and indicated that she immediately liked it; what is perhaps more striking about what she wrote was not her description of the plot but instead what she says about her lack of previous reading:

Classwork   8-30-95

Dear Mrs. Baginski

You want me to tell you what my book was about. The name of my book is Scorpions. It is about a boy named Randy and he has gone to prision for killing a store clerk. He has a brother named Jamel and a sister named Sassy. Jamel moma was telling him to stay away from the Scorpions because that was who his brother had got in trouble with. I am on page 21.

> Jamel is in the 7th grade and he is getting in trouble for being late and the principle was fussing at him about being late four times. That principle said that at least he comes to school because his moma dont care what he does, but she realy care what he does. Sassy is the sister she is only eight years old. She is the cutest girl in the 3rd grade that is what they all tell her. There is this one boy that Jamel's mom dont want him to mess with and his name is Mock because he was one of the boys that had got in trouble with his brother and he was bad news. Mack had got in a lot of trouble befor that he had been in a home for a long time because of a fight that he had got in. *I think that I will enjoy this book. This is only the second book that I have read.* (italics mine). Talk to ya later. Bye.

Brittany really does enjoy the book and later writes, "It is good." What her writing above also provides is a gauge of her progress; her use of run-ons and her lack of proofreading may later be utilized to compare how she wrote at the beginning of the year to how she wrote at year's end.

Brittany was literally "on a roll" and was excited to continue after reading one book that she had so enjoyed and thus, when that book was finished, she immediately proceeded to the library to find the next book to read; this is what she originally had to say about her new book:

> 9-25-95
>
> I started reading about a new person his name was J.D. and he was 14 year old when he started using. Hi stepdad used pot. He went and told his mom that he wanted to try it and his mom said that he could try it, and he did it and he liked it. He started doing it alot. Then he got into heavier drugs like cocain and poping pills. . . .

Here was a student who, by her own admission, had only read one book in its entirety before starting ninth grade, a book mentioned

earlier entitled *Summer Spy*, which Brittany indicated was "dumb," saying "What I liked about it was nothing." Now, already within the first month of a new school year, once allowed to choose from a large selection of books, she was reading her second book for the year.

Two other students also read *Scorpions*, indicating that it suited their interests as well. Marianna, a student who had admitted that she often pretended to read in class, wrote: "My two favorite chapters in Scorpions are the last two" and "The reason I liked this book is because, I was reading about gangs and I wanted to see what Jamal would do to stay out of the gang." What Marianna indicated here is that (1) she was already interested enough in gangs to have begun to read another book on gangs and (2) she was interested enough in the book to read it cover to cover, trying to find out what would happen, choosing the final episodes as her favorites. Bill writes: "I like this book because it [is] a very good book. I like this book a whole alot." Surprisingly enough, through his writing on his favorite parts of the book, Bill indicated that he had not needed the opening chapter to capture his attention or to keep him reading: "I chose these parts because they were the best parts in the book to me. The frist [first] chapter was not very good because I was not interested in it." Although Bill indicated that the first chapter did not pique his interest, and that "interest" was a large part of his motivation to read, his anticipation of exciting events was undoubtedly whetted through

the author's subtle hints by way of foreshadowing in the introductory chapter of his book. That Bill had read the first chapter and picked up on the author's subtle clues was evident in the fact that he continued to read the book.

Chelsea, the student who had written this response on one of her autobiographical assignments: "I realy don't care. . . because if I don't know how to do something I don't know how to do it that just means I am stupid, and can't do it": read novel after novel fairly quietly at her desk and had few tantrums (and her tantrums were now sparked by other students who tried to bother her as she became immersed in a good story!). She wrote two very long pieces on two R.L Stine books she read: about one of them she opined:

> The reason I liked this book is because it is very interesting. Some of the chapters are good and some are not. The chapter I read [wrote] about was very interesting it was the best chapter in the book. When I read this book I figured it was going to be a good book from the start. The reason I picked this book is because all of the R.L. Stine books are good books so I picked The Knife because I figured it would be a good book since all the other ones I read were good. That is all of my comment.

My accompanying comment to Chelsea also revealed that there was a noticeable change in her behavior and her work in my class: "Chelsea, You've really read a great deal this nine weeks. I'm impressed with how much you've read. Keep Reading."

Every single student found a first book that they loved. And from then on, students were reading a book of their choice every day

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during the fifteen to forty-five minute free-reading time. Some students read more than other students and some read a very wide variety of books. Students were required to write about several of the books that they read, but every student read more than just those books they actually wrote about. They generally selected their favorite books about which to write. What is most important about these findings is that they provided hard evidence that the students could read and did not need much prompting to read once they found a work they enjoyed. Reading became a pleasurable experience; enjoying a book was essential for this group of students.

WAYS OF PROMOTING WRITING ABOUT TEXTS

I wanted students to begin to enjoy writing in the same way they had begun to enjoy reading. So I gave them the same opportunities and the same choices that they had been given with reading—they could choose their own topics related to the book(s) they were reading. As the majority of students had indicated that their biggest problem with writing was "I don't know how to begin," I gave students suggestions on what to write. They were also given many options from which to choose for the composition that would count as part of their grade; some of these options included artistic or creative work so that students were not confined to only write the usual book report. As I had to evaluate students or grade them, I wanted to grade them on the

types of assignments that they believed they would do best on because I wanted them to feel successful at writing. As indicated earlier, the majority of students did not like writing and also did not believe that they were particularly successful at it. In order to motivate students to desire to write, their image of themselves as writers needed to be somehow changed.

In one of the creative novel projects, students had to imagine that they were both a character in the book, and in turn, an advice columnist who needed to write a letter of advice to the character. Some students had indicated earlier that they liked to write letters, and they had all done well at getting started when I had students write letters to me or to a friend for their journals. Many students chose this assignment as one of their writings and wrote some interesting letters that revealed that they had indeed read their books as well as gave them more experience at writing shorter, more motivating pieces of writing. Students also revealed that they found strength in the ways that the characters in their books dealt with their problems, and thus, they learned many lessons about hardship, responsibility, and often, how to be strong in the face of adversity. Most of the characters in young adult novels reveal strength of character, and most, even though they often find themselves in a predicament of their own making, are not inherently "bad" kids. These characters, when finding themselves in trouble, are resourceful, and ultimately, like Huck Finn,

do the right thing. Many students also saw some of themselves in their chosen characters.

One student did a number of creative assignments before he wrote a paper on the book. He ended up using almost all of what he had written in the creative assignments (most were webbing activities where he used adjectives and quotes to describe one character). Here is his letter to the advice columnist and his response:

> My name is Styx. I am having some problems in my life. I have a buch [bunch] of pressure on me like my club is raising money for a Basketball tournament and if I don't get all the money I need We will not be having it again. And in school I am failing and I want my grades to come back up.

> Dear Styx,
> I have received your letter I think you should not think about all that Pressure you have on your mind. And about raiseing money for that basketball tournment you should just keep on reminding them about it. And I think you should stop being clown in class and listen and try harder and your grades will come up.

What Jacquez was doing here was giving himself advice; he actually sounded like a parent. He knew that he was so much like the character in the book that he was pleasantly surprised. But, that was also what made him enjoy the book so immensely, and also what made him connect to the story. In the first short sample, Jacquez shapes his webbing into a piece of writing on the character of Styx, from the book *The Mouse Rap* by Walter Dean Myers. Then, in the second sample, he tells his audience more about the book and compares himself to the character.

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My name is styx I am a very talktive person. And I am noisy, cool, funny, active. The things that I feels Is when I am in class I am a person who worries a lot, and I can't stand when I lose bets, and in class I worries about if I am going to fail the tests we be takeing. I at school we have a lot of gangs I worries if they will try and start some trouble with me. The way I look is I have brownskin, tall, and I have browneyes, and I have a mustash. I am a person who likes to rap what I always says is WHOOP! WHOOP! CHUM-CHUMMMM, YO! MY NAME IS MOUSE AND I'M MR. COOL, YO! YOU WANTA PIECE OF ME, Yo! WHATS MY NAME.

In his longer piece, he writes again about his similarities to the character and, at the same time, uses some nice descriptive words and quotes from his previous creative writings, webbing, or mapping activities:

STYX

Styx is my main character. The reason why I like him so much is because he and I have some of the same ways. I would tell you some of the ways. We like to rap and some of the line styx like to say are "whoop! whoop! chum-chummmm, yo["] "my name is mouse and I'm mr. cool, you want to [a] piece of me, yo! What's my name ["]. Both of us also like to be the clown of the class, and like to dance, and do bad stuff. And another reason why styx is my main character is becase he likes to play basketball a lot. And another reason why styx is my main character is because we have our way with girls. And another reason why he is my main character is because we talk a lot and we look alike . . .[left out repeated words] because all both of us [are] tall, brownskin, and have browneyes. The things we feel about is we worries about classes, can't stand losing bets, worries about tests worries about the gangs at school. The problems we have are we have a bunch of pressure on us. The possible event might happen in our life is that [we] might become a rap star and have our on [own] studio. And another possible event [we] might become the riches[t] people in the world. And we might be owning hotels. And be hotels [recopied by mistake?]. And be owning all the stores in the world.

Timmy, the student mentioned earlier who was remarkably similar to the timid character of Stuart Glassman in the novel *How I Survived My Summer Vacation*, not only finished reading the book, but wrote a letter that almost brings me to tears because it is so telling about Timmy and how he feels about his schoolmates who bully and tease him:

> Dear Timmy,
> My name is stuart glassman and I went to camp beacause I thought it would be fun. But when I got there people kept picking on me and calling me names. So I wanted to leave the camp.

> Dear Stuart,
> I think you should start standing up for your self and not let people say things to you behind your back. If they do don't say anything and don't let it bother you. Let them say what they want to say.

Timmy was notably the weakest student in the class. Although he had not completed the assigned journals and wrote only one or two short autobiographical pieces because he had been absent over half the school year, I am fairly certain that this was one of the first books he had ever read. Although Timmy read slowly, he could read, if a book could be found that interested him. Timmy also read well enough to pass his written driver's license test and to receive his license—he was one of the few in my class who had been able to do this on his first attempt.

As Timmy was not present in class so much of the year it was difficult for me to help him. I ended up buying him novels, and books

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on fishing and hunting that I took to his trailer. Although he came to school only sporadically until June of 1996, he did not officially drop out until the 1996-1997 school year, intending even then to return to school, and to the ninth grade, for the 1997-1998 school year, the year he would turn 19. Timmy said that he and his mother were reading the books together and he loved them. He was planning to continue to read while he was out of school so that he would be a better reader when he returned to school the following year.

It was lamentable that Timmy had been made to feel so inferior to and so frightened of his peers that he had difficulty attending school until he was older, and perhaps a little bit taller, because Timmy was intelligent, but anxious and apprehensive. His fearfulness had, for years, brought him feelings of shame and inadequacy. At lunchtime, Timmy, carrying a stack of five textbooks, literally held up a brick wall on the side of the cafeteria, not speaking or being spoken to by a soul until I invited him to stay in my room during lunch. His math teacher then also offered him the same consideration.

Timmy also had gone unnoticed at his previous school because his of his quiet, unassuming mannerisms. He was the type of student who would do anything a teacher asked of him, but would not seek out help when he needed it. A teacher had to remain consciously aware of his presence in order to remember to teach him. He literally beamed whenever he was given personal help.

Timmy was one student who would have been much more able to perform his academic duties had he been tutored. The problems that he had with the other students disrupted his ability to focus at times; at other times he was able to tune out any distractions or feelings of insecurity that were brought on by his intimidation by almost everyone. When I was working with other students, I often had Jamaica or Shaquetta work with him because they worried about him and were nice to him. Antwain and Ned also began to build a rapport with Tim when they discovered they had interests in hunting and guns in common. Bobby Boyd, a member of the first period class, also made an effort to befriend Tim, and actually tried to call him at home but Tim's phone had been disconnected. Unfortunately, Tim attended school so infrequently that these incipient peer friendships had little time to grow.

Other students also found parallels to themselves and their own lives in the novels they read and indicated through their writing that this was a motivating factor in whether they would read the text. Marquez writes a letter to the main character in *Sounder* and then answers the letter:

> Dear Bosco:
>   This is Marquez and i wounder [wonder] if you could help me? Yesterday two white men came over to our house about dinner time and turned my house up side down and took my father two [to] jail then shot my dog and now I can't find my dog, we don't have any food and our house is a mess. Could you please help us? In your news paper artical you said you could solve any problem.

Dear Marquez,

   I got your letter and the two men that took your father to jail, shot your dog, and messed up you house were racist cops. They took him to jail because he is black. I've solved your problem, I found your dog. He came down her for his master. Now were [we're] sending your father home, and forget about the mess. Were [we're] putting you into a new house, and we're giving you $1000, and 3 years worth of food. So Marquez, have a good Christmas.

Students identified so closely with the stories and the characters they were reading about that they often used their own names as the character writing to the newspaper advice columnist. What Marquez's good wish letter also revealed is that he, first of all, felt comfortable enough sharing his true feelings about the events in the story with a white teacher, knowing that she would not have any problem with what he wrote. Second of all, this short letter reveals also that Marquez understood the story, and especially the section where the father is taken away to jail, because the beginning of the story is all about racism. Thirdly, his letter reveals that he has indeed read the end of the story, because in the end Sounder as well as the boy's father do come home and things are normal again. That he wishes the family well by making everything all right again with the new house and the money is unrealistic but reveals both a desire for others to be happy and a desire for himself and his own family to be brought out of poverty as well. Marquez was identifying with the character and the events in the book because his life was very similar to the boy's. He

lived with his grandmother, his parents had both abandoned him, and he grew up in poverty in a rural setting.

Marvell also wrote about *Sounder*. The comparisons that Marvell makes between himself and the main character, who he names John Boy (the character is simply called "the boy" in the book), are even more striking than Marquez's:

> Dear friend, my name is John Boy and I am the oldest boy. I am having some very bad problems. My dad is in prison and me and my mother don't have much food in the house to feed me and my mother and my 2 brothers so I am writing you to ask you to send me some food for me and my family.
>
> > thanks your friend
> > John Boy
>
> Dear John Boy,
> I recieved you letter and I feel very bad for you. I have lots of deer meat in the freezer and I will send you all of it. I will keep on sending you all kind of food and takes [thanks] for writing me. We can be friends forever and I will send you other things when the summer come. We can plant some corn and other crop. We can trade all kinds of vegtables you grow in your garden. Then I'll eat yours and you'll eat mind [mine]. I will never forget you JohnBoy.
>
> > your friend,
> > Marvell Stone

Marvell writes to "John Boy" as if he were his oldest friend, and I honestly believe that he felt that close to the character. The similarities between the two and the reasons why Marvell became so attached to the character are revealed in another piece that he wrote about the book:

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"Sounder"

I like my book <u>Sounder</u> because me and the oldest boy John Boy are alike in many ways. We do lots of things alike we hunt alike but different kinds of animals. John Boy hunt racoons, possums, and bird, I hunt deer, raccoons, turkey, quails, doves, and squirrels. But they are having some very bad problems. The raccoons and possums went to a warmer climate and we don't [have] much food left to eat so he thanks [thinks] of a address from the South and he wrote a letter so someone can send his family some food. So the letter came to my house and me and my dad got the letter and we sent them a lot of food. So he and I still write to each other and we are good friends.

your friend,
Marvell Stone

Marvell's favorite hobbies were hunting and fishing and he reveals a deep knowledge and love of such activities in his writing. He wrote other pieces on *Sounder* which demonstrated his understanding of the complete novel. Marvell had also admitted that never before had he finished a book because he was an expert at pretending to read. No longer was Marvell pretending to read.

One student read *Rainbow Jordan* by Alice Childress. Peaches takes on the responsibility of an adult as she tries to solve the difficult problems of Rainbow Jordan, a young African-American girl whose mother is irresponsible, leaving Rainbow with a foster parent who treats Rainbow with respect and actually teaches her a great deal about love, trust, and responsibility; Presented here is Peaches' letter to the advice columnist and her response:

If I was rainbow Jorden I would tell my cosail [social] workr to sent me to my dad so I could live with him. Because my mother do not care at all she leave at all time of day & night

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I'll build [our building] catch on fire I scared. She got put in jail for that she need to leave burke and come houme and found a real job. If I saw rainbow for myself hi [for an] hour you well I know been going through alot and would like to come live with me for long as you want we can[work] these thing out with you & your mother.

Now, acting as the advice columnist, Peaches answers the letter:

I'll rainbow to come live with me for a little bit then I'll found her mother sit he [her] down and have a long talk her about her respisble [responsibilities] to she have a child there live one there you are sleep with people take care of your respicable or send her to her father.

Although Peaches' situation is actually quite different from Rainbow's,

she has great compassion for the young girl whose mother does not

take care of her the way she should. Peaches wrote other pieces,

including those in her journal and some character mappings, which

she finally put together into this basically unedited piece of writing:

Rainbow Jordan
Rainbow is a 13 year old and she is to brave to be a child and to scared to be a woman. Rainbow lives with her mother. Her moher does not take care of her. After her father left her mother, her mother had to go and fina a job but she niver found one. So she starts sleeping with men for money and at night she woul leave Rainbow. She always say do not use any kind of matches. Late that night their building catch on fire. so the firefighters got everybody out and they took rainbow to the police so soon as mother found they arrest and put Rainbow orphans. So her mother spent one night in jail so she go out she tried to get Rainbow back the mother still left her alone so a the lady next door let her stay with her till her mother came home. But still and all Rainbow was going back and forth to the orphan. Will her mother change? No because Rainbow mother can't stop going out or leave rainbow home alone. But now rainbow is having bad dream about the Fire in their old build and her is not there to tell her it alright She there for her. So now she is with a lad [lady] & her husband they have a nice house no childern She alway be home by herself because her husband gose on buissen trip's

So she let rainbow cook with her and set up the table for dinner She teachers rainbow a lot of things. Now the sasocil [social] serive [service] let her mother come see her once a week. Her is still with burke that her mother boyfirend he came their one night saying her know had so babyup in own house & he ask me and I do not see anymen in this he said rainbow was lieing. But all in all I like the book because rainbow was scard brave then strong sometime through the whole book that how I am some time. So that what I read in <u>rainbow Jordon</u> I in enjoy it.

What is most important to notice about this piece of writing is not the grammar or the misspellings, but instead that the experience of reading was rewarding to this student and that the reading and the writing was completed. The product is not always the reward. Students learn by attempting to learn and also by making mistakes. This student said that she hated reading, but she always welcomed books about African-Americans. Although Peaches' situation at home was the complete opposite of Rainbow's, Peaches nonetheless connected with the book because she felt she saw a bit of herself in Rainbow; additionally, she liked the independence and strength of the character and she enjoyed the book enough to want to finish reading it: "But all in all I like the book because rainbow was scard brave then strong sometime through the whole book that how I am some time. . .I in enjoy it."

I only owned one copy of *Rainbow Jordan*, so one student in each class was able to read the book, which made Peaches angry—she thought that we should have many copies of this book and she thought that everyone should have the opportunity to read this book.

As Peaches was a very vocal student, her pleas about the importance of this book were far-reaching; other students took the book home or read it during free-reading time and I ordered four more copies of the book with our materials money. I believed that Peaches' reading would improve and her writing and her errors would lessen as long as she continued to cultivate the experiences of reading and writing. I would continue to work with her on her understanding of the text and on proofreading, but most importantly, on avenues to provide her opportunities to continue and to enjoy the beginning reading and writing experience.

Jamaica, who had originally begun to dissect the reading orange (see Chapter 10), was also fast becoming an advocate of reading about African-Americans. Unlike Peaches, Jamaica was aware of what books she really wanted to read and actually had a list. As we did not have a copy of *The Color Purple* in the classroom books and the library also did not have a copy, Jamaica literally begged me to bring my copy of the book from home. She had, of course, seen the movie and really wanted to read the book. I had decided against bringing this book to class because I thought the situation of incest and some other situations was too advanced for ninth graders, but Jamaica made a convincing argument against this; part of the argument was that she already knew the story because she had seen the movie so she would not be reading something to which she had not already been exposed.

According to my philosophy, getting students reading—anything and everything—was key, so why I was worried about censoring what students read was beyond me. If a teacher finds a student begging to read a book, let the student read it (See Swiderik, 1996).

So, Jamaica read *The Color Purple*, and even though her father was a minister, her parents never criticized me for their daughter's choice of reading. Jamaica was the only student who wrote a dramatic script as her creative assignment; Peaches actually jumped in to help her because she had seen the movie and read some of the best parts of the book via Jamaica. The two wrote together out of their memories of scenes that had actually occurred, including many stage directions, and they had a great time writing together and laughing about what they wrote. The two also read their play aloud to the class, which was not only entertaining but proved to interest others in the book. Later, Jamaica wrote a more serious piece, a basic, short synopsis of the book. Jamaica's writing style reveals many shortcomings: a lack of organization, a lack of variety in sentence structure, a lack of vocabulary, and a lack of grammatical knowledge:

> The Color Purple was about this family that the step father married there mother. There father always treated nettie with pride and never mess with her. but Celie was his little hoe [whore]. Nettie and celie mother died and left them with there step father none of them like him but he didn't care about that Celie had her first child and it was a boy witch [which] she couldn't name him. That child was given to her by her father. Next she had [a] little girl by her father to but she had a name for that one and it was Olivia, she had to give that one away to. She felt really bad about her little going to stay

with people she didn't know. Well one day her dad thougth that it was time for her to go. It was a man came looking for a wife, so her dad call for ciele [Celie] you come here. Celie did not know the man at all but her father made her marry him and she went to live with him. The kids did not really except [accept] her but she had to live there anyway. One of the boys came out and hit her in the head with a rock, and she just about bleed to death. But her husband just had sex with her one night and didn't even stop.

One day nettie decied [decided] to run away from home and come live with celie. Celie was so happy that she and nettie sanged dance and even played there sister song. Nettie thought [taught] celie how to read write and every thing. Oneday nettie was going to school and Mr. tried to make a move on her and she hit him in his——[word left out] that was the day she had to leave they couldn't stand being apart from one another they cried and cried he even hit her with rocks to get her to go. Celie life wasn't always easy but she made it. Her husband love a good blues singer, barreled into her world and gave celie the courage to ask for more then [than] being hit or treated bad, but to laugh to play and finally to Love. This book was great it just was intersting [interesting] and good one thing i like about the book is that celie was a strong woman.

Faulting Jamaica for recapitulating the story strictly according to the sequence of events, or for capitalizing words only occasionally, or for writing perhaps some of the world's longest run-on sentences was, again, not the purpose of the assignment. Beginning writers and readers need to start somewhere and to make errors in order to learn from them; I was working with her individually on all of this. What was most important about her written reaction was that she showed that she had read the book cover to cover, understood it, and loved it: "This book was great it just was intersting [interesting] and good one thing i like about the book is that celie was a strong woman."

From reading this book, from perusing the library shelves to see what was available, and from becoming aware of what others were reading about African-Americans, Jamaica discovered a field of interest, a niche if you will, and continued to read avidly within this genre. During the year, Jamaica did more reading than any other student in the class and was more interested than anyone else in what other students were reading, wanting to read everything they read and to peruse all the books in the classroom and the library; she was also extremely interested in the personal store of books that I was reading and chose to take home novels and books of poetry written by and about African-Americans that I often thought were too advanced (I do also love adolescent literature, however, and reading multicultural and/or adolescent literature is one of my favorite things to do). She only wanted to read books about African-Americans and African-American culture, which was perfectly acceptable to me. She had most likely been denied access to this literature throughout most of her schooling as attention to multicultural issues is a product of the late 80's to 90's. Schools have been criticized for considering African-American literature only in February, or during Black History Month. Although Jamaica chose The Color Purple to write about, during the period students were specifically expected to be reading novels, which lasted approximately two or three months, Jamaica read *Rainbow Jordan* (Childress), *The Friendship* (Taylor), *The Gold Cadillac* (Taylor),

The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman (Gaines), *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Angelou), and more. She also read the stories to accompany a variety of literary videos I owned, including "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (Wright), because she wanted to see the "movie." She had become a reading monster, an avid reader who could not be contained. She enjoyed the feel and the smell of a book, not to mention the words, as much as any true reader could. I felt certain that the road to reading Jamaica was traversing would admit her into many other worlds of reading—indeed many other worlds—if she could maintain her fascination.

CHAPTER 13

A BREAK IN MOTIVATIONAL MOMENTUM: THE WORKBOOKS

Students were required daily to complete assignments in the Learning 100 Workbooks (EDL). Often, after reading quietly and writing a little bit every day on the writing assignments that accompanied the reading, students were forced to change to keep up with the workbook assignments. That often led to a break in momentum which caused students to be pulled away from the type of reading and writing assignments that were motivating them to continue reading and writing.

Although many teachers continue to use worksheets or workbooks, and some even prefer to use them to "ensure participation" or to commandeer time, these fill-in forms often do not provide students a real opportunity for learning or for valuing literacy. Shuman (1986) discusses the reasons why those teachers she observed all used worksheets as a major aspect of their courses and the type of learning that was expected to occur from this practice:

> Fill-in forms teach a certain mode of writing and require certain kinds of understanding of writing. They also require a particular sort of interaction. The purpose of the worksheets, according to the teacher, was not so much to measure the students' understanding of the material as to ensure their

participation in the lesson. The worksheet gave the students something to do and paced their work throughout the lesson (p. 100).

The teachers' preferences for using worksheets were based on the quality of student participation rather than on the kinds of thinking or writing demanded by the worksheet. These preferences included the conceptualization of answers in the form of single words or brief phrases rather than questions (p. 100).

In a class where holding students' attention was the major problem, the teacher found that he could encourage full participation by giving students the worksheet to fill in. If he could keep their attention, he felt he was doing all he could to encourage them to answer the questions on their own (p. 100).

A characteristic quality of forms is that the purpose of writing is to make an incomplete piece into a complete piece whose completeness is defined a priori by the author of the form. The person who fills in the form is not the author but rather the instrument of completion. Further, forms allow no room for equivocation or ambiguity; they discourage tangential questions. In filling in a form, it is not possible to answer a question with a question (Shuman, pp. 100-101).

Students in my class could choose the books they read and the methods in which they completed assignments on everything except with regards to the workbooks. As will be discussed in the following section, my students enjoyed their freedom with respect to their reading and writing experiences. The workbook exercises were in a myriad ways a restriction of this freedom, did not in any way "ensure participation," and were an impediment to students' understanding of the definitions and values of literacy.

In January, I had spoken to each of the students and their parents in individual conferences about the requirements for passing

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the class and proceeding on to a regular tenth grade English class. This is the letter that the teachers gave to students and parents to explain the requirements during these meetings:

TO: Parents of Ninth Graders Enrolled in English I/Reading

FROM: Sandy Stiehl, Reading Program Coordinator
         Tommy Leduc, Principal
         Lee Baginski, Reading Specialist
         Nancy Moore, Reading Specialist

RE: Criteria for Promotion

This year your child has been enrolled in a special English I class designed to improve his or her reading skills. Our goal is for your child to be able to move into a regular English II class next year and to be successful in all tenth grade classes.

Students entered this program reading at all different levels and needing help with a variety of skills. The reading program is so individualized that your child is receiving instruction at his or her appropriate level and in those skills in which he or she needs assistance.

Your child's promotion to regular tenth grade English depends on his/her meeting the following criteria:

1. Reaches a reading level of at least 7.0-8.5 by completing level GA in the EDL Learning 100 materials
2. Makes sufficient progress as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test given in the spring
3. Makes passing grades

As you can see, the requirements for promotion are different from other classes because we want to be as certain as possible that your child has the reading skills necessary to be successful in the tenth grade.

If your child does not meet these criteria by the end of the year, we will discuss with you the following options for next year: (1) continuation in this program until a reading

level of 8.0-9.5 is reached; (2) enrollment in an adult education program. We also plan to have a summer program for students who need to continue to work on their reading skills.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

After reading this letter and attending the individual conferences, students and their parents knew just exactly what was at stake regarding promotion. They also knew that because the Learning 100 was the focal point of this document, it was to be considered priority.

Although the letter placed the workbooks as priority, I believed that too much emphasis had been placed on them throughout the course. Students had been allegedly "learning" through workbooks in earlier classes and in earlier years, and these workbooks, with their fill-in-the-blanks, and multiple-choice questions, perhaps led only to teaching students test-taking skills, if that.

And so far, the workbooks and their activities had led my students to much less than ample test-taking skills, and from what I observed, only to mass confusion. For example, a student beginning in level CA, would first take the criterion-referenced test to discover which skill cycles he or she would need to complete in order to move up to the next level. On average, students needed to complete ten to twelve cycles in each level before moving ahead.

What was involved in completing a cycle? First, students were provided with list of vocabulary words, which I had them read aloud to

me to ensure that they could pronounce them properly. Then, a student would read a selection in the Reading Comprehension workbook; this reading was broken up by lines and pictures and sometimes the words, "Stop tape" and other directions. The reason for the directions regarding the tapes was that the workbooks were expected to be accompanied by cassette tapes; however, we could not afford to purchase the tapes to go with the workbooks. As the workbooks only came with the tape directions included, the students' reading had to be interrupted in places where the tape directives or questions would be. In the Reading Comprehension section of the cycle, students were never able to read a complete reading all the way through uninterrupted; in addition to the tape directions, students also had to tackle multiple-choice questions placed in various areas throughout the text. Once finished with the reading selection for the Reading Comprehension portion, which averaged three to five pages, including the interpolations, students had to answer the remainder of the comprehension questions.

The next part of the cycle was completing the Language Clues workbook. Students had to use their word charts to fill-in-the-blanks to compose complete sentences; these fill-ins were fairly easy in the beginning levels, but became progressively more difficult in the higher levels. As there were no definitions of the words on the vocabulary list given in the workbook and each one could include as many as fifty

words, students were required to either look up many words in the dictionary or decipher their meanings from context. In the higher levels, there were simply too many words for a student to work with, and most did not look up each and every word. Students were also unlikely to absorb the meanings of that many words at once. In Part II of the process, the Language Clues workbook, the vocabulary fill-ins were followed by grammar and language pronunciation questions, items that were never discussed or taught through the text nor in the directions. Students completed on average approximately 50-75 multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions in each Language Clues portion of the workbooks.

Part III of the process was the GO Book, a book that looked much like a paperback novel. In the GO Book would be a story of approximately four to seven pages; at the conclusion of the narrative, students were required to answer ten questions, usually multiple-choice with one or two fill-in-the-blank questions about the story. Of all the workbook activities, the GO book was preferred—students liked the short stories, the book was easy to handle and *felt* like a book, and there were only ten questions, which were easy to self grade, and not so many questions that they overwhelmed pupils by their sheer numbers.

After completing the GO Book, students were done with the cycle. However, they still needed to fill out three separate worksheets

in order to receive a grade. Students were graded according to how many cycles they completed, no matter what level they were on, as well as on the grades they received on the three worksheets. The first worksheet was labelled C, which stood for Comprehension; students were normally given three or four multiple-choice questions related to a short reading passage that would test them on their facility within a particular skill (main idea, cause and effect, or sequencing, for example); the main problem with this worksheet was that if students missed one question, they received a 70, which was a D. If they missed two questions, they could not pass. The second worksheet, which was labelled R, was a grammar worksheet, which tested students on grammatical issues which were never taught through the reading nor explained in the worksheet directions.

As students were expected to complete all this work, I was often pulled away from working with what I considered more important reading discussions, to teach, for example, a grammar point to one student, as every student would come to each worksheet at his or her own individual moment. The final worksheet, labelled W, which stood for Writing, was an essay-like question, which students could answer through composing a page-long response; however, the short-essay questions were not in any way related to their reading, and only confusion resulted when students had no idea of what to write about in order to respond. Students appeared to have more difficulty writing

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when they did not have a reading assignment to provide them with writing stimuli, as evidenced by their ability to begin on the variety of reading/writing essay questions I gave them in the English portion of the class. Students also had difficulty beginning to write when the essay question did not appeal to them and when they had not been able to choose the writing topic.

On the other hand, these short essays were the types of writing that they would have to do in future schooling, and they could have been motivating in the sense that they were short writings that students could complete quickly. However, most of the essay questions were not of much interest to students, did not relate viscerally to their personal lives, and came as the last leg of a very long workbook cycle. I worked with students, suggesting ways to begin, and although some of the questions were not those that might prod *me* to want to respond, students nevertheless were learning to write for essay tests and that was an important process that could be intrinsically worthwhile. The W worksheets were the only parts of the workbook activities where I could participate with meaningful comments—I read the students' essays, and wrote encouraging responses, sometimes working with grammatical issues pertinent to the particular student.

After completing each part of the process before the worksheets, students were expected to self-check their answers: as each student

was working on different workbooks and different sections of the three-part workbooks, it was virtually impossible for the teacher to check all of the students' work, so each student was expected to grade his or her own work. A table was set up immediately behind my desk where students could go to check their responses whenever they were finished. As students were finishing their work at different times, and there was room for three or four students to check their work at a time, this system should have worked.

However, instead of working to finish one section of the workbook, grading it, checking their work, looking over missed answers to understand their errors, and going systematically on to the next section, students found ways to cheat. First, they started taking the answer keys for the next section they needed to work on out of the notebook; I caught a few students doing this as they tried to hide the plastic-coated sheets under their clothes or under books and I found a few sheets crumpled up and stuck behind the computers. Although I endeavored to be watchful of students, some students still continued to get away with this form of cheating. Another method was for one student to make copies of their work and give that to another student who would soon be encountering the same exercise or cycle. Some students also simply gave their work to another student out of their folder as soon as they were done and before I had a chance to pull completed work from their folders—I tried to go through their work

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every day and place completed work in folders that I kept locked up in a file cabinet in my classroom. Students desperately wanted to get into that cabinet—where all the exercises and thousands of multiple-choice answers abounded—but they were never alone in the classroom.

Another form of cheating was the one where students sat at their desks and pretended as if they were reading the questions and filling in the responses, but were instead filling in any letter and any word or group of words to make it appear as if they were finished; to make this more believable, when they finished writing down any answer, they would head for the grading table, where they proceeded to mark at random some answers wrong so that their "completed" work looked credible to me. This form of cheating took me longer to discover, but once I did catch on to it, I had the unenviable task of grading and spot-checking many more assignments than were possible in a normal school day; I then spent many more hours after school checking the thousands of workbook responses every day and soon discovered that there was hardly a student to be trusted with doing the assignments without some form of cheating.

I was luckier, however, than most of the other teachers; the others told me of similar schemes going on in their classrooms, and more. A student from another school, for instance, stole the entire answer key notebook for a class, put it in her locker, and refused to open her locker and return it until the principal and vice-principal

compelled her to in front of a large crowd of the student body; a student, or group of students in Nancy's, the other reading teacher's at my school, classroom broke into her portable (what the trans-portable or trailer-like classrooms were called) and stole her entire notebook for the GA or top level of the workbook from a locked cabinet—only her students subsequently knew where the notebook was clandestinely kept and only her students, and mine, would thereafter benefit from the answer keys—no one was ever caught in this incident. I also taught summer school at Kingsboro High that year, where the students played the same cheating tricks. After I caught them immediately from experience, they told me that they had cheated all year with their regular teachers.

The cheating came and went all year for my students; once caught, a student would often honestly work for a while and then start cheating again. The cheating also became dramatically worse at the end of the year because students were under real pressure to perform, and to get out of this class once and for all. A few students at the end of the year began taking the workbooks home so that they could finish a level or the program, and spent hours filling in hundreds of answers, bringing to class stacks of "completed" pages, only to start again, as they had not read anything or even looked at the questions in an attempt to answer them. This final burst of speed came too late and usually was done incorrectly. Often, it was not

even attempted at all. For the students involved in this form of cheating, their actions cost them either the summer, for they had to attend summer school in order to complete the workbooks, or the first semester of the following year, for they had to take the same program again (to be called Reading/Writing II or Reading/Writing Workshop), do the workbooks and complete two more levels, HA and IA in order to escape the Learning 100 workbooks. What is sad about this situation is that the majority of students were perfectly capable of completing the workbooks and of going on to a "regular" English class by performing the workbook tasks; the students knew that they were perfectly capable of completing the workbook exercises during the 45 minute time allotted them daily during class, but they continued to avoid them. For some reason, students had a true aversion to doing exercises in the workbooks.

I knew that it was not only my students who were fighting the workbooks, and doing perhaps more cheating than learning. So, my question became not what are they learning, but why are they cheating? The answers could be that they did not understand the questions or have the skills required to do the workbooks, so they cheated. They could also find the workbooks boring, so they cheated. They could simply cheat because they liked the thrill of the illicit behavior and because they had always cheated—and, probably gotten away with it. Perhaps, too, students were just simply lazy. Or—this

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was my first choice—they could have cheated because they were pressured to advance to the next level through completing the corresponding workbook levels, and the workbooks were so emphasized by the principal, by the reading coordinator, and by the time they were required to spend on them in class. The workbooks and the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Test</u> were the only items specifically designated as relating to their passing the course and being admitted to a "regular" English class. Hence, students "read between the lines" of the message of their educators' emphasis and recognized where their true priorities lay. They were going to find a way to be admitted into a "regular" English class no matter what. Although student priorities were not really the completing of the workbooks, they had "put two and two together" and reasoned that doing the workbooks or pretending to do them was the only way out. That the workbook exercises were tedious and copious only stoked their determination to cheat rather than to complete such multitudinous and monotonous exercises. Perhaps the workbooks held priority for teachers and administrators but were not important to students.

I did not believe that the workbooks would be very helpful from the start, but as we had spent so much money on them and it was expected to be the focus of classwork, I wanted students to learn whatever they could from them and to give themselves a chance at succeeding in this class. I still question the amount of time and

energy they and I devoted to these *weapons of mass confusion* as I term them now. But, at the time, I hoped that their scores on the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Test</u> would increase as a result of these workbook exercises, as the representative from the EDL (Learning 100) company and Ms. Stiehl, the reading coordinator had indicated they would. I hoped that my instincts about such a program based on workbooks would be wrong and so I carried on, attempting to conceal my bias on the subject from students so as not to give them any more reason to quit "workbooking"—I could always be wrong, and, regardless of my opinions on the subject, students could not pass without completing the workbook portion of the class and they could not go on to a "regular" English class without completing the GA level. Furthermore, I was told by my superiors that this was what was expected of me—I am extremely sorry that I was unable to do more to keep students from wasting even more of their valuable time but I was not absolutely certain that students could not be helped through workbooks and worksheets and I had no choice in the matter. Perhaps some students did learn through the workbooks, but I believe that the majority did not learn much in the way of useful information or skills that would improve their reading or writing.

Students also developed such an aversion to the workbooks that they avoided doing them in other ways too. Beginning in December, we reported reasons to Ms. Stiehl during our meetings as to why some

students were not completing a reasonable number of cycles per the time allotted. Then, in January, after we had spoken to each of the parents regarding the rules for promotion of their child, Ms. Stiehl provided a form through which we could report to her on each student's individual progress. We were to place check marks in boxes indicating each level a student had completed and to provide explanations of the reasons why those students who had not yet completed even one level in more than two months' time lagged behind. The reasons to explain why students had not completed a level had almost entirely to do with a lack of motivation.

On January 7, the first week of the second semester, I reported that I had 10 students who were still working in their initial workbook level. I had two students who had begun in the BA level, who, I wrote "[had] many skills to complete but are working steadily but slowly." One of the above students really did need extra help in order to complete these exercises, but the other student, in retrospect, was much more capable of completing the exercises necessary to continue and could have worked much faster. He was slowed down because he was upset that he had begun in the lowest level, and was embarrassed because he felt singled out in this class, as he confirmed to me in a private conference, as a "dummy in a resource class."

As Ms. Stiehl determined what level students in which students began in the workbooks according to their <u>Stanford Diagnostic</u>

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<u>Reading Test</u> results and her own personal impression of each student's capabilities, I could not change Jacquez' level even though I felt that he should have started at a higher level—CA at the minimum. Jacquez was simply mortified by the fact that he was placed in the class; placing him in the lowest level where he had to complete so many exercises in order to ever get to GA and to get out of this class simply added insult to injury. Complicating this was the fact that Marquez was more anxious about tests than any other test taker I had ever seen; his self-esteem and self-confidence was so tenuous that he was rarely able to do well on tests. On the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test;</u> he had only attained a grade level placement of 3.3 on the pre-test which had been administered in September; his results in May on the post-test were worse rather than better—he scored only a 3.0, although his grade in my class for the year had been an 85, a B. His performance on the writing and other assignments dramatically brought up his grades on the workbooks, which were low because he did not progress very far throughout the year—he only completed level DA by the end of the year and had to attend both summer school and a similar program, called Reading Workshop II, the following year. He was, however, able to accomplish more than acceptable work on the reading and writing I required. Nonetheless, his ability to succeed in the course and to no longer feel himself to be "a dummy in a resource

class" were denied to him due to his inability to work to succeed in the workbooks and his extreme test anxiety.

In the information I sent Ms. Stiehl, I included a discussion of five other students that I believed were "not progressing due to apathy, lack of motivation, lack of focus, and poor attitude." Concerning two of these five students I wrote, "has trouble getting going; wastes time getting started. Not many skills to do in respective books; could easily move ahead." When I look back at what I wrote about these ten students who had not completed even one level in the workbook after two months, I realize that the above statements could have been written about any of my students concerning their progress in the workbooks. The cheating that students committed was simply one more method of escaping the "apathy, lack of motivation, lack of focus, and poor attitude" toward "getting going" on the workbooks. Although only ten of my students, out of 23 total, had not yet completed a cycle, by January 30, only seven students had completed two or more levels. By March 25, a few more had completed a second level, and ten had completed either three or four levels.

One student who completed level CA at the end of January finally, during the last week of school, completed the DA level. Although Bobby was perfectly capable—his beginning reading comprehension score had been 6.6—he just sat there during workbook time trying to motivate himself, but to no avail. This same student

wrote short papers (1-2 pages long) on ghost stories and on books he read for extra-credit to make up for his complete lack of drive on completing the workbook assignments. If this student was motivated to read and write, why was he not motivated to do the workbooks?

Another student, Annette, who had a total score of 9.5 on the comprehension portion of the pre-test (8.8 pre-test total) completed two levels, level EA and FA by January 30, and remained in the same place, although still working sporadically on GA, on March 25. Annette was a student whom I had tried unsuccessfully at the beginning of the year to place in a regular English I class—if her scores were 9.5 on the pre-test, and the test was everything to Ms. Stiehl, then Annette did not belong in this class. What was happening to her was extreme boredom at the workbook activities. Annette was, according to the pre-test, reading at a 9.5 grade level, but Ms. Stiehl decided that she had to start in the EA, or fifth grade, level; the only reason I can ascertain for this is that Ms. Stiehl did not want any student to finish the program too early because we would not know what to do with that student—once a student was so labelled and made a part of this class, it was impossible to get beyond it, whether or not their placement was "correct." What was interesting about Annette's predicament was that she loved writing, especially poetry, and she came to love reading, as she found many books that she wanted to read. She was one of the students who, when we visited the

library, often returned with three or four books. Although always working hard at her reading and writing when she had chosen the work, she constantly avoided the workbooks, and only finished GA during the last week of school, at my prodding, five months after she had begun this level.

What was Annette doing during the workbook time of approximately forty-five minutes per day? Annette spent her day trying to work, sometimes asking questions, sneaking reading of the books she had chosen at the library (sometimes I pretended not to notice), and often doing a great job of helping other students in the class with whatever they needed help on (she was a wonderful assistant). Although Annette did eventually complete the GA level of the workbooks, she had great difficulty doing so, not because of lack of skills, but because of lack of motivation. What is even more interesting about Annette's situation is that her 9.5 comprehension on the pre-test reverted to a 5.1 on the post-test. Certainly, in her case, the workbooks had not helped her on the test; instead, the workbooks and the incorrect placement of Annette in a remedial class, had taken away whatever motivation she had to do well on workbook exercises and on their corresponding tests, and perhaps other assignments as well. I am convinced that Annette's reading had indeed improved, and that her original score was her true score; what Annette was sentenced to was slow death by monotony: as the short

passages for the workbook tests and the other activities were so similar to a reading test format, and after a complete school year of the same thing, it was difficult to read those passages, answer the multiple-choice questions, and even to care how well she did—after all, she had done well at the beginning of the year and yet it had not changed a thing, for she remained in a remedial class regardless.

Other students also regressed in their reading levels. Nine of the 23 students regressed on their reading comprehension from pre-test to post-test; the regressions ranged from -.1 to -4.4 (Annette) grade levels. Bobby, described above, achieved a grade-level score of 6.6 on the comprehension pre-test, and then scored a 4.2 on the comprehension post-test, a difference of -2.2. He began the Learning 100 workbooks at the CA, or third grade, level and completed only the DA, or fourth grade level.

Another student, Chelsea, who began the workbooks at the DA, or fourth grade level, started out with a reading comprehension score of 8.4; she tested out at the end of the year with a reading comprehension score of 5.7. Chelsea began in DA and ended by completing EA; as a result of not completing the GA level, she was required to go to summer school to complete it. What was so strange about Chelsea's lack of progress was that she found the workbooks incredibly easy but she chose not to complete them because she did not find such an activity worthwhile. As Chelsea disliked the

workbooks and summer school, and all that would be accomplished in summer school was the workbooks, Chelsea was not going to attend. I spoke, however, to both Chelsea and her mother, telling Chelsea that if she did not complete the workbooks, she would have to take a similar course the following year, where she would have to complete two additional levels beyond GA, and complete both HA and IA as well. If she ever wished to leave the Learning 100 workbooks behind, work that she did not consider worthwhile, this was her only chance. I advised her to get it over with in the summer so that she would never have to catch sight of the workbooks again. So, Chelsea went to summer school, completed the workbooks, and found herself in a regular tenth grade English class, with no workbooks, the following year. She wrote me a letter at the beginning of the next year explaining how happy she was to escape the workbooks: " I am glad that I finished the Learning 100 too because I hated all of that work."

Although other students indicated their disinterest in the workbook activities through their almost complete lack of enthusiasm, still only one student mentioned the workbooks as problematic and futile in his evaluation: "I would give everyone a Language book and make the[m] do work out of it. Learning 100 didn't teach me anything." During the year, the students had decided that they wanted to be like their classmates and to have their own copies of the English I textbook; having no lockers, they valiantly carried these

heavy textbooks with them everywhere in an attempt to fit in. And although we did some reading both aloud and silently and held some discussions of some of the texts we read together, the time spent on the workbooks occupied most of our time and it became difficult to work with the textbook, the workbooks, and the students' selected reading in the limited class time. It was extremely unfortunate that the time spent on the workbooks cut into the students' time which would have otherwise been available for reading the more challenging materials presented in the textbook, and into their time to read and do what the other students were reading and doing, the time where they could be "regular" students not worrying about what the other students were thinking about them. They refused to take the workbooks with them—those needed to be hidden from their peers because they were recognized as being the reading class books, and would be easily spotted across campus due to their large dimension and their bright and conspicuous colors: pinks, oranges, turquoises, and other bold, outstanding colors.

The use of workbooks should have made it easy to teach my class, as so much of the class time was already planned for me. However, the layers of work involved in a cycle, as well as the lack of motivation students had for the monotonous activities only made the day harder for me and more disheartening for them. Nelson (1988) discusses the problems with workbooks, indicating that the use of

workbooks may be one more push for students who are at-risk and considering dropping out:

> Curriculum materials are of critical importance in whether students stay in school. In recent years, the use of workbooks and xeroxed passages from workbooks has increased enormously. In the 1960s researchers on the dropout problem frequently pointed to a connection between dropping out of school and the overuse of workbooks and other boring materials. Writers warned that workbooks were a teacher's crutch and not a substitute for teaching that was sensible to individual needs. This is still true today. No mechanical form of instruction can substitute for classroom interactions. It is even more deadly for potential dropouts, for they frequently are treated as a separate species who must be fed on a diet of dull, often stupid, rote materials. As Wilbur Brookover has cautioned, equality of opportunity is not facilitated by differentiated materials and methods based on the presumed differences between children. A common curriculum with common materials is associated with an open society. The heavy use of Skinnerian technology with poorer students and Deweyan approaches with more able students will only create more dropouts, just as it has been doing. It is also a violation of educators' commitment to equal access to the curriculum.
>
> Moreover, as Daniel Tanner pointed out. . . research does not support the idea that students who have never really become interested in learning do best with a system of learning that relies on workbooks, preprogrammed instruction, drills, and tests (instruction delivered one piece at a time). Indeed, such students prefer discovery approaches. Rote instructional procedures will not keep secondary students in school (pp. 235-236).

The students themselves had substantiated everything that the research on workbooks had to say. They were not motivated, they considered dropping out, they were bored, they were not receiving equal access to materials, and they said as much, both directly and indirectly.

The problem with the workbooks is that students were not motivated to learn; rather, they were motivated to cheat, or to quit. Or, at times, they were not motivated at all. Others rebelled at the perceived uselessness of the workbook activities. In some cases, students actually regressed rather than progressed as shown in the results on the <u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test</u>, which was supposed to correspond with the skills taught in the workbooks.

The aversion to the workbooks was, for most, a detrimental factor in their learning because the majority of students were not motivated to learn through the workbooks. Some students were masters of immobilization and shirking during the time scheduled for workbooks; some students began in one level and stayed there for months. Others worked, moved up, then quit for a while, then perhaps reverted to cheating once again, and on and on it went. Only one student really stuck with the workbooks straight through to the end; it should be noted that she worked systematically, did not cheat, asked questions when she did not understand something, and indicated that she liked the workbooks.

Most students, however, did not consider the workbooks useful, challenging, or interesting, all elements that are necessary in order for learning to occur, and for motivation toward further learning to be stimulated. Santa (1997) discusses some of the relevant literature on

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the question of whether simple or challenging material is more

worthwhile:

> It is hardly a surprise that the exploration of challenging content and issues is more motivating to students than reading from textbooks or doing skill sheets. For example, Miller, Adkins, and Hooper (1993) found that third graders had more intrinsic motivation for complex assignments than for simple assignments. In fact, simple assignments such as copying and writing single words or sentence fragments prompted work avoidance (Turner, 1995) (p. 229).

Birch et. al. (1974) in their study of stream of behavior, indicate that

negative reactions lead to resistance which then leads to avoidance

and finally, to "a delay in the initiation of the activity" (pp. 76-77).

Although the workbook activities were neither challenging nor

difficult, students had an extremely adverse reaction to them and

clearly avoided them. Furthermore, a student had to be systematic, or

organized, in order to complete the myriad activities involved in even

one cycle—Reading Comprehension, Language Clues, Go Books,

Comprehension, Language, and Writing Worksheets—without

becoming overwhelmed, bored, and frankly, simply tired (Remember

that students often had to complete 10 to 12 of these cycles, or more,

before going onto the next level to start the same process over again).

Considering all that was involved in a cycle, and the thousands of

short answers and multiple-choice questions they had been adminis-

tered even by January, not to mention by the time they were still

performing the same mundane routine in May, it was understandable

that students avoided or even rebelled against this work. Students

understood the process after going through it a number of times, but they could still be overwhelmed by the amount of work involved to complete a cycle. If I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of steps in the process, the students had to be—these workbooks were more than "drill-kills", they were overkill, and I believe that they killed the spark my students might have had for reading and writing. However, that spark was often rekindled through activities other than the work-books. Would that I had had the time spent on the workbooks to spend on these other, more engaging reading and writing activities.

CHAPTER 14

WRITING AND ITS EFFECTS ON MOTIVATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

FOLLOWING FORMULAS IN BEGINNING WRITING: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The work that I believe revealed student improvement in writing and came closest to showing students being effectively prepared for future academic expectations were those in which they wrote according to a more formulaic assignment sheet that I had written (see Appendix B: Library Book Paper). Students used this assignment sheet to write about one book and two magazines. Although students were still given the choice of what book or magazine articles they wanted to read and also selected which events and what questions they would include in their summative assignments, they were expected to follow a preconceived order of paragraphs. This was done in order to help students to get started on what would be the longest piece of writing they had ever composed. The suggestions of what to include in each successive paragraph were developed so that students would examine closely various aspects of their books and would also arrive, upon finishing each paragraph, at

being able to know where to search next for the ideas to be included in the following paragraph.

Students, to be sure, expressed their anxieties about completing the assignment, but I told them that we would take as much time as we needed in order for them to complete it successfully. I taught them brainstorming, prewriting, webbing, and mapping strategies, and also taught them how to work with the dictionary and the thesaurus. Although most students did know how to use the dictionary and thesaurus, and had used these resources in the classroom when doing the workbooks, poetry, and other assignments, they did still need to be reminded that these were tools that could be used when writing. They were told that they could use any of their prewriting in their final writing.

Part of my charge as a reading specialist was to get students reading and writing. I was also expected to get students ready for tenth grade English, which, to me, meant that they needed to be challenged to read and write as much as possible: that they should be reading, and writing about their reading. And, as all the ninth grade students in "regular" classrooms would be expected to write a term paper at the end of the year, I wanted to launch students on an assignment that would be similar to a research paper in some ways. Students would work with summaries, quotations from texts, non-

fictional material, their own questions about the text, and paragraph organization.

Although an experienced writing teacher who had taught composition to both native and non-native speakers at both the college and high school level, I had heretofore never given students such a "formula" for writing as I did with this assignment because I had always found that a good piece of writing can be written in an infinite number of ways. I also believe that a piece of writing will be what needs to be said to answer the questions a writer poses about the writing. However, I knew my students by now and I knew that they needed a little prodding in order to get started and to develop the confidence to continue writing a piece that was different from anything they had written before—and notably longer. My students were also novice writers, therefore giving them some extra direction was appropriate; they were not independent writers who could work through a set of writing problems or could be left to muddle through all alone without direction:

> Although researchers caution against formulaic interpretations of the steps in the writing process for teaching, they do not suggest an approach that leaves students to their own devices. Instead, teachers are being encouraged to organize their instruction in ways that provide for the students' development of abilities in writing over time (Bright, 1995, p. 9).

Through the brainstorming and prewriting activities, writing a little at a time, writing a little more every day, students might realize

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that they could write more than they had ever imagined. The short writing and the prewriting assignments that I assigned to students for this longer paper allowed them to advance slowly through the writing process and toward completion of a paper. Students had access to the computer to type their drafts which could be written and rewritten as they proceeded. In this way, I also had time to oversee their writing, their dilemmas, and to provide comments and suggestions in successive stages. When students had completed a rough draft, I would read their essays and write comments.

After students completed their brainstorming and prewriting, they were given time in class to complete the reading of the book on which they had chosen to write. Students actually only needed to read one chapter carefully in order to complete the book assignment, but the majority of students read the entire books they had chosen. When we spent time choosing books from the library, the result was that some students even read two or three books on the same subject, or found other books or subjects in which they were interested. On a daily basis, students were also given time to work on the paragraphs they were expected to write in order to produce a completed paper.

I will admit that when I first gave the assignment, I was worried about it. I am including a complete entry from my journal on my thoughts about this assignment because I believe it demonstrates not only my understanding of my students' needs but also my reservations,

that I eventually work through, about the abilities of my students. The reason I decided to move forward with this assignment was because I did not want to believe what others had told me or believed about these students, and I knew that this was an assignment that might not only prove that students were capable to me but also, and more importantly, prove it to the students themselves:

October 1, 1995

    I am afraid that the assignment I've given for the non-fiction writing assignment (The Library Book Paper) is too difficult for them. The reading of the assignment sheet is difficult enough. I read it aloud to them today as they followed along, and they seemed confused. Students were supposed to have completed all the brainstorming/prewriting activities already, but many did not do all of them or did not do a thorough job of it, and they are confused. The students are on so many different levels, some barely able to write a sentence, others very capable but not motivated, afraid perhaps, others writing anything and then quitting long before the rest of the class is finished, others writing fairly clearly and a great deal quickly and well, grammatically at least, but not putting any time, energy, or deep thinking into their work when they have the potential to do a much better job.

    I hope I have given them enough questions/suggestions to help them begin writing. I hope that I haven't done too much and that they can make this paper their own. I have given them a way to get started writing, which is for me the hardest part of writing. I wish someone had given me as assignment like this when I was learning about writing. Hopefully the form I've set up will open up possibilities rather than restrict them like the five paragraph theme seems to do—that seems to be much more exact than what I have given them. I want to give students a chance to realize they have something to say. I don't want a blank page which is what always happens if I don't ask the right question or give strong directions/suggestions/ pushes/ shoves.

    But, on the other hand, I did give them this assignment in writing after they had been introduced slowly into the process of writing. Everyone has chosen a book they like on a topic they are interested in. The reading of the assignment sheet, even if they have to read it again and again is reading too. They know they can always ask me questions and I will help them get started

on each section or to catch up on what they haven't done yet. I hope that I am not treating them like college students. That is my expertise and I need to remember that they are only in ninth grade.

Well, we still don't have any books, and this is the assignment I have come up with to help them to read more and to read better. I am glad that we don't have the workbooks yet because that is one part of the program I am not at all comfortable with. I have never worked with workbooks and I see no sense in knowing what a main idea is. Back to the immediate problem/ issue.

I am proud of the assignment I have written. It has the potential to get me some really great papers. I am sticking with it! Ms. M. is not doing anything nearly as difficult; she is having students draw pictures of a story she is reading in class to go with the sequence captions she has written on colored sheets of paper. Students are then told to put the story in order and are then allowed to put the pictures in a border around the walls of the room. She is treating them like children who cannot do anything, like remedial kids. Am I doing just the opposite? Ms. Stiehl seems to like everything she does. Please tell me that Ms. Stiehl will not tell me, "They can't do that!" That is what her eyes tell me even if she doesn't say it in words. She always makes me feel like I don't know what I'm doing. But I do! This assignment has to work. It is well-thought out, even if difficult. I am only going to grade students according to their ability. Timmy, for instance, will only be able to write a paragraph or two, and that's O.K. Most of the others are going to surprise themselves and me too. I hope.

If students follow the plan, they will also learn how to summarize—they all had difficulty summarizing before when they wrote their Summer Reading Assignments—most were plagiarizing, taking exact words from the novels or the newspaper/magazine articles they read. Students will also write their first long paper, their first of many papers to come; they will be behind in tenth grade if they don't write longer papers and then their "deficiencies" will be even greater. They will be so proud of their papers if things turn out like I want. That will be worth the risk!

By breaking up the assignment into smaller parcels, I was able to get students in gear, a hurdle many students had earlier admitted they had difficulty leaping, and to make them feel that they could be

successful. They had practiced with shorter pieces of in-class writing from other assignments in class and had appeared to prefer those assignments that could be completed within one class period. Shunk & Zimmerman (1997) indicate that it is important for students to break longer assignments into smaller short term workable units in order for them to reach their long term goals: "Research shows that broader, longer range goals (such as writing a term paper) are best accomplished by subdividing the task into a series of short-term, manageable subtasks" (p. 39) My students had been overwhelmed before by fear and confusion about assignments and the grades they might receive. Breaking the assignment up into "manageable subtasks" was an appropriate method of motivating students to complete the longer, more difficult task.

What I learned about my students throughout the time we spent on each of the three pieces of writing—actually each piece was in itself many shorter pieces, segments, or paragraphs of writing about one book or one magazine—was that the students took ownership of their writing from the start because they had selected their books individually and could choose what parts of the book they wanted to write about. Bright (1995) discusses how important it is to listen to students and to allow them to choose their own reading materials in order to motivate them to write:

> Melissa, one of the students I observed during my research, said this about her writing: 'I just find I can write a lot more if

I can choose the subject and the things I want to write. Otherwise, I'm not really in the mood for writing.' And if any of us were Melissa's teacher, wouldn't we learn a lot about how to support her writing by encouraging and listening to comments such as this? (p. 5).

Beyond motivating students to write, I wanted to provide students with opportunities for success through completing challenging activities. Additionally, I wanted students to be provided with a classroom culture or context that would lead students to value literacy, and to consider it to be much more than rote, mechanical practice, as the workbook activities suggested:

> Socioconstructivist interpretations of literacy learning are based on certain tenets. First, the society or culture of the classroom helps create shared understandings about meanings, forms, and uses of literacy. For example, in some classrooms, students are asked to demonstrate correct application of literacy skills by completing practice exercises, whereas in other classrooms, students interpret and compose texts. These opportunities influence students' understanding of what it means to read and write (Turner, 1997, p. 184).

Students were interested in their topics, and found that, once they had read their books, and written different parts of their essays day by day, that they had something to say, and that their papers fell together and sounded increasingly logical and orderly; furthermore, the students appeared not to be avoiding the task—in fact, some of the most reluctant readers relished it.

THEIR CHOICES OF ENJOYABLE AND PURPOSEFUL READING

What is interesting about what the students chose to read and to write about is that they almost always chose realistic or concrete works. What I mean by the term realistic texts in this case are works that were about real people, real issues of concern to young adults, real people like them; among the books the young women chose were those on topics of abortion, pregnancy, relationships, while the young men chose sports figures, political leaders, for example. If they read a book about a person, all wanted to find and most succeeded in finding strong, independent men and women whom they admired and wanted to emulate. As occurred in their earlier novel readings, students were very likely to find similarities between themselves and the situations discussed in the books; if the students were African-American, they almost always chose a book about an African-American and indicated that they wanted to read about strong, important people who were African-American like them.

Another topic of interest to these young adults was drug and alcohol addiction. Drug problems were not ubiquitously rampant in Littletown, although many of my students admitted on a school survey about drugs and alcohol, that if they had not already tried drugs or alcohol or both that they were curious and wanted to try them. One student indicated that she wanted to read about drugs to deal with a real problem she had—she was desperately curious about taking drugs

and wanted to find a way to combat that desire. She ended up being so sickened by reading what drug addicts did to themselves that she changed her mind, thus employing reading to wrestle successfully with a real-life dilemma.

My students read to find answers to real-life situations and to find meaning and connection to their lives; they read for therapy, or to settle their emotions on certain subject:

> The basis of learning is emotion. . .There is no intellectual interest which does not spring from the need to satisfy feelings. . . .Not only is learning fostered by the need to satisfy feelings but feelings themselves are relieved and helped by learning. For work to be creative, feeling as well as intellect is involved. Any education must always take into account education of the emotions (Gardner, qtd. in Cullinan & Galda, 1994, p. 314).

And, ultimately, they learned because they wanted to learn about these topics; the books they chose were answers to real-life questions they had about life, about being a woman, about being African-American, about avoiding becoming a drug addict, about being independent, about being better hunters or farmers, about being in the limelight. In allowing students to choose the books they read, students were also able to choose the questions that they would like answered by their reading. Hence, through this assignment, reading was shown to be purposeful as well as enjoyable. They were able to search through their prior knowledge on a certain subject and to determine what further information they wanted, and to search out

books that would help them to attain that particular knowledge they decided they wanted to learn:

> You probably remember much more associated with a special project that you may have had to research and develop for a presentation, a science fair, or a demonstration. We learn when our emotions are involved, we learn when we are actively engaged, and we learn when we pursue our own—rather than someone else's interests. We remember facts when they are integrated into our conception of reality, and we most often learn and retain them when they are part of a meaningful experience (Cullinan & Galda, 1994, p. 314).

THEIR WRITING

Below are examples, excerpts, and commentary on papers I received from students who I was informed by the coordinator, the principal, and the other members of the Littletown English department could barely read or write. Queshana discusses abortion, asking some valuable questions, which, in turn, lead her to elucidate her opinion on the topic:

> The title of my book is <u>ABORTION: THE CLASH OF THE ABSOLUTES</u> Laurence H. Tribe is the author of this book. The reason I picked this book is because I thought that it would be interesting. What I knew about this book before I picked it was that this book was going to have everything about abortions.
>
> The summary of this book is about why we have abortions. Should it be legal. Why someone who has an abortions should suffer in jail? Why would anyone get pregnant and then kill her child before he/she has a chance to live?
>
> When I think about things like that it makes me feel like crying because you are not only hurting yourself you are hurting society. I believe that every women should think hard before she has a abortion.

The chapter I am reading is Approaching Abortion Anew. It is interesting because one of the section called, Rights it is to live not to kill. And I think that your will find this book interesting because it has a lot of facts and statement. Abortions are not illegal but it should be. Take it from me.

One of the question I have is "what is the purpose of an abortion?" If a women get pregnant at an early age then she will decides she doesn't want the child is this the easy way out? The second question is "why are abortions legal?" One of God's commandments is thou shalt not kill.

The facts I learned from this book are that you should not have an abortions. It is valuable for me to know these things because when we have children I want to love them the same. I would definitely recommend this book to everyone because just reading this it makes you think before you do something stupid.

Yours truly,
Queshana Taylor

Queshana's book was actually quite long and quite difficult; however, her passion for discovering information on the subject led her to continue to read it. Her paper is organized and informative and gave me an insight into her opinions and her reasons for choosing the book. Without the questions on the assignment sheet I asked students to discuss, I might have received a list of facts, rather than an indication of Queshana's thought processes and opinions forming on the topic at hand.

Shaquetta also wrote her essay on a subject of interest to young adult women:

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

The name of the book I'm reading is called Teenage and Pregnant: What Can We Do, by Herma Silverstein. The reason why I picked this book is because the title sounded interesting. I know that a lot of girls are getting pregnant.

The book was about teenage girls getting pregnant at a vary young age, and how they were afraid to tell their parents.

As the book went on and told what girls have to go through to have an abortion. The book also told the step by step of having an abortion. The book went on to discuss adoption and that some girls didn't want to give their baby up for adoption. As the book continued they talked about labor and delivery, how often most girls have a contraction, and how painful it can be. The book told that when your water broke it is time for you to have a baby. When having your baby the head must come first. If you baby head doesn't come first then you will have to have a C-section which means you will have to have an operation. After that they talked about STD's which means Sexually Transmitted Disease. Other STD's are herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and A.I.D.S.

Out of the whole book the one chapter that most interested me was the chapter about STD's. Everyone must know about STD's because this is very easy to get but hard to get rid of. STD's are a major diseases that so many people have.

How do you get STD's You can get STD's from sexual intercourse and needles.

The most important fact I learned from the book was about labor and delivery. The reason why you should know this is to know what happens during delivering a baby, and how long will it take far a baby to be delivered.

I would recommend every girl to read this book. The reason why for this is to stop so many girls from getting pregnant. Let them know what they have to go through during pregnancy and after. Let them know about STD's and other diseases.

The tone of Shaquetta's argument is forceful and her writing is clear. She is writing to promote a cause and the urgency of paying attention to the information she has learned is evident most clearly in her concluding paragraph.

The majority of African-American students chose books and wrote about important black historical figures. Sunny, for example, read a book on Harriet Tubman, writing: "The reason why I picked this book is because I want to know more about her. I had already know

that she was a slave woman. What I learned about Harriet when I picked this book was that she had a dream for a better life for her people." She seemed shocked by some of what she read, writing, "This whole book is about black slaves. Black people were treated so bad back in the [those] day[s]. The black people could not read or write." And finally, she writes, "Yes I would ercommed [recommend] this bok [book] to anther [another] student. Because our black people should know where they came from and the thin [things] same [some] black people had Ben [been] tour [through]." Sunny was an extremely weak student, especially in writing. She struggled with her reading also, but was able to read extensively in this book on Harriet Tubman because she had always wanted to learn about African-American history but had never before had the opportunity.

Jaquetta (Peaches) also wrote about an important African-American historical figure. What she writes does not follow the pattern I had set up for students and as a result, her paper does not seem organized. However, she uses the information she learns about Sojourner Truth as a springboard for reasserting her opinions on strength of character and the importance of black history; her written opinions then lead her to write about goals she has made for herself, clearly indicating a feeling of comraderie with Sojourner Truth and what she represented for Jaquetta:

Sojourner Truth
Ain't I a woman

      Sojourner was a hard working woman she work day and night. She also wrote song's and poems Sojourner believe in fighting for what is right. When men in the old days they use to treat woman wrong they would rape them make them work till they fall out in the sun so Sojourned was tried of men treating woman wrong so she spoke out after that thing changing slow but they did change. Sojourner is like Mrs. Rose parks she was not about to out of her seat and she didn't so they boycott people stop riding the bus after that thing change so people can make a different in due time.
      Sojourner and Rose Parks I thank them for making it easy for a young lady as myself to stand up and be that brave I thank you. If I had a chance to meet Sojourner Truth I would tell how much she mean to me and how she have made a different in my life. So keep on making a different that other will see the different too. One part of the book I did enjoy it was called; the last cause it is about the right to voit it's called the fifth amendment on that day men and woman was given the right to voite. They vote for what they believe in. So men and woman vote for they like and dislike and men are making a different's too like Martin. L. King jr and Jessie Jackson. I look up to them also for my hero's in life there are many heros like your mother or your father it can be your teacher or anyboby you look up to. So found your hero and be true to what you believe in and make the right choice not the wrong. I have set a goal for myself first I want to finish high school then try to go to collage in A.G to be a R.N or to go to the navy for four year and to come out on top to make something of my self. so that goal I hope to gain in life. So Sojomer Truth is my true hero in life. The end

As Jaquetta indicates in her last line, Sojourner Truth is a role model who has made her rethink her goals in life; my African-American students yearned for real-life heroes who helped to make them aware of their heritage and had accomplished something with their lives, in spite of the obstacles. Tiki, when writing about Diana Ross, echoed these sentiments:

> I would recommend this book to a friend or so [some] one who thinks that their live [life] don't means any thing to them and after they get though [through] with the book they would think of some thing else that could make them feel that their live is important to them.

Students apparently were searching for uplifting lessons about life through the books that they chose.

The majority of males read about sports figures or on the hobbies of hunting, fishing, or working on cars. Antwain wrote about a book on football; his active writing style and his use of words like "amazing" and "intense" is indicative of his enjoyment of the book:

> The chapter I like best is Chapter 2. The reason I like it is because Sammy Baugh has won awards and championships. It's a good chapter. He can throw bullet passes. He gave a running back confidence. He said not to be scared because you dropped the ball one time. To the other student they should be interested in this book. It Is Intense. It has talked about some amazing plays and catches. . . .The reason I would recomment this book is interesting and good.

Margullis also wrote about a book on the history of football; he included paragraphs on two African-American players, Marvin Leroy Keyes and O.J. Simpson, where he included a great many details from his reading. He admitted that he was reading to learn and that he enjoyed the book because he had learned from it: "I would recmmed [recommend] this book for everyone to read if you want to learn more about football. This book tells you about football in its old days and it educates you."

Bill chose to write about Nebraska because he knew they had a "good football team and were big on farming." Although I was

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surprised by his choice, I was even more surprised about how intrigued he was by the book as he continued to read it. His paper included so many details and opinions that clearly revealed just how much he had read and how much he enjoyed the book. He picked up on the difficulty of farming and talked about hard work as something to emulate from the Nebraskan farmers: "All farmers should have the same approach to farming and to work hard." His favorite part of the book was the section on farming and its difficulties: "The reason I said the heart of the book was that it had all the good stuff. Nebraska takes a different attitude because they are good farmers and they do the best they can do."

Marvell read and wrote about one book and one magazine on hunting. He had specific reasons for reading about deer hunting, mainly that it was deer hunting season, and specific questions that he wanted answered. As he wrote, he gave his reader a great deal of information about himself and about how reading material must be closely connected to his interests in order for him to connect with it and read it; here are two samples of Marvell's writing about the hunt:

FIELD & STREAM

> The reason why I like this book so much is because I like hunting deer. My magazine is mostly about deer and other animals to hunt hunting is like a challenge to me because deer are hard to keep coming around if you don't put corn out for them to eat. I started hunting when I was nine years old and now I'm sixteen years old and I will never quit hunting. When I get married and my wife have my son he is

going to be hunting with me all the time. I love being in the Outdoors.

The other reason I pick this maginze is because I love being in a boat going fishing. Fishing is one of my favorite hobbies, but I don't go fishing more than I go hunting. I try to go hunting every evening and I try to go fishing when I am not at work or doing other things. The things I like most about hunting and fishing is that you can go fishing when you can't go hunting fishing is never out of season, but hunting is out of season. I love being in the nature part of Life.

"Wild Life In the Outdoors"
Marvell Stone
Complete book of Hunting
Author-Ormond

The name of my book is The <u>Complete book of Hunting</u>. I picked this book because I really liked to hunt and do outdoor things. I knew alot because I was hunting since I was nine years old. I wanted to learn how to skin a deer better and see what the far range on different guns was.

This book is about all kinds of animals to hunt and the main thing I got the book for is about deer I wanted to learn a little more on deer. I want to learn how to hunt and kill other animals.

The best chapter I like in the book is the chapter on deer because it is deer season and I want to kill as many deer as possible and to learn more things about them. I can learn how to stuff my own deer when I kill a small deer.

How far is the ranges of different guns? The ansew [answer] to this question is that all guns have different ranges and rifles go farther than shot guns.

How to skin a deer better? This books tells you how to skin a deer in different stages or in steps of 1-6. That is how I know how to skin a deer better. Then I can start skinning for other people.

The most important fact in my book is about you are not ever supposed to kill a doe out of season because a doe is a girl and a doe brings more deer in the world to hunt so don't kill anything but the <u>bucks</u> because they are boys.

I would recomend my books to young men that hunt deer and other animals. To me hunting deer is a good sport but I think women have no business in the wood hunting with their husband. Hunting is a fun outdoor sport.

Although one might not share his opinion about women hunters, Marvell does express an opinion. Brittany, Chelsea, and Marianna, the most experienced female hunters in the classroom had an intense discussion about this when they heard what he had written and Marvell did concede a few points.

Marvell also learned more from the book than he wrote in his papers; for example, in his prewriting he wrote: "It [the magazine] shows me others places that I can shoot the deer and kill him instantly" and "[I learned] [t]o calm down before I start to skin the deer and take my time doing it and I don't have to worry about busting the bladder or cutting the meat." Those were specific details that revealed how closely he had read and understood the material presented in the magazine.

Marvell was the consummate informational reader, in the sense that he wanted to read materials that would help him in his future career as a farmer, a hunter, or a construction worker; otherwise, schooling had no use for him. Through reading his article, Marvell is able to imagine another possible related profession for himself, something that he knows he would enjoy: "That is how I know how to skin a deer better. Then I can start skinning for other people." After observing Marvell for one year, I am confident that he would not have read one word of text if he had not found something in it for him;

thus, he only read for a purpose that was immediately related to his own future, which was also the only way that reading could ever be enjoyable to him. As Marvell had discovered that books and magazines did contain worthwhile information that he could use, and after he had discovered magazines such as *Field and Stream*, he wrote that he would continue to search out the information he needed on his topics of interest.

Bill, who had already written a piece about Nebraska, discussed above, read and wrote about two more articles on hunting—one on training a coon dog and one on hunting bear. Bobby read and wrote about a book on ghosts and then on two articles on hunting—one on goose, the other on deer hunting. Timmy, although not present long enough to complete very much writing, read an article on auto mechanics, commenting, "I knew alot about cars from experience"; wondering, "how did they turn that truck from a rusty piece of junk into the best truck in the car, truck shows [?]"; and learning as he read, "I learned he [how] to restore an old car from junk to like new." Bobby, after completing his assignment on ghosts, when asked what he had learned from the assignment wrote, "That Reading Books Is fun after all." Students who had not read much, if anything at all, were becoming avid readers in their fields of interest. Their writing, too, was becoming longer, more detailed, more organized, and clearer in overall conception.

SHARING WORK WITH AN AUDIENCE: A SIGN OF CONFIDENCE

I wanted my students to think in terms of other audiences and that was why I often suggested that students begin writing, on days where writing was difficult, in the form of a letter, either to myself, a friend, or a parent. After the papers they wrote on a book were done, this time I wanted the students to feel proud enough of their writing that they would be willing to consider another audience, their parents. Parent-teacher night was to be later in the week and I wanted to discover whether they would be more motivated to work hard for their parents and whether they would have the confidence to share their writing with others.

"Confidence in what one has written can be observed in the audience with whom a writer is willing to share his or her work. And, writing for an audience, either the teacher or others, can have a powerful influence on a student" (Britton et al., 1975). My students knew and accepted the fact that I would read their papers, write suggestions, and ultimately, grade them, perhaps because they had to, and because they were accustomed to this system after years of schooling.

Students were, however, fearful of allowing students outside of our classroom to see their work. Although I still did not have a chalkboard, and had no useable walls for displaying student work, I

had acquired a display board from the Art Department and had in the past used it to show off my students' work in the same manner that other teachers had hung their students' projects in their rooms or in the halls outside their rooms. Students enjoyed reading their own and others' work on the display board and seemed to have a boost of confidence from seeing their work and hearing the, always good, comments about their work from their fellow students. The other students were often honestly excited about and interested in what their classmates had written and were in no way critical of anyone else's work.

Students, however, had never allowed me to hang their work outside the room because they did not feel it was good enough. and they did not want other students who walked by the room to look at their work and think that they were in a "resource" class. My students had long ago begun to believe the lie that said that there was something wrong with their brains, that they could not do anything that others would see as good; they were embarrassed of themselves and wanted their work and what went on in our classroom to stay enclosed in our little room, to be our little secret. They had come to believe that they were incapable because of their placement and they did not want schoolmates to laugh or make judgments about the work they were doing in a remedial reading class. As long as they had to be in this class, no one was going to be able to see the work they did but

me and sometimes their classmates—I was the only audience that they had come to accept. On rare occasions, however, if they would allow another to work with them during peer editing or group work or allow me to hang their work on the display board in the classroom, other student(s) within the confines of our classroom were granted permission to take on the role of audience.

I knew that my students were not ready to allow their peers to see their writing as a first step, but I believed that they would be willing to open up and share their successes with their parents. I had seen what my students were writing and I thought their papers were quite good. I had not graded them or marked the final product. I decided that the students should finish their papers by copying their final version onto high grade paper by hand, or by finishing a typed version in the computer lab, and that we would then together as a class attach the papers to the display board. It was Interim-Report time and the parents were coming for their first real meeting with their children's teachers. I hoped that my students would want the classroom to look nice for their parents and that they would allow their work to be shown to their parents.

When I suggested the idea that they put together their best draft of their paper for parent-teacher night, students accepted the challenge readily. Students worked hard and some worked together to get their work done, to rewrite, to make their papers more legible, more

interesting, more finished. Brittany stapled all the essays onto colored paper and hung each essay by stringing each page together like a legal parchment. The class was proud and ready to show off their work and so was I. I believe that the papers the students had written would reveal to their parents that they had improved and were honestly learning something of value in my class.

The first parent-teacher meeting could not have been better received. Almost all of the parents were present; only Clevon's, Jamaica's, and Marquez' parents or guardians did not attend. As was customary, the students attended the event along with their parents. Each student walked his or her parent or parents to the display board whereupon the papers were read, and discussed. The parents were extremely pleased by what they saw and even commented on their child's writing style, indicating that the writing or the subject was one in which they knew he or she had expressed an interest. Many parents also read what the other students had written and enjoyed this as well. At the conclusion of the evening, Mr. Leduc dropped in, and for the first time, truly recognized and appreciated what students were working on in my class, and was evidently quite pleased. Although he did not look closely at the student work, the look on his face at the sheer length of the writings told me that he was surprised that I had been able to motivate my students to write this much. The students and parents were comfortable, some students were even

delighted, to see Mr. Leduc noticing their work. I always respected Mr. Leduc, and even though he did sometimes refer to my students as "The Orange Blossom Specials," I knew that he wanted to see them succeed as much as their parents and I did.

Strong evidence of confidence in self were manifested through the events surrounding this assignment and the subsequent display board breakthrough. These were students who had heretofore been afraid to let anyone see their work. These were students who had never written a longer paper. Some of them were those who had never bothered to finish reading a book, whether they could understand it or not. If these students had not been confident in their work and proud of their accomplishments on this assignment, they would never have allowed me to show them to anyone else, not even their parents, and especially not Mr. Leduc.

END OF YEAR WRITING: SOME COMPARISONS

Later in the year, when all the "regular" English students were writing term papers, I added paragraphs to the first extended essay assignment (see Appendix B: Autobiography/Biography Research Paper) in order to challenge students to write even longer papers in response to their selected readings. The genre I had students experiment with was autobiography or biography. As students had indicated that they were extremely interested in other people's lives,

and were especially impressed with certain sports or popular culture figures whom they considered role models. I knew that they would be able to find books that would interest them immensely. We had also recently received the books I had personally ordered and a great number of books were biographies of African-American sports or entertainment figures, or authors. There were also a great many autobiographies and biographies at the school library for students to peruse.

As students had done before, I had them perform prewriting activities, such as the KWL (Know-What-Learn) forms, looking up vocabulary words, writing questions, and the writing of themes. Some of this was done as students were reading. After students were finished reading their books, they were asked to write a letter to the person about whom they were reading. It is from these letters, that I sometimes discovered just how appropriate their reading choices had been for them.

For example, Annette's reading of *Lisa, Bright and Dark*, a story of a suicidal adolescent prompts her to reveal in a letter that she had also contemplated suicide:

> Dear Lisa,
>
> I am only on chapter 4, and that I can see that me and you are allmost alike. Sometimes I feel like I am going crazy too, but I don't tell anyone because I am scared that people will look at me and think bad stuff. I can remember one time when I tryed to kill my self, I took so many pills and I tryed to slit my wrist. But one of my good friends told me that I had

alot to live for. But it seems that all my friends are dieing. Well I know that I will see them some day. well now all my friends and I promised each other that we would live to see each other get married and have kid, and then we would see each other become grandparents. Well Lisa no matter how crazy or depressed you get you should look at all of the good things in life, and allways remember that your friends will be there. Annette Armstrong

By the time Annette read this book, she had already lost two friends during the year, and was particularly depressed. She and her friends had been brought together by the tragedies in their own young lives, and had been working with the school counselor, me, and with their friends and family to deal with their losses. Annette had also written poetry about the loss of her friends as therapy. Reading this book at a time when Annette was already dealing with so much might have seemed a bit much. However, Annette selected this book, identified with the characters, and also used it to provide her with the much-needed therapy that reassured her that she was not alone in her grief.

Through reading Annette's writing about her reactions to the book, I was able to glean much more about her than she was able to speak of openly. Although none but a few friends knew about Annette's suicidal impulse, significant adults were then made aware through her writing and thus we were able to help her deal with this serious matter. As a result of her reading, and in response to her writing, Annette was able to reveal and discuss her contemplation of suicide with adults and again with friends. Annette's preoccupation with death had surfaced earlier in her writing, when she read a book

on teenage murders. Her reading patterns had given the adults in her life an opportunity to help her to deal with this preoccupation and fear of death and her friends' deaths. Thus, reading was rendered valuable to Annette by allowing her to learn information and receive therapy about a subject of situational interest. Annette herself had chosen the book without any prompting by either myself or the librarian indicating that she knew how to search for books according to her own educational and psychological needs.

Lakeisha read a biography of Oprah Winfrey, indicating in her letter just how much she admired and looked up to Oprah; in fact, she says as much in the post-script to her letter.

Dear Oprah Winfrey,

How are you doing? Fine I hope. How has life been treating you? Oprah, my teacher Lee Baginski ordered some books called <u>Black Americans of Achievement</u> and I'm reading a book about you. Oprah, I really admire your wisdom and hospitality. I didn't know that you were entered/sponsored by a black radio station to enter a beauty pageant. Oprah, you were popular in high school. You were voted most popular and dated the most popular boy in school, Anthony Otey. Oprah, I didn't know that you were in many school organizations such as the Drama Club. In 1970, Oprah you were invited by President Richard Nixon to represent East High School at the White House Conference on Youth held in Estes Park, Colorado. Vernon and Zelma did a great job of raising you. Oprah, Oprah, you are a smart and talented lady. I admire people like you because you put your mind to something and do it. When I grow up I want to be a doctor but I think that if I put my mind to it I can do it. But, now I am praying and trying to work on getting my license.

P.S. I admire and look up to you Also I Love you.

Love Ya! Lakeisha Jackson

In the end of her letter, Lakeisha indicates that reading the book on Oprah has inspired her to think about her own dreams and how she plans to reach them. After learning that Oprah's childhood had not been easy, and that she had gone through many trials in order to become the strong, African-American role model that she is today, Lakeisha, in turn, realizes that she too could grow up, in spite of the obstacles, to make a difference in the world.

Tiki also expresses a similar admiration for the "course in life" taken by Bill Cosby, and is motivated by what she has learned about his life:

> Dear, Cosby
> I,m just writing to tell you about your book. As I was reading it tells about your future. Well, you made an good start with your book. As I was reading it tells about your future. Well, you made an good start with your life. Because most people don't use their head like that most people let their friends mess them up by trying to live the hard way buying using Drugs, selling Drugs & going to jail instead of trying to make something out of their lives. But I like what you did. You made up and did what you put your mind to do. You made good money that I wished I had. So far your wife & you sound that you both really love each other after those miles you traveled to be with her to show her that you love her. That is real Love. That's good that you both agree to get married & had some beautiful kids. I hope that your kids would make their minds up say, well, my father is famous and he made good choices like I will and in the future they could just look back and say, well, I got me a good course in life. Then have a good life. Tiki Jackson

Tiki had internalized some of the messages given in the book about behaving well, and had often been moved to write about the lessons she learned through reading about others' lives. She was

constantly searching for ways that she could become a better person and was desperate to stop causing trouble for herself and her parents. She had indicated as much in her graduation writing, and had made similar comments regarding the earlier reading and writing she had done about Diana Ross. Tiki was obsessed with the difficulty she had at behaving appropriately to her teachers, her friends, and to her parents. Her choice of reading revealed a pattern of searching out testimonies by others who had learned to rise above their environments and not be brought in by the crowd to do things that were not right.

Queshana was also motivated to read a book by or about an African-American. Queshana read the book, *gal: a true life* by Ruthie Bolton. I had suggested the book as I had recently read it and had also searched out the author through the women who make the sweetgrass baskets in Mount Pleasant, where Ruthie lived. Although the subject of the book was physical and emotional abuse, I believed that the autobiography was appropriate for my students because one of its major themes was hope in the face of adversity. Queshana absolutely loved the book, as can be seen in her letter:

> Dear Gal,
> I really enjoyed your book and to tell you the truth I don't know how you put up with it. Me myself never had to experience that. I know it must have been hard for you especially knowing that you couldn't see your daughter. It is a wonderful book. I enjoyed reading it and I would sometimes not even do classwork just to read your book.

What happened in your life must have been horrible, knowing that you could've had much more. But you didn't and the Lord blessed you anyway with five I'm sure beautiful kids and with a husband I'm sure that would do anything for you.

To say I read your whole book I should have more to say but I'm pretty sure you don't need to relive that experience by me talking about it. You know what happened and I read the book. I'm prety sure it was more awful for you because I only read the book, you had to live in it (that'll be our little secret). But I really enjoyed your book and if I had to give a scale measurement 1 out of 15 I know you'll be gettin' a 20.
Always,
Queshana
9th grade student
P.S. I'll always be your #1 fan. . . . .

Queshana's writing above is quite clear. She feels that she knows her audience from having read her book, clearly indicating that she not only admires Ruthie for what she went through and how she accepted her life with optimism rather than pessimism but also that she feels that they are friends. Queshana also knew when she wrote this that she might have the opportunity to me Gal, or Ruthie Bolton, as the author was planning to visit our school in the middle of May.[1]

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1   Unfortunately, for the students, Ruthie Bolton canceled the day she was to visit and would not respond to my or the guidance office's phone calls to set up another visit. Many students were quite upset about this event or non-event. Annette and some of the other students had made banners to welcome Ruthie. Queshana, Jamaica, Jaquetta, and Sunny were planning to sing for her. The librarians had closed off the library for this event. The home economics teacher, who also had several of my students, had students make sandwiches, various hors d'oeuvres and desserts, and set up glasses, ice, and drinks, for an after-school book signing to which all students and staff were invited: the home economics students were planning to serve the students and adults who attended. Mr. Leduc, had first read parts of the book, decided that Ruthie's coming to Littletown would be worthwhile, and then had extended an invitation to her, saying that this would be a wonderful opportunity for our students. I made up an invitation, with the cover of the book on the front, which was placed in every teacher, administrator, and custodial staff's box.

When Queshana completed her paper, her true excitement about the book came through in her quick tone. She includes many details, and her writing becomes clearer the more she writes. Her writing at the beginning of the year was extremely difficult to follow, but what she wrote at the end of the year is much longer (her paper is 5-6 pages double-spaced), more to the point, and contains many fewer grammatical errors; included is Queshana's entire paper as a representative sample to exhibit how much longer students' papers had become by the end of the year (almost all papers were equally long). Queshana's paper is also apropos here because she includes subtitles for the parts of the paper asked for on the assignment sheet,

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Students all over the school were excited: as one junior said to me during lunch, "No real author has ever come to Littletown. I can't wait. I brought money to buy a book." Ruthie had accepted when I had visited her in Mount Pleasant, had accepted again via a phone call from me, saying, "I'll definitely be there. I would do anything for those kids." and then again, leaving a similar message on my answering machine at home. When Ruthie canceled, all of our plans had to be canceled, which would have been acceptable, if ever we would have been able to reach her again to set up another meeting. Immediately upon hearing the news that Ruthie would not be coming, Annette took all of the banners she had made or supervised their making, and ripped them up angrily into a million pieces, saying, "Nobody ever comes to Littletown." She was not the only one who felt that way. I felt extremely disappointed, and so did everyone else.

We were never told why Ruthie chose not to visit our little school, and I was never able to find her again, as she sold her dress shop in Mount Pleasant where I had originally discovered her, and she refused to return any of our phone calls to the shop during the last weeks of school. This is further evidence that students wanted, even needed real people about which to read and write. When Ruthie did not materialize, it was absolutely devastating to the majority of students. My students, in particular, were let down, because this was something that they were most involved in, something that had originated out of our class, and something that would show others that they were in a real English class, and not a class for "dummies. They were proud of the opportunity to receive some acknowledgment from their peers. Unfortunately, this all fell apart when Ruthie denied them.

which, in turn, reveals the internalization of a strong organizational pattern:

Gal: a true life

The name of the book I'm reading is called Gal: a true life story. This book was written by Ruth bolton.

The reason I picked this book was when my teacher Mrs. Baginski showed me the book and she was saying how good this book was but I was like auh this book was going to be boring but when I read the in cover I was like this book is phat and I couldn't wait to start reading it.

When I saw the subject of this book I really didn't know what this book was about. I wanted to know did something bad happened that may have motivated her to right (write) this book. I couldn't really think nothing because I never saw this book before so I couldn't think nothing about her.

I think that he/she whoever read this book will enjoy it when you read this book it will probley (probably) make you wanna cry but you have to understand that's life but you will indefinitely enjoy it.

The Summary

Ever since gal was a little girl she lived with her grandmother and step-grandfather Clovis Fleetwood. Gal which her real name is Ruth homer Bolton was named after her grandmother Ruth homer Fleetwood gal got that nickname because she would be standing in the road or something like that and her grandfather would say get that gal out the road and after that every one started calling her gal. Gal never met any of her brothers' or sisters' because every time her mom got pregnant she would give her babies away.

When Clovis had met Ruth they had three daughters: Florence, Kitty, and Naomi. Leathia who is gal real mother would come once a week to see her and stay for a couple of days. One day when clovis was gone and Ruth was gone know one was home but leathia and gal and leathia had one of her friends name Marlon to come bye so leathia and marlon started kissing and hugging and touching on each other. Gal never knew who her father was and she would go in her grandmother pocketbook looking for papers with her name on it but there wasn't none and she would always see stuff with kitty, Florence, and naomi on it but nothing with her name on it.

Well since marlon was there and gal pulled on her pants leg and ask him was he her daddy but he never said something. Leathia left about 2 days and she never came back. When Gal grandmother died Gal, Florence, kitty, & Naomi went to stay in Mississippi with there other sisters Sylvie, Evelyn, & Pamela. They stayed up there for about a year and that's when Clovis came to Mississippi to pick them up because his brother Oscar told him that Florence, & Kitty was messing around. When he got then [them] home he want the house clean, the bathroom, and all the rooms cleans, and his food on the table. Clovis would make Gal, and Naomi clean the crust out of his toes, he would make them stand al [all] there holding the antenna for the television. Later on when gal was 18 she had a baby for a man named Peach. Gal didn't really love peach because while she was married to him she was dating a white man. His name was Jcffrey Brewster and she knew if Peach was to find out he would [have] killed her. Later on he found out that Gal was seeing Jeffrey because Gal had hide [hidden] the letters that Jeffrey wrote her in a raggy pocketbook. When Peach had asked Gal she to lie but couldn't so he beat her tail and she left him and she let her daughter Mary stay with peach mother and his whether [mother] want [won't] give her back to Gal. After doing a world of sin full things she finally found a man and a family to love and adore her and they had 4 children.

3 &4 The Important Events

One of the event that happened in her life was when she lost her first child and it happens like this. Gal first husband Peach found out that she was cheating on him and he beat her up all in her head and was boxing her and se started crying and then Peach was like oh Gal I'm sorry. The next day Gal called Mr. Millican which is peach mother and told what happened and Mrs. Millican replied and said that's the good for you but gal said you can keep Mary for a but [about] a week so I can look for a place for me and her. Mrs. Millican said yes, Gal brought her over there about 15 minutes later Gal kissed Mary and said, mama will be back soon but Mary just stand at the door crying. When the week was up Gal came to get Mary but Mrs. Millican wouldn't let Gal see Mary and Mrs. Millican son would push Gal down and tell her not to come back. Gal would come back every week and after about a week.

The second event that Happened in Gal life was how she got abused ever since she was a little girl. After Gal grandma died she had no choice but to listen to her grandfather she Would go to school and get in trouble and knew she would get a beating. The kind of beating Gal and her sisters would get

wasnt' call for if the toilet was clean and if he see just a little scratch he'll beat you like you going fool.

The Questions 5 & 6

One of the questions I had was will Ruth ever get to see her daughter again. The answer is yes her oldest daughter Mary who is 16 now did get to see her daughter. Mrs. Millican had understand that Gal has changed and just want what's best for her daughter.

The second question was when Ruth father died Clovis Fleetwood died did she get to keep the house. Yes, but she had to pay $350.00 a month to Naomi and her husband because in the will Clovis left the house to Naomi.

7&8 The important Themes

One of the themes I wrote was Even though she was abused by her father when he was sick she took care of him until he died.

The second theme was when she had no one to love her and tell her that she was pretty and to hold her when she was down, but some how she found a man to love her for herself. A family to be there for her and her children.

9 The most Important knowledge

The most important fact of knowledge that I learn was even though she wasn't love she found someone to love her. Other people could benefit from this because no matter what you will always find someone to care for you if you open up to other people.

10 Concluding paragraph

Would I recomment this book to another student? Yes, because it is a wonderful book and I really enjoy it and I think you can learn from her experience. An Important fact or piece I think you can learn is no matter what you have your self to learn.

Queshana's sentence structure becomes stronger as she writes, and there are no run-on sentences after the summary. She had learned so many valuable lessons from the book, which is never more

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evident than in her concluding sentence: ". . .no matter what you have

your self to learn." Furthermore, Queshana had never been more

affected by a book than this one. In particular, she enjoyed that the

autobiography was narrated in dialect, which she believed allowed her

to use words like "phat," and phrases like, "going fool." She also

simply enjoyed the book, and had found that there were absolutely

great books in which she could literally immerse herself.

Chelsea also read *gal: a true life*; she admits that she first

selected the book because she enjoyed reading about other people's

lives:

> The name of my book is gal: a true life. The author of
> my book is Ruthie Bolton. I picked this book because Mrs.
> Baginski told me about the book and it sounded like it would
> be a good book. And when I began to read this book I wanted
> to learn what has happened in her life and now I know what
> happened in her life.
> Another reason that I picked the book gal is because I
> thought it would be a good book. I am the type of person that
> likes to read about drugs and other people's lives. "gal" was a
> good book because it told me about everything that has
> happened in her life, well almost everything.

Her conclusion is replete with opinion and revealed deep consideration

of the subject of abuse as represented in the autobiography she had

just read:

> The lesson that should be learned from this book is you
> should not beat someone because they do something wrong,
> because it will all come back on you when you die like it did
> on gal's father. If you ask me I think that deep down inside
> that gal's father did really love her, but he just did not want
> to show his love for her. I think the reason that he did not
> leave gal anything in his will was because she was not really
> his child and he made all the rest of the children think that

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he did not like her. So, he was not going to leave her anything in the will to prove to her that he did not love her. But it would not prove to him that he did not love her because he did. But this was a good book in my opinion.

African-American role models were often sought by my African-American students. For example, both Peaches and Jamaica admired Maya Angelou immensely. Jamaica read Maya's autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, while Peaches read a biography of Maya Angelou. In her introduction, Jamaica wrote: "The reason why I picked this book is because I am in love with her work." Jamaica also admired her because she was a strong woman in spite of the obstacles her life had presented her and was extremely impressed with Maya because she was intelligent and was not ashamed to show it; she wrote:

> The most important fact of the book is when her and Bailey Jr. went against each other in saying there [their] time tables. They usually said them so fast to were [where] there grand-mother would tell them to shut up. The reason why it is so valuable to me is because that showed me that back then they were even smarter then [than] ever. I can benifit by reading the book and finding out things about her and there [their] smartest [smartness].

and:

> If you should read this book it would be very interesting to you and other people and you would learn a lot about her history. My opinion about this book is that she is a very upright woman. What I mean is that she stands up for her rights.
> My book is about a woman of courage and a woman that will speak her mind. She likes to tell it with a lot of attitude. She likes to read books with her brother Bailey Jr. They do everything together. Maya is a nice girl and woman

when she wants to be. She likes everything to be done right or else she likes to show people how smart she is in front of everybody.

I could really say that their outreach on life was positive. Some of the things she didn't [want] them to happen the way they did and there is not another way to describe their life at all. There is something I really do like about her and that is her love poems and other things. I wouldn't want to write any poems because that's not my dream or goal. I couldn't tell what the subject and I would disagree about because I don't think there's anything that we would disagree about. That's just how I feel. She is very interesting to life, hope, and peace.

In her reading, Jamaica continued to seek out works about African-American history, and for role models with whom she could identify. Although Maya's life was difficult—as Jamaica's had been (living in a two bedroom house with eight siblings just to start)—Maya's attitude is always optimistic. Jamaica is able to recognize this optimism in the midst of struggle and poverty, and able to latch onto the book's overall message of ". . .hope and peace."

Peaches was so motivated by what she read about the same African-American author and poet that she commented:

My opinion about Maya Angelou is that she opened my eyes up to a lot [of] things that I was doing wrong with my life. When I read her poems, they make me want to write until I cannot anymore. Sometime when I am down I can get one of Maya Angelou's books and everything would be alright. I learned that nobody can make your dream come true for you, only you can make it happen for you; Maya Angelou has really made a change in my life, so I try everyday to read one of her books. So this is Maya Angelou.

Peaches hated reading and writing at the beginning of the year, but came to the ninth grade with an obvious obsession with African-

American authors, and Maya Angelou in particular. Peaches had enjoyed writing poems during our poetry unit, and had told me that she was inspired by having read some of Maya Angelou's poems discovered when we went to the library. Knowing this, I ordered several books of poetry and the series of autobiographical works by Maya Angelou. Peaches and others often read parts of these works and the poetry together. Peaches also ended up borrowing all the autobiographical and poetry books, which she read in her free time at home. Although highly selective about what she would read and write, Peaches had definitely begun to read and to write more. There were many other African-American authors whom Peaches admired, and I was convinced that she would continue to read and to write for her own personal enrichment, and as a result, would continue to become a much more proficient reader and writer.

Brittany outdid herself by reading and writing about yet another book on the topic of drug addiction. Her entire paper is included here as an additional representative sample of the student writing development that occurred in my class:

Go Ask Alice
By: Brittany Lambert

The name of my book is Go Ask Alice and the author is Anonymous. It is about this girl who lives a very wild life until drugs takes her life. She died at a very young age. The reason that I picked this book is because I enjoy reading about drugs. I knew everything about drugs before I read this book. People said that I should read this book because it was a book about drugs and it was a good book. I think that you

would be interested in this book because it is a good book. It is kind of sad the way Alice messed up her life. Some stuff you could learn from this book is to stay off drugs if you want to keep yourself healthy and alive. I think that she would have lived a lot longer if she would have received help and found some new friends.

Go Ask Alice is about this young girl who loved drugs. She started at a young age and stayed on them until she died. She would not have been on drugs if she found the right friends. First she started doing small things like cutting school and drinking. At first she did well in school, but that did not last long. She tried to change her life but she was so used to the old one that she could not change it. She had done some wild and crazy things in such a short life. She died from a drug overdose. The drug that killed her was pills. Some of the pills were Valium and speed. She stayed on a diet and speed helped her lose weight.

One thing that she did not understand was that she was a very loved child, but she did not think so. There is nothing that I admire about this person. I think that she had some goals and dreams, but drugs and sex got in that [the] way. One short quote that she said was "Why change? You're going to die of something so die happy." (p. 75).

One of the most important events that happened in her life was the time she lost her virginity. Her first time having sex was with a boy that she had just met, and they were both high. They had sex in the back seat of his car. After she did it she wished that she had not, and wondered what it would have been like if she had not been high. One reason that she wished that she had waited was because she wanted to lose her virginity with this boy, Roger, whom she loved so much.

The other special event in her life was the time that she ran away with her friend. When they left they only had a little bit of money and stayed in a small apartment. They both got jobs, and they loved it. They saved enough money to start their business. One day she decided that she wanted to go home. She could not believe it but she was homesick. When she got home she stayed straight for a little while, until she started hanging with the wrong people again.

I feel bad for Alice because she died at such a young age. She could have received help from her mom because her mom was willing to help her. Alice wanted help but she could be talked into anything.

One question that I wanted to have answered was why would someone put herself in that position? The answer is that people can't help it. They say that they are in control

but really the drugs are. They just need to get help, and pick some more friends. They know that they want help but they want to act "bad" and tell people that they are fine.

Another question I have is what do people get out of doing drugs? People say that they only try it one time, but when they try it that one time they get hooked. That is what they get for saying that they could not get hooked. If they ever get clean they know not to ever try them again.

One theme that I liked was the one that said Drugs will kill you but you think that they are helping you. That means when people do drugs it kills their body and their mind but they are so used to it that if they do not have any drugs they think living without drugs is going to kill them. Really what is killing them is the drugs. You are just so hooked on drugs when you don't have any drugs you think you are going to die, but you really helping yourself when you live without them.

Another them [theme] is that drugs make you not care about yourself. All you care about is drugs, and having the money to buy the drugs. Drugs control you so much that all you worry about is getting the money to buy the drugs. People who work and buy drugs are stupid. They should spend their hard earned money on something useful and not harmful.

A lesson that this book has taught me is to never do drugs because I would not like to live the life that she lived. The other lesson is to pick the right friends. One thing that best describes her is a wild person who doesn't care about anything, not even herself. So, smart people, stay away from drugs and the people who do drugs. If you have a friend that is trying to get you to do drugs, stay away from them. People who care about you would not let you hurt yourself. Pick the right friends.

One [of the] references that I used was the book Len Bias. The way that Alice and Len Bias were alike was that he used drugs because he said that it made him play well. The reason that she said that she used them was for attention and for people to like her. Len said that they made him play better because they made him feel no pain and relax while he was on the court. She used them for attention because she wanted people to like her. Another reason that she used them was that she was addicted to them.

Another [of the] references I used was the book Addicted. Alice and Roger were alike in the way that they were all heavily into drugs, but there is a difference in them. The difference is that Roger did not die when he almost died he changed his life and stayed away from drugs. When Alice almost died she was clean for a little while. When Alice got

around the wrong people she started using again and that time she died.

So if you ever want a good book to read pick this book <u>Go Ask Alice</u> because it is a great book. It is not only a good book it is also sad. If you do not [like] reading you will love this book because this book is just that good it makes you want to keep on reading it. So if you have time you should read this book, so in your spare time do yourself a favor and read this book.

The End

Brittany admittedly was curious about experimenting with drugs at the beginning of the year. After reading Brittany's final paper, I was certain that she would indeed never use them. Her opinion of drug addicts is sprinkled throughout the essay, with strong advice to friends or anyone else who might want to experiment with controlled substances. Brittany had vehemently hated reading at the beginning of the year, but by the end of the year is compelled to write: " If you do not [like] reading you will love this book because this book is just that good it makes you want to keep on reading it. So if you have time you should read this book, so in your spare time do yourself a favor and read this book." Brittany not only provides evidence that even those who hate reading most will be able to find some reading of intense interest to them, and also that reading of this sort is something that is worth doing even "in your spare time."

The males again mainly read books on sports figures that they admired and wished to emulate. Margullis read a book on Michael Jackson because he admired musicians; Devon read a book on Michelangelo because he wanted to be an artist. Marvell wrote about

Muhammad Ali, indicating that he might wish to be a boxer some day (although he had previously admitted that he wanted to be a hunter or a construction worker more); Livan had the same aspiration (although he also wanted to be an NBA player). Marquez had admired Michael Jordan forever and wanted to read everything he could find on him. Some of what they wrote about the lessons they had learned revealed that these men were considered important role models whose advice and examples they would heed:

Marquez wrote:

> If you want to be like Michael Jordan you must do these things:
> 1. Never give up. 2. Don't use drugs. 3. Try to make it to the top. 4. And most of all stay in school.

and:

> "I would recommend these two books to another student because he/she who might want to learn about Jordan and may be just like him. They could learn to play and learn that even Jordan is not perfect. . . ."

Livan wrote:

> A lesson that I learned is everyone who you think are your friends aren't. In the book there was a lady who always traveled to see Muhammad fight. After a fight one night he went to her and she asked for his autograph. He have seen her at some of his fights before. What Ali found out about this lady is that she didn't like him. Muhammad was very shocked because he thought everyone was his friend.
> This lesson is important to me because now I know not to trust everyone. From reading this book, I know now that everyone who you think are your friends aren't.

Margullis wrote:

> I learned that you can start from nothing and you don't have to be a rocket scientist to become rich.

and:

> Michael is a hard working person. He worked day in day out performing. Many times they would have to ride all night to return home from a concert. His father pushed them all to do their best. Michael is living proof that if you work hard at what you want you will get it. . . .
> I would recommend this book to everyone that likes music. I think that this book is full of information like how did he started singing and who first sing with him. The thing that I like most was when Michael's father said "Let's go boys". (p. 17) All those times the boys thought that he was just hard on them but he was giving them the key to success.

Marvell wrote:

> One important theme is a true winner never loses. That means that if you want it bad enough and you do not cheat you can do anything. If you cheat to win it will all come back on you when you need to win the most. So, if you want to win all you have to do is practice hard and keep your mind on it.

and:

> If you want to read a good book you should read this book. If your dreams and goals are to be a boxer you should read this book. It will help you become a great boxer and it will help you with your boxing skills. So be a *CHAMP* and pick up this book.

Each of the above students, as well as the majority of others (only Timmy and Clevon did not complete theirs), wrote longer, better written, and more thorough and insightful summaries of the books they had read. What they wrote indeed comprised their best work for the year. Students had continued to motivate themselves to read and

write through choosing books that were, for their own personal reasons, exciting to them.

Beyond writing longer, more interesting, and clearer papers, there were two other measures of progress worthy of discussion. When students had completed their papers, I asked them whether we could display the papers on the frame board outside the classroom. Earlier, students were ashamed to show their work to other students in our class but were able to overcome this fear through becoming accustomed to their peers. On parent-teacher night, students allowed their parents and Mr. Leduc to see their writing, but they were adamantly opposed to allowing any students or adults outside of our classroom to review their work because they were afraid that the others would laugh at them. Students had worked extremely hard on their final papers and I had the sense that they presumed that they were good. I was also extremely pleased with the results. After asking them only once in each classroom, the students immediately began helping me to staple their papers onto the exterior board. In fact, once they began to assist me, I stepped aside and allowed them to perform the hanging ceremony—for that is what it truly appeared to be—on their own.

Another measure of success was reflected in the results of the peer editing session. Each student read at least two other student papers. As they had all read each other's papers before, students were also able to see the progression in their classmates' work. All of the

students' comments consisted of constructive criticism and positive and motivational comments. For example, what Bill wrote about Marquez' final paper was evidence that he recognized a new strength in the latter's writing: "Marquez this is one hell of a report keep up the good work." As Bill had never written such an uplifting comment before about Marquez' or any other student's work, this kudo truly meant something. I also believe that Bill had perhaps internalized some of my methods of writing comments full of encouragement, which I took as the ultimate compliment. His evaluation also revealed that my writing of positive comments when they were deserved was stimulating for him and allowed him to better perform his work, and thus, he wanted to motivate others in the same manner. In the following section, I will discuss further examples that reveal, in students' own words, how much they had improved, and how much stronger were their potentials for success at reading and writing and schooling in comparison to the beginning of the year.

FINAL EXPRESSIONS OF CLASS EFFECTIVENESS: IN STUDENTS' OWN WORDS

Although I feel that there was much more learning that my students needed to do in order to succeed in high school, to graduate, and to be successful beyond high school, I do know that students learned. Some of the ways that they learned, even though in some

cases did not feel that they had, are expressed in their own words. Students' evaluations were kept in a folder by another teacher until after I had submitted their grade, so I did not read them until after the course had been completed. And, although their comments were expected to be anonymous, and students were instructed not to write their names on their evaluations, most of them did anyway. Beyond that, I was by then able to recognize most of my students' writing and thus, am able to explain more about their comments than if I had not known who were the authors. As this final evaluation of the class and materials was done at the end of the year, and after an exam, students' responses were less detailed than they could have been, but they did make some revealing comments about how they learned, how they might better learn, and which activities helped them and which were not as helpful. Listening to what students wrote about their impressions of the course is one way to evaluate the class.

In Chapter 7, student comments from their journals were shared to impart how they felt about reading and writing at the beginning of the year. The majority of students revealed through their various opinions that they hated reading and writing or that they did not think that they did well in either of these activities:

> "When it comes down to writtling I don't have an earthly idea of what I be doing. Yes at times I consider myself as a good writter. I like to write about those things that interesting, or romantic. I hate to write about someone dieing or anything sad. I really don't know. I hate Math and Reading."

"The last experience I had on a book report was in the 6th grade and it was kindea boreing."

"I feel good about reading aloud because I love to read."

"My favorite subject is social studies. The thing I hate most is language arts."

"I think I write fine and some times I write sloppy. Sometime I can write so good the it looke bad too me and other people think look good."

"One of my accomplish is that I would like to read better but sometime I just hate to read."

"What can [help] me to be more interesting in reading is to enjoy more books. . . .I'll found some fun book to read."

"What would I like to accomplish is to read more & to study more and to do better in my classes. My goal in English class I would read more & write more and listern more carely. What can I do so thing can interest me more pick Fun books to read. Try to enjoy the book some. . . ."

"Yes I just want to say that I am working hard to read alot some of the books look fun to read and some are boring."

"What I wont to do better on is Read."

"I don't really like reading aloud in a class or during a presentation in front of others. But I will do it to make a good grade. I really don't like to read. If I don't have any thing else to do I might pick up a book and read a little. I have done a report on alot of books in school. I have been writing Journals since the fifth-grade, but I'm not to good at it."

"My writing is not to good. I don't like to write. I don't write to much. I don't consider myself a good writer.

I hate to write. But if I write regularlly I will learn to write better. I can not hardly write in cursive and barley in print. I like to write about things I have done, letters. I hate to write reports."

"I hate reading when I am reading my mind is not in it."

"Well you want me to describe my writing abilities, I describe them as I dont like writing.

I consider. . .myself as a good writer when I want to be. I hate writing.

I really dont like writing about anything, but [what] I dont hate [about] writing [is] I really like writing letters.

. . . .My strongest skill in English I am not aware of yet."

"I hated reading books and writing book reports."

"I hate reading and writing and school. I havent read a book sence 1st grade and I hated it."

On the subject of writing in particular, to the question "When you are given a writing assignment, how do you approach it?," all but two students circled the response, "I don't know how to begin." The discussion of the end of the year evaluations below will serve as a direct comparison of the way students felt at the beginning of the year about their reading and writing and how their attitude had changed by year's end.

To the question, "How has this class helped your reading and writing skills," one student wrote: "This class has helped my reading and writing skills by helping me get prepared for an 10th grade English class. This class helped me by the teacher giving me reading and writing assignments." As one of my goals was to give students reading and writing assignments that would correspond as closely as possible to what the "regular" or non-orange-box students did, that a student believed she was ready to tackle 10th grade was a very positive indicator. Students were, for the most part, much more positive about

their skills than they had been at the beginning of the year. Other positive comments were:

"It has help me a whole lot."

"It has helped me to read faster and write more."

"My reading and writing has improved alot sense the beginning of the year. I like to read and write even more than before."

"My Reading & Writing has improven alot sense the beginning of this wounderful school year. I have injoyed being in this class and I would like to thank my teacher Ms. Baginski for not giving up on me."

Marianna wrote, "This class has helped me alot. When I first started ninth grade I had trouble about reading a story and telling it's main Idea. I really hate to read and I still do but I will read if I half [have] too." I had not expected any student to consider that "reading a story and telling it's main Idea" was the purpose or goal of reading, nor did I want students to only read because they had to, but from what I know about this student, this was a very positive statement. She was a hard worker and did learn more about reading and writing than she indicated here; her specific reference to skills such as finding the main idea was a reflection of the workbooks' emphasis because she had been the most inspired to complete the Learning 100, or the workbook series. She had, however, also done much extra reading on her own, worked hard on expanding her vocabulary, and throughout the year she had the highest grade in the class. She received an award at the end of the year for having the highest grade in the course, but

due to her shyness was absent from school the day it was conferred. Much of this achievement resulted from her perseverance and her upbringing which had taught her to do what she was supposed to do, and that included doing work in order to get good grades. On the other hand, her internal motivation was higher than she might have indicated. She had gained so much confidence in her abilities because she had done so well in the workbook series and in everything other facet of the course. She had gone to a "regular," ninth-grade, English class for a month and had written an excellent paper on a book she had chosen to read from our class library. She still was not as confident about her abilities as I felt she should be, but I felt that this would come in time. And, indeed I believe that her time has come; as she indicated in a letter sent to me the following year:

> I've been so caught up in my school work I have not even been riding around town lately. . . . Both Brittany and I have been taking our school work this year very seriously. We know that we only have two more years to go, and they're going by pretty fast. . . . I've done pretty good so far. I already have ten credits. I need twenty-six to graduate. I would really enjoy being in your book. I am writing you on my new word processor I got for christmas. To get back to my schooling, I have Mr. Manning for English II. It's pretty hard, but I just started a couple of monthes ago. Today we had to present our plays to the class, it was pretty cool. In my group it is Marvell, M.J., J.M., D.G., T.B., and me. I'm trying my best to get out of my shyness, I'm not that shy anymore, I'm all the time picking at people now. You always told me that I had to get out of my shyness, to make something of myself. I'm trying my best to.

Graduation was definitely on her mind, and she was extremely motivated to see that day arrive.

To the question geared to their reading, "How do you feel about reading now?," many students had changed their minds about reading; instead of "pretending to read" as they had done in the past, they now read because they liked to read on topics that they liked and in order to get better grades:

"I feel that reading is a big sucess and an big accomplishment in life."

"I use to hate reading bfore school I hated reading but know [now] I do [like reading.]"

"I really don't like to read but if it counts as a good grade I have no choice but to read."

"I love it."

"I enjoy reading now just a little especially on the topic that I like."

"I feel good about a little bit."

"[T]hat this class help me to read an[d] I could do better."

"I feel much about reading because one time I couldn't stand reading. [B]ut now I could read so many books and plus I could understand them."

"Well I always love to read so I guess reading is cool."

"Before school started I hated reading But now I have grown to like it. [I]t goes to show what can change you in one school year."

"I like to read."

"I like to read now. I like to find out what happens."

"I feel very good about my reading because I can't read very well."

"How do I feel about reading now. Reading is fun."

What was worrisome yet still telling about the students and the way the class was set up were the negative comments. A number of students indicated that they still did not like reading:

"I still hate it."

"[t]he same way I felt at the begining of the year."

"Crossed out: It sucks A lot
Changed to: I don't like it at All."

" [I] don't Like it."

"I hated reading when I came and I still hate it know [now].

"I still feel the same way about reading I do not like it."

But, as only six students of the original twenty-three that this study discusses offered that they still "hated" reading, the class might yet be considered quite successful. Ned had written, "It sucks A lot." and changed that to: I don't like it at All." As discussed in Chapter 10, Ned was not motivated to do any work at all until he realized that he was able to complete assignments by simply attempting them. Ned's change in attitude was remarkable, and he enjoyed a great many books during the school year; however, Ned's character inclined him to write and to say anything provocative most of the time; that was simply part of Ned's makeup—he did not want any one to take him too seriously or to think that he took his schoolwork seriously. The coordinator had told me that he could not read, but he *had* read. Ned was probably never going to be a member of the Book-of-the-Month Club (Purves, Rogers & Soter, 1990, p. 3), but he had become a much

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better reader and writer throughout the year. His spelling was and probably still is atrocious, but his ideas and his confidence and appetite for being able to read more and more about agriculture, or building, or hunting, or archery, or to read more adventure stories or books about people involved with drugs would continue to grow (he wrote papers and read books about each of these subjects). He had shown me that he could perform adequately and that he did enjoy some readings, his protests notwithstanding. Ned had also been one of the first students to complete the GA level of the workbook which thereby permitted him to attend a regular ninth grade English class as a reward. Although scores on standardized tests do not necessarily mean that a student is a good reader, his scores on the year end Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test revealed improvement and a newfound strength in vocabulary; his scores on the MAT 7, another standardized test students were expected to take and that I was expected to prepare students for, were indeed much higher than average for the ninth grade.

One student wrote that he wanted to try to like reading: "I still need to improve in read[ing] so that I could like it." This was a marginally positive comment that indicated an understanding not only of the importance of literacy but also how an enjoyment of reading can sometimes lead to further and more sophisticated reading and, ultimately, becoming more literate.

Another student wrote: "Well this class has helped me none. I knew everything when I came here. I just goofed around last year." This student was one whom I believed did not need to be in the class from the beginning. Her writing was unquestionably the best in the class, and her reading improved markedly because, for one thing, she found herself interested in books on young people overcoming or succumbing to the temptations of drugs and could not stop reading them. She had been in a great deal of disciplinary trouble in middle school, and she was right, she was placed in this class for disciplinary reasons, because she "just goofed around last year." Although she had improved, she could not see it because she was still, I suspected, resentful and angry that she had been placed in the class in the first place.

For some students, being in the class prevented them from learning as much as they could have, as they could not get past the anger and embarrassment at their placement, nor, perhaps more importantly, the rejection and the lack of confidence in their own intelligence it implied. This comment alone supports the arguments of those who oppose ability grouping. However, once this student was out of this course, and in a "regular" schedule of classes, she felt much better about herself; she continued reading books on youths with drug addictions, a subject in which she had originally developed a heightened interest on the occasion of our first longer writing

assignment. She was now trying very hard in school, settling down, and remained interested in becoming a drug counselor, something we had discussed many times throughout the year; Brittany confirms this in a letter she wrote to me in the Fall of the following year:

> School is doing real good, I made honor roll. I am taking 10th grade English. I still like reading about drugs, Yes I am still thinking about being a drug counselor.

The most positive comments came from students in response to the question, "How do you feel about writing now?":

> "I love to write always will from now until eternity."

> "I felt realy Good writing the Shaq report."

> "I feel good about writing.

> "I kind of like writing, know [now] when I like what I am writing about."

> "I have always loved writing and know [now] because of Mrs. Baginski I like to write even more."

> "I like writing but not much. But I understand how to write papers better now than I did."

> "I could [can] write better."

> "I think ok"

> "I enjoy writing except long papers. I have improve a lot in writing assignments."

> "I feel better because I know a little better than before."

> "I feel that I could probaly write now write a term paper because you have teach me so much."
> "It's alright."

> "I have always Loved writing and Know [now] I Love to write even more."

"I feel good about writing."

"It helped me learn more about writing and what to write about."

"It has helped a lot words that I didn't know I know Know [now] and I seems to like writting a little bit more."
"I[t] has helped me a lot because I have been improving on my writing. . . ."

"It helped me improve the way I write my papers."

"How do I feel about writing. Writing is fun to [do]. I write net [neatly], People like my hand writing."

"I always love to write but now I like to write and get a good grade."

"I love my writing Because everytime I write I get a good grade."

"I like writting now more than I use to I didn't like it none one time."

In the above comments, students indicated that they were extremely pleased with themselves and with the work they had done. They enjoyed writing because they had received good grades for it, because they had the opportunity to write on topics that they liked, and because they had learned many skills that enabled them to express themselves more freely. They also enjoyed writing because now they had gained confidence in their ability to write. What was somewhat surprising about so many students expressing feelings of success about their writing was that they had just finished a long paper on which they had spent a great deal of time about a book they had read. Actually, their comments are strengthened by the context;

students were not tired of writing but, on the contrary, exhilarated by it—especially when it worked for them.

Two of my favorite comments from students are related to motivation, and are great testaments of the efficacy of structuring my class around constructive criticism, positive attitudes, optimistic beliefs, good grades, pats on the back, and ultimately, around trying to inspire students to reach their potential:

> "My Reading & Writing has improven alot sense the beginning of this wounderful school year. I have injoyed being in this class and I would like to thank my teacher Ms. Baginski for not giving up on me."

and:

> "To: Mrs. Baginski,
> You really have helped me to become a big success in reading and writing. You have inspired me to keep writing and the writing I've done was really great which I know it was. Thanks for the honesty and sweet inspiration.
> Love ya, Lakeisha P.S. Don't forget me not matter what."

I tried to guide and to inspire them to do their best at all times, but I did not realize that my students noticed this. As being positive about all the literacy events in the classroom and considering students as human beings with highs and lows, strengths and weaknesses were the basic tenets of my classroom procedure, it was pleasing to see that some students had appreciated my endeavors. But, what is most exciting about these comments is how cheerful, positive, and success-ful both of these students felt about themselves and their work; the first student writes that she has strengthened her reading and writing

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skills, but also that she had a "wounderful school year"; the second writes that she has "become a big success in reading and writing" and "the writing I've done was really great." There was nothing that could have possessed these two students to have talked about their reading and writing in such a positive way when they first entered my class. The transformation of these two was absolutely amazing.

Although some students still made negative comments about their reading and writing skills, clearly most of the students were much more positive about these skills than they had been at the beginning of the year. Students felt better about their abilities, had not been allowed to fail at anything that they had tried, and actually were better, more rounded students as a consequence of being stronger readers and writers. And, as a result, they were more motivated. They now knew that they could do good work because they had done it. They had learned; they were proud of themselves, and they had gotten back some of their dreams, and some methods and hopes of reaching them.

One student seemed to have stayed relatively the same in terms of her attitude toward taking responsibility for her life; in her tenth grade year, she chose to continue to cause trouble in her classes and she was proud of it:

> What have you been up to me not much of nothing. Well I know you are wondering if I am the same old Chelsea! Yes! I am the same mean young lady, and I am still up to the same mean things. Well I have already gotten suspended a total of

four days all together, two days were for missing my detentions five times well really skipping them, and I got suspended for two more days for fighting. I am glad that I finished the Learning 100 too because I hated all of that work.

However, although she had chosen to fail almost all of her classes, she had not succeeded in failing mine, and she had been able to attend summer school in order to complete the workbooks so that she could attend a regular, tenth-grade, English class. Her grade was lowered because she did not complete the Learning 100 workbook, but she did not fail.

Chelsea was not the only student who felt that the workbooks were not the best learning tools. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the majority of students' aversion to the workbooks reflected their beliefs in the relative unimportance of the activity and the inability of such exercises to enrich their literacy experiences. Only one student discussed his opinions of the Learning 100 workbooks explicitly and his comments were strongly negative: "I would give everyone a Language book and make the[m] do work out of it. Learning 100 didn't teach me anything."

Although only one student specifically mentioned the Learning 100 series as a problem, I believe that when students were asked "How do you feel about your reading now?" and when they discussed their improvements in reading, they considered their improvements in reading based on either their opinions of the workbooks or on their progress in the workbooks. They divided the class into two parts, one

that was called Reading, in which they received a grade that was based solely on their progress in the workbooks, and the other for English I, which was based on the reading and writing they did beyond the workbooks. When they said that they did not improve in reading, I honestly believe that they meant that they had not learned much from the workbooks. They did not feel that they had progressed very far in finding the main idea, and other basic reading skills on which they were tested. As the majority of students had not done well on the multiple-choice tests and had difficulty motivating themselves to the workbook tasks, all of which formed the basis of their Reading grade, they concluded that they were still not good readers. That they read many books and could understand many words and many stories, and that they enjoyed the reading and the related writing they had done did not mean—to them—that they had improved in their reading. Reading to many of them then was how well they did on the workbook skills tests. What an unfortunate side-effect of the attention and resources devoted to the workbooks.

In total, however, students had indeed learned to read and to comprehend better than even they realized. They had selected books and many other types of materials and read them—fiction, non-fiction, poetry, magazine articles, short stories, novels, auto-biographies; they had written daily in a variety of different modes—summaries, poetry, editorials, stories, short essays, longer essays. Although neither the

activities mentioned above nor the following were discussed in particular in this dissertation as time did not permit. students also learned study skills, time-management skills, and library or research skills. But, what they had learned most of all was to be self-motivating and to direct their energies toward finding interesting literature and reading it. Their attitudes toward reading and writing had also changed dramatically since the beginning of the year in every respect except with regards to the workbook and its accompanying skills, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank exercises. Their confidence levels were unquestionably higher than they had been at the beginning of the year. They had all been successful at a wide variety of tasks and had begun to believe in their abilities once again. Although students' writing still may have contained many grammatical mistakes, they were novice writers who were all better at editing and were becoming more fluent writers. They were writing daily and becoming better, more interesting and stronger writers from the practice. In one short year, students had gone from feeling hopeless and incapable to feeling strong and able. There is not much more that a teacher could expect in one year than such positive reactions to reading and writing coming from students who, for the most part, had virtually refused to read and write for many years previously. Students certainly had much more to learn about literacy but hopefully their motivation levels would be maintained in their future years of schooling.

CHAPTER 15

CONCLUSION

Current patterns of instructional organization do not serve struggling readers well. Our schools and our classrooms do not adapt well to many kinds of differences, including linguistic, racial, cultural, and socioeconomic differences—any type of variability. We know a lot about how children learn to read, and we know that there is wide variability in the rate and manner of literacy learning. Acting on this knowledge means reorganizing the delivery of literacy instruction. There are ways to teach literacy that accommodate the reality of variability and allow children the dignity of learning at their own rate and in their own ways (Roller, 1996, p. 125).

Not only is there no reliable method of identifying which children would be best considered remedial or mildly handicapped, there is also little evidence that the two programs, as currently offered, differ substantially in the intervention strategies commonly employed. Allington and McGill-Franzen (1989a) report the use of similar materials, tasks, and techniques in remedial and special education programs. However, a critical difference was identified (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989b) in the amount of reading instruction offered to the two groups of students. Mildly handicapped special education students received significantly less reading instruction than remedial students, and there is evidence that both groups actually received less reading instruction than better readers (Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Vanecko, Ames, & Archambault, 1980). Similarly, studies of effective instructional intervention with special student populations (Larrivee, 1985; Lyons, 1989) suggest that there are no truly specialized materials or teaching strategies with demonstrated advantages over the best teaching available in regular education classrooms. In short, it seems that while we have two broad program types and routinely separate low-achieving students into one of these two strands, there is little evidence that such assignment is carried out in a reliable manner, or that the instructional interventions offered in the two programs differ from each other (Walmsley & Allington, 1995, p. 22).

Our concern is the design of instructional support programs that alleviate, if not resolve, the reading difficulties of all participants (Walmsley & Allington, 1995, p. 25).

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To summarize my findings, I discovered that students who indicated that they were unwilling to read assigned texts were willing to read texts they had chosen of their own volition. I also discovered that students were averse to workbook activities and to rote, repetitive tasks but were willing to engage in writing when it was immediately related to their own topics or purposes and to the reading of their choice. The evidence presented in my study indicates that, in order for students to progress, they needed to be able to choose their own reading materials and writing topics, and to be provided with a nurturing atmosphere and a significant amount of attention to their individual needs. These students who feared failure when my study began responded in the end to challenging assignments in which they were able to succeed. I did *not* determine that my students were willing and *unable*, but, quite to the contrary, that they *were* unwilling and *able* when they entered my classroom. Their progress in my class in terms of the number of books they read and the number of pages they wrote attested to their growth.

To answer the conundrum of why they had been unable to succeed in the current educational system, I found that the majority of students may have been placed into the program because they had been classified as discipline problems at their previous middle school. Although students were given The Stanford Diagnostic Test of Reading as a placement exam, and all students who were tested did place in

the first through sixth grade levels, students were administered the test under less than optimal conditions, on short notice during their lunch hour. Moreover, several students placed in my class were not tested at all. To make matters worse, only certain students from each middle school were tested, and the reasons for those few being chosen from amongst the entire eighth-grade-student body remained unclear. Additionally, students who scored high on a second testing (the pre-test I administered in September of 1995) were retained in my class regardless of protests. Those students who, according to their teacher, were competent enough readers and writers to attend a regular class, were nonetheless retained in my class.

According to Walmsley & Allington (1995), a student's place-ment may depend on "chance" as much as on other factors:

> It is also clear from our review that there are not sufficiently well defined categories of reading, writing, and learning disabilities to justify separate funding, separate diagnoses, and separate instructional materials and techniques for students who basically are all having difficulty in learning to read and write on schedule. We do not deny that there are many causes and manifestations of learning difficulties: current classification schemes (including referral procedures, testing, and remedial instructional approaches), however, do not discriminate adequately between the various mani-festations, and in practice—which is the acid test—a child is more likely to be in one program or another, being treated by one approach or another, as much by chance (e.g., to whom the child was initially referred or by availability of funding) as by accurate and appropriate diagnosis followed up with appropriate remediation (pp. 25-26).

As over one-third of the school's population was considered to have significant reading difficulties, scoring from two to six grades behind

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In their age-appropriate reading levels (Littletown High School SACS report 1996-1997), sanctioning the segregation of only 52 students into a remedial course, while leaving the others to fend for themselves in regular classes could only occur by the luck of the draw. I suspect that a large number of my students were conspicuous to the administration because they often visited their offices through disciplinary referrals. If a remedial program is necessary for over one-third of all students at Littletown, then perhaps the remedial course should become the norm, or the "regular" class.

I also discovered a connection between lack of self-esteem and the behavioral problems this produced. Self-esteem and behavior are complicated issues that are perhaps better understood if addressed together. If discipline had been a problem in the past for some of these students, it certainly had the potential to become worse in a remedial program in which a student did not belong or did not want to be. Students exhibited a variety of inappropriate behaviors, from pretending to be immersed in a reading activity to creating educational disruptions. Their actions, including the dissection of the reading orange, could only be construed as resistance to the education provided to them (see Chapters 8, 9, and 10).

Although only a few students were "actively" passive, as in Timmy's case (non-attendance, apathy, fatalistic acceptance of being a low reader), students were nonetheless rejecting their educational

opportunities through passive behaviors such as their habitual resistance to reading, through various ploys such as creating distractions in the classroom, and through the self-hypnosis manifested in the oft-repeated phrase, "I ain't know and I ain't care." Students were refusing their education due to a variety of factors, including the makeup of the program, the labeling inherent in the course's title, the mind-numbing workbook activities, and students' overall sense of failure created for some simply by their noticeable segregation from their peers. All of the above caused these students to regard education, at least according to the way that it was presented to them, as not worth pursuing.

Orange-Box students were also extremely unsure of themselves and of their potentials for success. Being placed in a remedial class to them meant that they were failures while those others placed in regular classrooms were perceived as being much more capable. In sum, students actively discarded their educational opportunities in protest, out of simple boredom at their choices, and because they felt predestined to fail at the start. Erickson describes the reactions of students who could have been my own, placed in analogous courses, and their subsequent acts of protest or passivity, terming them "acts of resistance" against the current educational system in which they found themselves:

> It is no longer a matter of difference between teacher and student that derives from intergenerationally transmitted

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communicative traditions. It is also a matter of cultural intention as a medium of resistance in a situation of political conflict. As students grow older and experience repeated failure and repeated negative encounters with teachers, they develop oppositional cultural patterns as a symbol of their disaffiliation with what they experience (not necessarily within full reflective awareness) as an illegitimate and oppressive system. The more alienated the students become, the less they persist in doing schoolwork. Thus they fall farther and farther behind in academic achievement. The student becomes either actively resistant—seen as salient and incorrigible—or passively resistant—fading into the woodwork as an anonymous,well-behaved, low-achieving student (Erickson, 1993, p. 41).

Dr. Tomlin, the Kingsboro County Superintendent, indicated in response to the proposed Accountability Act, South Carolina's attempt to establish a structure of school performance accountability which has since passed, that many of the students either were not ready to accept or actively refused the opportunities presented to them:

Rather than make the schools accountable for the 'quality of education **offered**', it [the Accountability Act] tries to make them accountable for the **students' responses to the opportunities** offered them by the institutions. One of the avowed intentions of the bill is to 'hold schools accountable **for all students achieving high academic standards.'** . .[emphasis in original].

Is there anyone anywhere who seriously doubts that learning is a participation sport? No one can **learn** anyone anything. Reflection on our own experiences, and some common sense, will remind us that structuring learning opportunities (teaching) is the responsibility of the teacher; that active engagement with those opportunities is the responsibility of the learner; and that **learning** is the end product of such engagements by the student [emphasis in original].

Schools produce learning opportunities for students and formal schooling is the organized presentation of those opportunities (italics in original). Schools do not produce students of any kind—only biological parents can accomplish

that feat—and schools cannot guarantee that students always can or will avail themselves of the opportunities that the schools do produce [emphasis in original].

What Dr. Tomlin failed to understand was that there are methods of motivating students to acquire the desire to succeed, and even more importantly, to know how to succeed in the current educational system. Motivational methods, which previously have been seldom used or may have not been used at all, are urgently necessary with the type of student who is either not academically prepared to engage actively in learning or who actively refuses his or her educational opportunities in the manner in which it is currently presented. Students require a choice of reading materials, attention to their individual needs, including but not limited to task analysis, and above all, need to be constantly inundated with opportunities for successful experiences.

Those students who resisted educational opportunities were so extremely fearful of failure and mindful of their self-esteem that they appeared not to have recognized or accepted the "opportunities" as opportunities at all. In other words, this type of student was more likely to view classroom assignments as occasions for impending failure than as opportunities for success. Students, however, willingly and positively responded to, as well as actively participated in, tasks perceived as carrying a future value for their own lives. Furthermore, they readily accepted any assignment that they knew would allow

them ample chances for success, that they felt they could master, and which implicitly carried the promise of heightened self-esteem. Apparently, they had not been offered such opportunities in their prior schooling, and thus they preferred not even to attempt such tasks so that others would be led to believe that lack of effort rather than lack of ability was the reason for their failure. The opportunities presented to them had heretofore been considered obstacles or barriers to learning. The current educational system needed to be revised in order for students to accept responsibility for their own learning and to seize these opportunities. The motivational methods described throughout this dissertation catered to creating and providing opportunities that were considered true "opportunities" by the reluctant student.

Students had also failed to succeed in the current educational system because they had very little exposure to reading and writing. They were unmotivated to perform tasks at which they might be unsuccessful, and they were constantly and actively resisting their education as it was provided to them. As they were not motivated to read or to write, and were missing class time due to disciplinary referrals, students simply did not have much opportunity to read or write, in part due to their inability to consider such tasks as opportunities. Students were also not interested in the reading and writing assignments they had been given in their previous classes.

What Brittany wrote on a questionnaire handed out at the beginning of the school year would very likely be the sentiments of the other students in my class as well: "If I like it I will read it, but if not I will not read it. So you can [can't] say I really don't like to read."

Although the opportunity for only reading literary materials that one liked throughout one's schooling is unrealistic, having hesitant or reluctant readers begin their experiences with books they liked was, at least for the members of my class, the only way to encourage students to read at all. They needed to experience these tasks, and they needed to perform them at their own volition. Students who were able to self-select reading and writing topics and were allowed to make decisions regarding their own learning exhibited a stronger propensity for *intrinsic motivation*, or performing tasks to meet their own inner goals, rather than *extrinsic motivation*, performing tasks solely to meet someone else's requirements. Students with *intrinsic motivation* are more likely to *continue* to read and to learn according to their own needs and purposes in the future.

Students may also have failed to succeed in their previous schooling because their teachers were unaware of the effect of task analysis, or of breaking tasks into their component parts, on the ability of students to perform more complicated or lengthier tasks. As teachers were either unaware of the technique or did not know how to

utilize task analysis, they did not use it to help students to master tasks, to boost their self-esteem, and to break down their resistance to participation in writing tasks.

Students in my class were given smaller but more frequent tastes of success in order to propel them toward the completion of more difficult and challenging tasks. The phrase "They can't do that" did not exist in my vocabulary. Furthermore, I tried in every way possible to bar negative sentiments such as "I can't do that" from my students' repertoire of phrases. In order to inspire students to remain positive about their abilities, I strove to remain positive in my comments, in my actions, in my conversations with students, and in every aspect of the teaching and learning process. I also worked via task analysis, designing tasks that would not only improve students' ability to read and to write but also those that would simultaneously boost their self-esteem. By breaking tasks into smaller units that students could complete, students were able to experience success and more importantly, feel successful about their abilities on a daily basis.

If I discovered that a student or group of students could not perform a task, it was incumbent on me to break a task down differently for that student or group of students. The knowledge of students' individual capabilities was beneficial for both the teacher and the student. From a microanalysis of each student's actions and reactions to a task, I tried to tailor the assignment to the individual.

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Often, the break-down of the task into smaller segments worked well for all students, alleviating the need for individualization. It is useful to know that every task can be further broken down and further individualized when necessary. Sometimes a task needed to be made more difficult rather than simplified because the more advanced students needed more challenging activities, more reading assignments, or more essay paragraphs to include in order to maintain interest in and to feel successful about a particular task. Depending on an individual student's needs, the teacher can exercise the option of adding to or subtracting from the assignment, or of further breaking down a task into more manageable segments.

Whenever students experience repeated success as a result of this task manipulation technique, the student and teacher benefit in equal measure. The teacher will experience a heightened sense of professional self-regard from student success. Likewise, the student who has daily opportunities to receive feedback and to encounter success will gain greater confidence and self-esteem. When both teacher and student experience repeated success, the attitudes and abilities of both profit and both parties will be more willing to continue to engage in such exciting encounters whereby literacy and self-esteem progress hand in hand.

Finding methods to change my students' attitudes on all of the above impediments toward reading, writing, and learning was a slow

but continuous process which nevertheless proved extremely successful in the end, as all students became more fluent readers and writers, and all but a few indicated in their course evaluations that their interest in reading and writing had been renewed. Through hard work and positive reinforcement, most students were able to grow into more mature and responsible readers and writers. They arrived at the understanding that part of the responsibility for learning had to come from themselves—and they were willing to pursue opportunities when they were presented in ways that allowed them not only to partake but also to succeed as a result of their participation. Furthermore, the majority felt that they were and would continue to be successful in their academic endeavors.

SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAM

In this section, suggestions for modifications of the program are presented. These program modification were devised in response to the needs and reactions of my students to the materials and the activities presented to them during the course of this study.

Nine changes are recommended in the curriculum to give all students reason to participate. The ensuing list of suggestions or revisions to the developmental reading program may also be useful for

other remedial reading programs and perhaps English courses as well. The recommendations follow:

1.   Attention to all students' literacy difficulties and self-esteem crises requires early and continuous intervention.   The Kingsboro County Schools needed to identify students who were having difficulties with self-esteem and/or literacy much earlier than the ninth grade. There should not be one more occasion to say, "It's too late to help that student. We were too late."

Many other school systems begin remedial reading programs as early as the first or second grade, and thus help students to overcome difficulties before they are overwhelmed by them or their self-esteem has plummeted to dangerous levels.

Some understanding of the origins of the learning difficulties experienced as students first enter school is evidenced in Dr. Tomlin's written comment related to the Accountability Act:

> Many children in our state come to the schoolhouse door initially unable to take advantage of the formal opportunities provided there. Common sense again dictates that these needs must be addressed before there will be the substantial improvement in average achievement test scores that we all desire. **The provision of full-day kindergarten would be an excellent place to begin** [emphasis in original].

Although an awareness existed on the part of the Superintendent, Dr. Tomlin did not change his attitude that the parents and the students

were primarily to blame for not being able to accept the opportunities presented.

The knowledge that many students have extraordinary needs when they arrive at school should presuppose a willingness to address the problem immediately by providing opportunities in which the underprepared students of the County could partake as of their initial encounter with school. To be sure, with the opportunity to provide only a half-day of daily instruction for students, teachers could have been overwhelmed or even frustrated by the lack of time to confront this serious issue. However, when the reality of the situation is denied until students have already been advanced to the ninth grade, and is coupled with the self-acknowledged awareness that these same students were already unprepared or underprepared at the time they entered the "schoolhouse door," it becomes clear that everything that could have been done to ensure these students the educational opportunities they craved and were due was not attempted. By this time, the educational neglect had already taken its course and its deleterious toll on the students.

That Kingsboro County did not have a program to help these students earlier was in part the consequence of inadequate resources. Dr. Tomlin, the Superintendent, indicated a deep understanding and at the same time a sense of powerlessness about the situation in his statement concerning the Accountability Act:

It can certainly be argued that, in South Carolina, the formal learning opportunities presented in many schools are woefully inadequate, but, this is primarily due to a history of woefully inadequate funding across the state which no one even debates. Many, if not most, of our schools have inadequate facilities in general, inadequate science laboratories, inadequate libraries, inadequate numbers of textbooks, inadequate technology, only half-day kindergartens. . . .But another announced intention of the bill is the 'continuation' of adequate funding to provide educational excellence.' This must be a typographical error. How can one continue something that has never occurred?

Most of our students have never been provided even a level scholastic playing field, much less an 'adequate' one. Now comes the 'Accountability Act' to hold schools accountable, not for the opportunities they were intended to provide, but for student performance that is logically connected to exposure to the very opportunities the students have been systematically denied! What is wrong with this picture?

However, allowing so many students to "fall through the cracks," as the County superintendent phrased it, and allowing so many students to continue year after year being promoted for the wrong reasons, some recognized, others not, created many more problems that were more complicated and of longer duration and heightened magnitude for the school system, its teachers, and in particular its students than was healthy or necessary. Certainly, allowing so many students to fail and not intervening much earlier was not an appropriate response.

Beginning the following year after this study was completed, the County planned to have a program for elementary students who had fallen similarly behind grade-level expectations. In time, perhaps this program will develop into something more significant and will work for

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those students who have gone for years without adequate attention or remediation for their schooling difficulties.

I acknowledge that the Kingsboro County officials did not wait once they finally recognized the problem, and set out to attack it immediately. They did not wait for the next group of students, and they did not allow this charade to go on any longer for the group of students who ended up in classrooms like mine all over the County. There is something to be said for the validity of the truism, "Better late than never."

The County did not wait to name a coordinator or to set up a program once the crisis had been identified. The problem that ensued from this, however, was that the program was hurriedly conceived, was not well-thought out and not monitored closely enough to discover what worked, what did not, and what could be done to improve it continuously for students throughout the County. Further ethnographic study of the students' responses to various aspects of the course and further study of teacher methods, including successes and failures, in these developmental reading and English courses would be valuable information that could be used to strengthen the curriculum and to continue to improve the class.

2.   Involve choice as the main motivational element of the program. Allowing students to self-select texts was the single-most effective

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strategy in motivating my students toward literacy and toward becoming lifelong readers. The adolescent remedial reader or writer needs to begin to read and to write for enjoyment, according to his or her own purposes or interests, and at his or her own pace. Students will naturally move toward more differentiated and sophisticated texts over time. They will also develop a habit of reading and learn about varieties of reading materials and writing styles available to them through the process of choosing.

Why students needed to enjoy what they read and what they wrote may be connected to their reading habits, which were, in turn, related to their self-esteem. By being allowed to choose works that were uplifting to them for various reasons, including the fact that many of the chosen readings were multicultural or adolescent literature that were closely connected to their own situations, questions, and concerns, or provided useful information related to decisions they needed to make in their lives, students willingly accepted and willingly completed the reading tasks assigned. The fact that students were able to find their own paths, their own reading niches, through this process not only raised students' literacy proficiency but also built their self-esteem. When students are given opportunities to make independent choices and are successful, their abilities to set goals and their confidence in attaining those goals is raised as well. Students who set goals, perform activities, and

ultimately, through the repeated success of their endeavors, reach even-higher goals are not only more likely to attempt to set new goals but also to gain assurance of ways to reach them. Furthermore, they will persevere to reap the positive encouragement in terms of the confidence imparted by learning and the higher self-regard that their endeavors have continued to bring. Students' confidence that such success can be transferred or repeated on other tasks is also enhanced and thus motivation toward greater literate proficiency is in turn heightened.

3.   Discontinue the use of workbooks. Assigning workbooks as a learning tool communicated to students the message that literacy is a set of skills to be mastered, nothing more, nothing less, and that it had no contextual relationship to or bearing on their actual lives. In contrast, what I wanted students to discover was that literacy is more than a mere set of skills, but instead a valuable learning and survival tool.

Furthermore, the workbook activities were demeaning to students' self-esteem. Not only were the "regular" students not doing any workbook activities but they were also not forced to do rote drills. Instead, "regular" students had textbooks with "real" literature and "real" writing activities. My students had brightly colored workbooks and monotonous drills in which students could not make their own

decisions about which readings would be most beneficial for their learning. Students had completed workbooks in their previous years of schooling, but now they considered it "babywork" beyond which they yearned to move. Being detained in workbook exercises caused students distress as they were not able to see or feel improvement as long as they were still doing work that only lower-level students would need to do. Their self-esteem could only be improved through giving students more challenging activities that were similar to, if not the same as, what the "regular" students were doing.

As a result of prioritizing the workbooks. "the focus was on the product, not the process of the tasks":

> Because right answers were indicators of achievement in these classes. giving or receiving help could be construed as either cheating or incompetence. As a result, students who were unsure often resorted to behaviors that produced answers but hindered learning (Turner, 1997, p. 197).

In my class, the majority of students cheated in attempts to complete the workbook tasks, rather than learned. Furthermore, they came to consider literature and literacy tasks as presented to be rote material that was essentially meaningless to their lives.

If discontinuation of the practice of using workbooks, or of using Learning 100, the workbook series used in my course, is not acceptable, I would suggest purchasing the software that accompanies the series. Although I do not advocate "throwing good money after bad" to alleviate a deleterious situation, there are some benefits that

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might in particular be gained by the reluctant reader through computer-based instruction. As grading of exercises and tests is provided via the software, the difficulties arising from self-grading and the problem of cheating would be largely eradicated. My students, as well as most other students I have observed, immensely enjoyed working on the Macintosh computers in the lab, and on the CCC Atari computer reading and math programs (the computers in my classroom)—and without coercion. The New York City Board of Education study (1992) of students reading below grade level in English as a Second Language, Special Education, and English courses, and using the EDL Learning 100 computer program, the same workbook series used in my class, reported significant gains in student proficiency for all of the above groups.

As computer work was considered advanced technology to students, their self-esteem would not suffer as a result of using the computers as it had from using the actual workbooks. The time spent on workbook activities would also be shortened, as it would take less time to perform the activities via computer. That extra time could be spent on more challenging reading and writing activities that would approximate tasks that the "regular" students would be doing. Thus, in providing more time for performing activities that the other students were doing, students would be preparing to be successful in future grades and in non-remedial classes. The more "regular" English

classroom tasks at which students could be successful, the stronger the potential for heightened self-esteem and in turn the more motivated a student would be toward enhanced literacy.

4. Motivate students to progress from shorter to more elaborate writing using formulaic assignments when necessary. Teachers and students can both profit whenever task analysis is used. Through this method, tasks are tailored to the abilities of the students and all students are capable of completing all assignments successfully. Rogers & Medley (1988) in discussing the use of authentic foreign language materials indicate that "guidance" and "tailor[ing]" of tasks is an extremely powerful technique for improving student comprehension of texts and successful mastering of assignments: "[I]t is the task and the subsequent guidance that the task provides—not the text itself—that must be tailored to the level of the students" (1988, p. 470).

Inexperienced (and experienced) writers often need assistance at formulating or organizing pieces of writing. Helpful suggestions on ways to begin writing will often allow the inexperienced writer the nudge he or she needs in order to attempt a task. Dividing longer and more detailed writing tasks into shorter sub-tasks keeps a student from becoming overwhelmed by an assignment and also allows a student many opportunities for success, as he or she will receive

information on progress more often and not need to wait until he or she completes the more elaborate task to receive feedback or to experience success. Students with low self-esteem are often overwhelmed by fear of failure and are thus unlikely to attempt larger, more difficult assignments unless these tasks are divided into smaller, more manageable pieces. In this way, with appropriate feedback from the teacher and classmates, the student is continually offered little pieces of success which will culminate in a much more fulfilling sense of accomplishment when the longer, more difficult assignment is also completed successfully. Self-esteem and literacy goals are once again achieved in tandem.

5. Revise methods of placement. Students who test at higher levels on the pre-test or show exceptional classroom gains in reading or writing levels should be immediately moved to a regular English class before further damage is done. Student writing samples should also be considered as part of the placement process. Furthermore, students should not be placed in a remedial course because they are discipline problems. Disciplinary problems need to be solved at the administrative level, in conjunction with each classroom teacher's cooperation and advice concerning how best to deal, on a case-by-case basis, with students' behavioral problems.

The self-esteem of a student who is incorrectly placed into a remedial reading class will suffer equally if not more so than the self-esteem of a student who does indeed need remedial assistance. The knowledge of their placement will be used against them by other students, and students may even stop learning in protest simply as a result of their remedial placement. Appropriate placement is of course necessary so that those students who need extra assistance receive it, but those students who are more self-sufficient should not be segregated unnecessarily. The fewer students in a class the more attention the teacher can focus on them. Students who are correctly placed in a remedial program and whose academic and social needs are accurately addressed may also accept their placement more readily.

6.   As tutoring may not be possible, devise ways to reduce class size so that students receive more individualized instruction. Accordingly, the teacher will have more time to gauge accurately students' needs and to devise specific methods to assist them. A teacher would also have more time to devote to individual task analysis and toward strengthening students' self-esteem through providing not only personal attention to each student's individual needs but also through providing constant and daily avenues for success. With the adoption of the 4 by 4 block scheduling system expected in the 1996-1997 school year, teachers could serve eight students in four classes, or

thirty-two students total. I personally would prefer to have smaller classes and no planning period than to have larger classes and a free period for planning. I suggest that the school system present this option to its reading specialists and perhaps to other teachers as well. The school would be also well-advised to set up a program in which tutors from within the school or recent graduates could be employed as tutors. Juniors, seniors, or even peers could work as student volunteers. The school would need to set up a training program for them and could possibly gain more willing volunteers if peer tutors were given school credit for their participation in the program.

7.   Involve all teachers and administrators in the process of motivating students to read, to write, and to value education. Negativity, lack of motivation, and passivity toward education needs to be eliminated across the school environment as a whole in order for students to break down the walls erected between themselves and their education.   Students must choose to learn and to accept the opportunities presented to them.   Teachers need to revise their approaches constantly in order to reach and to motivate all students to perform their best work, to feel capable of success in their learning endeavors, and to be interested in their own learning.   Teachers, students, and administrators must work together as each of the preceding groups are components in a team effort.

8. Students placed in a remedial course must be encouraged to perform challenging activities in not only their reading class but all other classes as well. Enhancing students' motivations toward reading and writing activities should not be left for the reading specialist to negotiate alone:

> Yet the issue of reading engagement is far too important to occur inside one or two classrooms. It must be a part of entire schools and districts. For this to happen, every aspect of a school's culture must be conducive to an engagement perspective. This requires changes in the sociology and curriculum of schools so that teachers are not only supported but also challenged to create contexts where children can become deeply involved in reading and learning. . . (Santa, 1997, p. 218).

> Thus, strengthening the core curriculum is a major element of reforming a remedial program. Sustaining effects of remediation—one of the critical indicators of success of the Chapter I program—depends more on the quality of the core curriculum than on the excellence of the remedial program, and so we have no choice but to attend to the core curriculum as diligently as we do the remedial (Walp & Walmsley, 1995, p. 181).

Furthermore, reading specialists and English teachers can work in unison to perform task analysis and to coordinate activities that would be beneficial for both the remedial and the more advanced reader. The majority of high school students need assistance in developing stronger literacy habits and also in heightening their self-esteem. Teachers of reading and English and other subjects can pool their knowledge on psychology, ethnography, task analysis, technical preparation and academic preparation courses, and field content to strengthen the motivational aspects and creativity of the curriculum.

From this broad-based knowledge of students and the teaching-learning process, perhaps teachers will be better understand students and teaching methods will improve.

9.   Set up classes more closely attuned to students' needs and interests, including classes where students perform tasks more suited to the careers they plan for themselves. The mission statement of Littletown High School indicates that this is a major goal for members of the school:

> The mission of Littletown High School is to equip and empower our diverse student population with the competencies necessary to succeed in a complex global society by utilizing innovative instructional practices, by involving family and community, and by providing realistic experiences that increase each student's options for success (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Ten Year Study, Littletown High School, 1996-1997).

Students who chose the vocational path, or the technical or life preparation route, need to be given the opportunity to pursue those interests across the curriculum, from English to science to math, and to be offered specific courses in which they can learn about their prospective professions. The year that I taught at Littletown High School there was no noticeable difference between the Tech (or Life) Preparatory courses and the College Preparatory courses except perhaps in so far as the teachers appeared to expect less from the students in the former track. There was a building construction, a welding, and an auto mechanics course offered that most students

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were however unable to take until they were seniors and had taken all their required basic courses. A cosmetology course was expected to be offered in the near future. Many of my students were, however, able to enroll during their first year in high school in the agriculture and the sewing classes, which were two prominent fields of interest and potential choices of profession. Approximately one-fourth of my students were enrolled in one or the other of these classes. Over half of my students were enrolled in ROTC courses, wherein six or seven of my students, male and female, decided that they were possibly interested in pursuing a profession in the military. Littletown High School needs to continue to offer substantial life preparatory courses that will prepare students for the types of careers they may choose.

Students who have ample opportunity to make choices, and to learn about potential careers will feel more confident about their future opportunities for success and will consequently set goals and value literacy and other academic skills as a means of propelling them toward aspirations that are meaningful and that are through their education accessible. A variety of avenues of learning are necessary for all students in order for each student to have the opportunity to make informed and confident choices about the path that he or she will choose.

A FINAL NOTE: BRINGING STUDENT, TEACHER, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TOGETHER TO PROMOTE POSITIVE EFFECTS FOR ALL

> This is a hopeful book about those who fail. *Lives on the Boundary* concerns language and human connection, literacy and culture, and it focuses on those who have trouble reading and writing in the schools and the workplace. It is a book about the abilities hidden by class and cultural barriers. And it is a book about movement: about what happens as people who have failed begin to participate in the educational system that has seemed so harsh and distant to them. We are a nation obsessed with evaluating our children, with calibrating their exact distance from some ideal benchmark. In the name of excellence, we test and measure them—as individuals, as a group—and we rejoice or despair over the results. The sad thing is that though we strain to see, we miss so much. All students cringe under the scrutiny, but those most harshly affected, least successful in the competition, possess some of our greatest unperceived riches (Rose,1989, p. xi).

In sum, students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community need to work together to promote participation, education, and success for all involved. Literacy is necessary and important for all students in order for them to make informed choices and to feel confident that they possess the abilities needed to be prepared for either a career or further academic studies.

Ultimately what and how a reading or an English teacher teaches students about literacy and its value depends on "knowledge, practice, and choice" (Purves, Rogers, & Soter, p. 45). The good teacher will use knowledge of students, of teaching, and of reading and writing to develop practice and to choose wisely what tasks and what techniques of teaching will work best for her own students. Teaching

and learning are complex entities because both are inseparable parts of one interactive process where teacher and student together must be active agents of knowledge production:

> Pedagogy is addressing 'the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the intersection of three agencies—the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they together produce' (Lusted). According to Lusted's definition, pedagogy refuses to instrumentalize these relations, diminish their interactivity or refuses one value over another. It, furthermore, denies the teacher as neutral transmitter, the student as passive, and knowledge as immutable material to impart. Instead, the concept of pedagogy focuses attention on the conditions and means through which knowledge is produced (Lather, 1994, p. 85).

Teachers continually need to find ways to involve the learner in his or her own literacy development, and in responding to tasks in order to make classroom more interactive, less teacher-centered; the classroom needs to be a negotiable terrain between teachers and students, a place where learners are equally responsible and responsive to literacy and learning. a place where students have more opportunities to respond and to create their own learning and to feel confident about their abilities to perform tasks that are valuable to them.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER SCHOLARLY INQUIRY

My findings suggest that my students needed help to strengthen their literacy as well as to boost their self-esteem. Students needed to be evaluated individually and on their own terms. The standard measuring instruments including standardized testing and grading of the final product alone had not been helpful in determining how these particular students could improve their literacy or in discovering why they had difficulty succeeding in the current educational system. In the absence of a school psychologist to assist in interpreting students' resistance to their education and the reasons for their previous lack of progress in the current educational system, ethnographic tools were both useful and necessary. The ethnographic approach provided valuable insight into the reasons why these students previously had not responded but now responded to literacy activities. Ethnographic methods, including studying students' individual resistance to tasks in relation to their self-esteem, as well as performing task analysis were the strongest evaluation tools.

Students needed constant attention to these two major aspects of their development, self-esteem and literacy, in order to participate fully in their education and to opt for learning rather than resistance. My attention was focused the entire year on addressing both issues simultaneously. My findings further demonstrate that addressing the two issues, self-esteem and remedial literacy, together is beneficial for

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students and their teachers. Teachers of reading and of English can profit from using individual microanalyses of students' literacy skills in conjunction with evaluating and understanding, on a case-by-case basis, the effects of enhanced self-esteem on students' performance of literacy tasks. All teachers, additionally, can benefit from learning to utilize task analysis for students who have difficulty on any level performing literacy tasks. Furthermore, the importance of understanding how self-esteem and strengthening literacy are related is worthy of further scholarly pursuit.

Another aspect of this study that merits further research is the efficacy of the continued use of workbooks and of standardized testing in remedial courses. Unfortunately, reading test developers and other specialists in the field of reading, school administrators, and even students continue to adhere to the fallacy that the ability to complete exercises in reading workbooks invariably results in heightened reading proficiency. In addition, the validity of reading test scores has repeatedly and justifiably been questioned by scholars, many of whom consider these tests insufficient evidence for the purpose of placement, promotion, and exit examinations. With stubborn disregard to a growing mountain of scholarship that demonstrates no valid correlation between the score attained on a reading or workbook test and true mastery of the act of reading, education officials nonetheless are reluctant to reexamine the existing positions which maintain

reading tests and workbook activities as the primary yardsticks for measuring reading success. Are these practices simply the easiest to administer, to score, and to use for political and financial reasons? Why do educational administrators so unyieldingly and inflexibly bow to worship at the altar of the test score hypothesis? Are there no better methods of testing students and of finding out what they know, how they learn, and what strategies of teaching would best work to help them raise their literacy proficiency? Would more attention to the reading of literature rather than to practicing standardized test-taking strategies produce better readers and writers?

If placement of students in remedial courses is difficult and misplacement of students occurs often due to testing practices and other means of placement, and if remedial courses often lead to not only fewer but less-challenging reading and writing assignments, then are remedial courses really necessary at all? Or, could regular courses be taught that include "remedies" for the weaker student, courses that are not blatantly different and do not create noticeable segregation of certain students? Through the use of remediation as "remedy," are we denying students their rights to literacy? Are we placing them in the path of predestined failure, a path from which there appears no return? Are we placing them on the path less travelled, without a fork in the road at which a student would have the opportunity to swerve from the preordained road, of stigmatization and self-fulfilling

prophecy, to take the other road, the road that will make the difference?

It is evident that teachers need to find new methods of assisting students long before they are on the verge of alienating themselves from the mainstream of schooling activities. How can educators break down the barriers created between students and their schooling so that all students choose to participate in their education? Further ethnographic studies of students in both remedial and in regular classrooms could be used to determine why some students willingly engage in literacy activities, and why others resist, do not participate, or do not understand how to participate. All students deserve equal access to literacy and equal opportunity to participate actively in meaningful learning processes. Through close observation of the current educational system, and through further study of those like the "Orange-Box Kids" we may come closer to offering all students the education they so rightfully deserve.

APPENDIX A

ACADEMIC AND BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF

THE ORANGE-BOX KIDS

Academic and Biographical Profile of the Orange-Box Kids

Name	Description of Student
Annette Armstrong	WF. Age: 16. Placement: No Test 1. Considered Discipline Problem: Expelled last week of school in 8th grade for stealing a golf cart with a group of friends; best friend and another good friend died during the first half of the school year; loved to write poetry and started reading extensively; made me signs and cards whenever she thought I was down; one of first to get to GA level of workbook and to attend a regular English class; hated, and was extremely bored by the workbooks; took five months to complete GA; enjoyed and was successful at playing teacher and helping others with workbooks exercises. and writing assignments; liked to bring candy for all members of the first period class; lived with grandmother (fondly called Mama); her mother abandoned her when very young but returned in the summer to steal Annette's fiancée.
Marquez Brown	AAM. Age: 15. Placement: low test scores; had difficulty concentrating without talking for long periods of time; took a great deal of time on reading; sweet disposition but had been discipline problem in 8th grade and continued to have fighting attitude in 9th grade; often admitted that he could not stop himself from talking and that he liked to fight.
Jacquetta Brown	AAF. Age: 16. Placement: low reading scores; writing almost unintelligible at first; disciplinary problem; tough and manipulative; best friends with Sunny, who sometimes was able to keep Jaquetta from misbehaving in my class.
Bobby Boyd	WM. Age: 15. Placement: higher scores Test 2; not a discipline problem in 8th or 9th grade; his best friend and another good friend died during the first half of the school year; started out perfectly capable of doing work; regressed 4 points on reading test by end of year; was unable to move out of his funk due to depression and feelings of insecurity. Not very tall; other students teased him about this; mother was a middle-school teacher and also could not help Bobby to get his motivation back; made excuses for everything not completed; nice disposition but had extreme difficulty acclimating himself to any task for very long after the death of his friend.

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Livan Brooks	AAM. Age: 16. Placement: Low reader. Apathy for school activities. Disruptive sometimes but not manipulative or angry. Upset about placement. Began to change dramatically and to take school work seriously the following year, saying, "you kept telling me to work harder, to read more, and to take my schoolwork seriously but I did not do it. Now I know that you were right." Mother was a beautician who always did his hair. Lived with father at the beginning of the year. Moved in and remained with mother during the rest of the year. Had seven brothers and sisters, of whom two others were also in ninth grade at LHS and were in Ms. Moore's Reading/ English class.
Lakeisha Jackson	AAF. Age: 16. Placement: low reading scores, poor test-taking skills. Definitely not a discipline problem in previous school. Hard worker. Meticulous. Worked very slowly, but diligently. Always turned in assignments on time. Sometimes took more time on assignments than she needed. Lived with mother and aunt. Mother was handicapable and Lakeisha needed to help out as much as possible. Absent, and eventually hospitalized the last few weeks of school due to complications of diabetes.
Tiki Jackson	AAF. Age: 16. Placement: low reading scores but definite discipline problem. Sweet as pie and then extremely angry at the world at a moment's notice. Always writing about how she was trying to change her attitude and behavior to school, to teachers, to friends. Very moody. Worked sporadically, then quit. Especially abhorred the workbooks. Went to alternative school the following year.
Shaquetta Johnson	AAF. 15. Placement: Not administered test at middle school. No Test 1: highest score Test 2 Total: I always questioned her placement. Possibly discipline was reason for placement. Writing was very good at the start of the year. Grammar was good. Did not put much effort into her work but was still able to do well. One of first to finish GA level of workbook and to attend a regular class as a reward.
Antwain Jones	AAM. 15. Placement: low reading scores. Very well-behaved. Quietly worked, although was susceptible to Jacquez' antics as the two were very good friends. Parents were very involved with his education. Mother decided to go to school to become a nurse the following summer. Met parents by accident at a store in Charleston during the first few weeks of school. Antwain was very unsure of himself when he first arrived, but was able to understand and

Antwain Jones cont.	to tackle every assignment with ease. Became bogged down and frustrated with the myriad details of the workbooks at times. He may never have worked as diligently as he could have, and always worked harder when reading about a basketball or football player.
Clevon King	AAM. Age 17. Tested and accepted into Special Education at the age of 17 for following year (1996-1997); transferred to regular program at another school in August of 1996; expelled for fighting during the first few weeks of school during 1996. When I called Clevon's grandmother because I had never met her (she did not come to school for the parent-teacher meetings or to pick up his report cards) she almost cried because no one from the school in 17 years had ever called her about Clevon before. She immediately came to the school the following day to meet me and to discuss Clevon's progress. We maintained an excellent rapport. On the last day of school I met Sister King, who told me that she did not want me to leave because I was the only one who had ever expressed an interest in Clevon's education.
Sunny Kinlaw	AAF. Age: 16. Placement: very low test scores. Well mannered so was not a discipline problem. Needed extra help with phonics and extra time for reading and writing assignments. Worked slowly but surely through BA, CA, and DA in workbooks. Took a picture of me in the classroom and hung it on her bulletin board in her room at home along with my letters. Best friends with Jacquetta (Peaches).
Brittany Lambert	WF. Age: 15. Placement: Higher test scores than most others: Discipline problem: indicated she had been in Mr. Leduc's office almost every day the previous year: a leader who could get almost anyone to follow her, very tough acting. Her mother told me that she was too young to date, but Brittany had more boyfriends that she knew what to do with. Had a real jealous streak—had a vendetta against another female student, a junior at LHS, because this student had dated one of Brittany's rejects.
Chelsea Logan	WF. Age: 14, the youngest member of the class. Placement: Considered disciplinary problem, remedial program previous year, tantrums; lived in a house with a swimming pool; had her own suite: tagged along with me like a little sister; best friends with Brittany until Chelsea's mother found lewd photos of Brittany taken by Marvell with Chelsea's camera: continues to call to talk; obese but subsequently acts tough: tried to kill herself during 1997-1998 school year by taking all the pills she could find after being

Chelsea Logan cont.	year by taking all the pills she could find after being expelled, according to Chelsea, for saying, "damn."
Jamaica Manigault	AAF. Age: 16. Placement: Low test scores but also disciplinary problem; had the most beautiful singing voice but was booted out of choir during the first week due to attitudinal problems with authority; admittedly bossy. Very talkative and loud, especially when with Shaquetta, her best friend. Became very interested in reading about African-Americans. Made the honorary first slice in the Reading Orange. Very opinionated and outspoken about her and others' placement in this remedial class. A member checker, along with Chelsea.
Timmy Nelson	WM. Age: 16. Placement: Passive student ignored or unnoticed during previous years of schooling; needed one-on-one attention; absenteeism problem previously and during 1995-1996 school year; dropped out following year shortly after the beginning of the year; planned to return to 9th grade at the age of 19 for the 1997-1998 school year.
Ned Norton	WM. Age: 15. Placement: very low scores but chose not to take test seriously, admitted he did not care and he did not try, just wanted to finish; careless and hurried; learned to be an excellent test taker if her tried; did not do best work; would rather hunt with the boys than fight; not a discipline problem; somewhat passive but also obnoxious; idolized male teachers who hunted, knew guns, and knew building construction. One of the male teachers borrowed one of his guns and subsequently dropped it into the Little River in front of Mr. Leduc's cabin where these teachers often socialized on the weekends. One of the teachers donned scuba gear to retrieve the gun from the bottom of the river. Ned was pleased to have been part of this transaction.
Margullis Prioleau	AAM. Age: 15. Placement: A serious student whose Test 1 results were at the high end for students accepted into program; a hard worker who wanted to go to college to be an engineer; his father was an engineer; not a discipline problem in 8th grade but knocked out Clevon (King) during class because of an earlier argument. Clevon was suspended for three days, Margullis only received two days of after-school detentions. The aforementioned incident was the only event of this nature that Margullis was involved in during the year. Often late for class in the mornings. Lived only a few blocks from school but chose to take the bus and often missed it. As tardiness often counted as an inexcused absence, Margullis did not

Margullis Prioleau cont.	pass the English portion of the class, even though his grade from me was a high B. He was thus, required to take the Reading Workshop II course, the follow-up course in which students needed to complete through 1A in the L100 workbooks. Margullis was the student who wrote in the evaluations that he had not learned anything from L100.
Marianna Sommer	WF. Age: 15. Placement: Shy but serious student; not a discipline problem. Highest final results, highest grade in class; every assignment done to the best of her ability. I worked all year with her to push her to share her opinions on many subjects. She got into some trouble for fighting on the bus near the end of the year, which was a good thing for Marianna in this case because she had stood up for herself and held an opinion. The others in the class were extremely surprised to hear about Marianna's fight on the bus, and said, "You go girl."
Marvell Stone	AAM. Age: 16. Placement: Test results could have been much higher than they were; did not try; found no value in formal schooling—wanted to be a farmer or construction worker; constant discipline problem during 8th and 9th grade; was stabbed (but not seriously hurt) by his girlfriend over a drug deal during the summer after my class; had been in jail for a drug-related crime earlier in the summer; cunning.
Queshana Taylor	AAF. Age: 16. Placement: Mediocre test results, 5.9 on Reading Comprehension, 3.7 on total; Possible discipline problem in 8th grade; was suspended in 9th grade for 5 days for fighting another girl over a boy. Was a hard worker who liked to read when she was not consumed with family and boyfriend troubles.
Bill Thompson	WM. Age: 15. Placement: lackadaisical attitude much like Ned's (Ned and Bill were best friends); low test scores; did actually work hard but never so hard that he had to sweat. Always completed assignments.
Devon Washington	AAM . Age: 15. Placement: highest Reading Comprehension scores (7.7) on Test 1; total brought scores down to 5.6; Post High School (PHS) Reading Comprehension score on Post-Test (Test 3); never accepted placement in program; admitted that he chose not to work until the end of the year and to do the minimum because he knew he had the ability to pass; involved in fight between Clevon and Margullis; also received 2 days after-school detention while Clevon was suspended for starting the fight before school; admitted that he didn't care if he got in trouble because "when I go to the office, I don't get nothin'.

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Devon Washington cont.	nothing.' Was suspended near the end of the year for fighting a female student (not in our class), throwing her in the mud and wrestling with her behind the portables.
Jacquez Wilson	AAM. Age: 16. Placement: low reading scores and lack of self-confidence; needed help with every step of an assignment, although actually quite able if continually nudged and inspired.

APPENDIX B

STANFORD DIAGNOSTIC READING TEST RESULTS

STANFORD DIAGNOSTIC TEST RESULTS:
READING COMPREHENSION AND TOTALS

NAME	T1 RC	T1 Total	T2 RC	T2 Total	T3 RC	T3 Total
Annette Armstrong	NT	NT	9.5	8.8	5.1	5.4
Jaquetta Brown	6.4	3.7	2.5	3.2	5.8	5.4
Marquez Brown	4.9	5.4	3.3	3.5	2.9	3.6
Bobby Boyd	5.7	3.1	6.6	5.8	4.2	5.6
Livan Brooks	4.0	4.8	3.5	3.6	3.9	5.4
Lakeisha Jackson	5.2	-4.6	2.6	3.6	3.5	5.3
Tiki Jackson	4.9	3.1	3.1	3.6	3.7	4.0
Shaquetta Johnson	NT	NT	5.8	7.5	8.6	7.3
Antwain Jones	4.9	2.8	3.4	4.8	5.5	5.6
Clevon King	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.1	2.3
Sunny Kinlaw	2.7	1.9	2.5	3.1	2.2	3.0
Brittany Lambert	5.4	5.6	5.6	6.8	6.6	7.3
Chelsea Logan	NT	NT	8.4	5.9	5.7	5.6
Jamaica Manigault	4.9	3.7	2.9	3.3	4.2	5.2
Timmy Nelson	2.5	2.8	2.5	3.5	2.3	2.6
Ned Norton	2.5	1.8	3.7	5.4	3.8	5.8
Margullis Prioleau	4.0	3.9	5.2	5.3	5.3	5.1
Marianna Sommer	NT	NT	8.4	5.7	8.2	7.6
Marvell Stone	NT	NT	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.6
Queshana Taylor	5.9	3.7	3.4	5.2	7.5	5.7
Bill Thompson	3.8	2.6	4.0	5.4	7.3	7.3
Devon Washington	7.7	5.6	5.6	7.4	PHS	8.1
Jacquez Wilson	2.8	1.6	2.7	3.3	2.6	3.0

T1 = Test One—Administered in May of previous year at middle school

T2 = Test Two or Pre-Test—Administered in October of 1995 in my class

T3 = Test Three or Post-Test—Administered in May of 1996 in my class

RC = Reading Comprehension

NT = Not Tested

APPENDIX C

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT RULES: MS. BAGINSKI

1. Do your best to answer the journal assignment given.

2. Write neatly.

3. Double-space.

4. Write at least one or two paragraphs in your journal each day during in-class journal time, and at least one or two paragraphs in your journal homework for each assignment given.

5. Use a new page for each new journal assignment. Write on only one side of the page.

6. Date each entry and label whether the assignment is an In-class Journal or a Homework Journal. Label and date your assignments at the top line of the page.

7. Title each journal assignment at the top of the page after you have finished writing it.

9. Begin writing at the margin on the left hand side of the page. Do not write inside the margin.

10. Turn in your journal to me at the end of class every week on Friday or on the last day of the school week.

11. You will receive 10 points per journal entry. At the end of the grading session, I will total the points for the journal assignments, both in-class journals and out of class journals, and will give you a grade based on the number of points you have e a r n e d divided by the number of total points possible.

12. You will for this nine-weeks be able to earn all the points for the journal provided that you follow the above instructions and turn in all assignments.

JOURNAL ASSIGNMENTS

IN-CLASS JOURNAL: MONDAY, AUGUST 21

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Write a letter to me telling me about yourself.

Include in your letter:

1) What are you like as a student? How do you usually behave as a student? How would you describe your personality?

2) Explain how you feel about reading aloud in class or doing a presentation in front of others. Tell me about yourself as a reader. Describe any experiences you have had reporting on books.

3) Don't forget to sign your name.

Journal Homework: For Tuesday (to be completed at home and written in English I Journal. Assignment is due at the beginning of class).

Write another letter of introduction to me in your journal.

Include in your letter the following information:
1) Describe your writing/composing abilities.
2) Do you consider yourself a good writer? Describe your feelings about writing.
3) What kinds of things do you like/hate to write about?
4) What are your strongest and weakest skills in English?
5) What areas would you like to improve in?

IN-CLASS JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT: Tuesday, August 22

Write a letter to your English teacher (me) answering the following
questions:

1) Think back to the last few years in English or language arts classes.
   Describe assignments or activities that you loved and those you
   hated. (Hint: Try to think of specific teachers and specific books
   or stories that you read and what you did in those classrooms as
   you were reading those books.)

Journal Homework: For Wednesday, August 23

We are getting to be good pen-pals by now. Write me a letter
explaining the following:

1) What would you like to accomplish in this class?
    List at least 3 one sentence goals for yourself in this class.

2) What can I do that will be most interesting or helpful to you?

IN-CLASS JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT: Wednesday, August 23

Write a letter to me on your honest feelings on this question:
What types of tests do you do best on? What type of tests make you
worry most? What subjects do you do best in? What type of tests do
you want to learn how to do better on?

Journal Homework: For Thursday, August 24

Write a letter to me answering the question:
What do you like to be graded on?
What do you hate to be graded on?

IN-CLASS JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT: Thursday, August 25

Write a letter to a new student at Andrews or a student you would like
to become friends with (Hint: Think of a specific person and write the
letter with that person in mind) describing the following three things
about you:

1) What types of books do you like to read? What subjects are most
   interesting to you? What is a good book that you have read
   recently? What did you like about it? Would you recommend this
   book to this new student?

2) What are your interests/talents/hobbies?

3) What are you proudest of that you have accomplished in school or
   outside of school?

4) Don't forget to sign your name.

IN-CLASS JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT: Friday, August 25

You have written quite a few letters this week. Pat yourself on the back for completing all of them. You will receive 10 points per letter, for a total of 90 points this week! Wow! Give yourself 10 more points for completing all of the letters, for a total of 100 points, a perfect score.

1) Reread the letters you have written about yourself. If you see something you want to change about what you have written, cross out neatly the section you want to change and write in any changes neatly in the extra space above the sentence/idea/word you want to change.

2) As you are reading, think about what you have written and then after reading through your letters for this week, respond to these questions in your last letter to me for this week:

3) Is there any other advice you'd like to give me or any questions you'd like to ask me? Think of at least one question and one piece of advice.

4) Is there anything else you feel I should know about you? Think of at least one more piece of information about yourself that you think I should know.

* * * Don't forget to sign your name and to turn in your journal notebook to me before you leave class today.

NOVEL ASSIGNMENTS

Directions: Choose five of the following assignments to do after you have completed reading your novel in class. All pieces of writing must be at least 2 pages in length.

1) Write a dramatic script (a play) of your book. You may a) either make your own book out of your script, decorating the book any way that you wish or you may act out the script in front of the class. (You may need to find others in the class to help you for the second one).

2) Write a comic strip for your book. You may choose only the events that were humorous or funny in the book. Or you may make a more serious event humorous. Make a comic book out of your comic strip. Make sure to give your comic strip a name.

3) Read your favorite part or parts of the book outloud (in front of the class, or in front of the teacher) or on tape and write an explanation of why this is your favorite part of the book.

4) Make a large bookmark of the important events that occurred in the book. Write two pages explaining why you chose the events that you did.

5) Make a web or a map of the events in the story or about the characters in the story. Some suggestions: You may use any major image (picture created by the words in the story) from the book to base your web or story map on--i.e. a basketball net, a rainbow, a tennis shoe or pair of tennis shoes, a gun, an alcohol bottle. You may do a character web which you draw for one character. If you do a character web, you will need to write a detailed description of that character and his or her part in the book you have read.

6) Make an Accordion Book to show what happened in each chapter of the book. You may draw pictures or paste pictures from magazines to illustrate your book. You will need to write a detailed description of that character and his or her part in the book you have read.

7) Write an A-Z or Alphabet poem about the characters and events in your book. The first line of the poem must begin with the letter A or include an important word in bold print or capital letters, i.e. APPLE, that begins with the letter A. Each new line of the poem must begin with or include in bold print or capital letters the next letter of the alphabet. Illustrate your poem any way that you like.

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8) Make a timeline/ goal line of the book. You may either make a basic time line or you can try a basketball goal timeline, a football goal timeline, a rainbow timeline, or some other creative timeline of your own design. Write an explanation of a) why you included the events you chose on your timeline **or** b) explain what the goal or the problem of the character was at the beginning of the book and show how he/she reached his/her goal or solved his or her problem **or** c) explain why he or she did not reach his goal or solve his or her problem.

9) Write a final chapter for your book. Illustrate the final chapter with pictures from magazines or through your own drawings or creative borders. **Or** put your final chapter together as a book. Give the chapter a creative title and make a book jacket or book cover for that book.

10) Make a Shoebox to illustrate the story. You can put inside the shoebox rooms to display the major events in the story or rooms to tell about the characters in the story. You might also try to make rooms to show how/where each character lived or what one character might do or how he or she might behave in each of the different rooms/environments he or she had to be a part of during the story (school, home, guidance office, basketball court, movie theatre, beach).

Write a report on what you included in your shoebox and why. If you set your shoebox up in separate rooms, you might want to write how the character feels in each of his or her environments or in each of his or her rooms.

11) Write a poem or a song about the story. Illustrate this poem according to the words in your poem. Make sure to put the poem on a nice sheet of paper first; then glue that to a piece of colored construction paper.

12) Make a newspaper advice column. Become a character in the story. Write a letter to an advice columnist mentioning all of your problems. Now, acting as the advice columnist, answer the letter. Suggest possible ways for the character to solve all of his or her problems. Give your newspaper column a title and give yourself a catchy name. Make a logo for your advice column and draw a picture of yourself (a self-portrait) for your newspaper audience to see. You may want to advertise all the skills you have in advice giving on this cover or around your picture. Put the title of your column and your picture of yourself and all of on a book jacket. Draw also a picture of the character whose

problems you have solved on the front with a list of all of his problems and how you have solved them.

13) Make a mobile of the characters and events in your story. Write an explanation of the events and the characters you included in your mobile and why you chose these events and characters to include.

14) Choose one of the story maps the teacher provides. Fill it out as completely and thoroughly as you can. Then write a book report based on the story map you have used. Illustrate the story map so that it can be used as a cover for your report. Make sure that the title of the book is clearly displayed on the front cover.

15) Write down a list of the best quotes from the book. Make sure to show which character made the comment and also tell to whom the character was speaking. Then write at least a one sentence explanation of the meaning or importance of the quote immediately below the quote. You may put this together chapter by chapter and make an Accordion book or you may simply put this together as a book of quotes.

16) Come up with your own web idea or another writing/creative idea. You <u>must</u> check with your teacher to have your idea approved.

* You will receive a grade on <u>both</u> your written and your creative parts of your project. The more elaborate and thorough you have been about telling your classmates, other students, and your teacher about your book, the higher the grade will be.

LIBRARY BOOK PAPER—NON-FICTION—CHOOSE A BOOK!

I) Choose one category of interest below:

A) A Teenage Problem: For example, Drug or Alcohol Addiction; Dating; Gangs; Violence; Self-Esteem; Teen-Parent Conflict.

B) A Profession: For example, Remodelling/Carpentry; Automotive Business; Baseball Coach, Basketball Coach, Boxing Trainer or Manager; Teacher; Artist; Poet; Writer; Opera Singer; Hair Stylist; Model; Retail Manager; Fast Food Manager; Hotel Manager; Daycare Center Manager; Medical Doctor; Lawyer; Psychiatrist; Nurse.

C) A Country or a U.S. State: For example, Jamaica, Japan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, England, Australia, Germany, South Carolina, Alaska, Hawaii, New York.

D) A Person: Maya Angelou, Margaret Thatcher, Diana Ross, Mike Tyson, Langston Hughes, Clint Eastwood.

E) A Sport: Baseball, Boxing, Hunting, Fishing, Basketball.

II) After you have chosen a category above, decide on one subcategory or topic that interests you. Check in the computer under the subcategory or under the name of person, country, profession, sport, or teenage problem for possible titles of interest, call numbers, and shelf areas to browse.

III) Skim through the books on the shelves relating to your topic looking for the most interesting one on your topic.

IV) Choose one book on your topic that you want to read. The book must be long enough to allow you to read and be informed on the issue or topic of your choice and must contain more text than pictures. If you find a text that you want to read but you believe may be too short for you to get enough information from, ask your teacher. She may suggest that you need to take out more than one book on your particular topic.

V) Choose one book on your topic, check out the book following the library procedures. Write down in your journal notebooks the title, author, and call number of the book you have chosen. Also write down the titles, authors, and the call numbers of the books you looked at but did not choose. (You may want to find these books again).

VI) Begin skimming the entire book as a prereading exercise, looking for the sections of the book that are of most interest to you. (See Homework Assignment below for suggestions on how to begin studying and reading the book.

VII) If there is still time left in the period, you may spend time choosing other books from the library that you want to read on your own or for other assignments. Or you may start reading the book you have chosen.

READING ASSIGNMENT AND JOURNAL HOMEWORK: DUE WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 6

1) Skim through the entire book you have chosen at the library, jotting down in a list form important or repeated words and ideas that you see throughout the book. Also, write down in a list form any words that you see that you don't know. Leave at least 2 lines blank following each word that you list.

2) Look at the Table of Contents; the index, and the glossary, and for any other appendices or extra sections of the book.

3) Decide on the one chapter of the book that appears most interesting to you and begin reading that chapter. (If your book is a biography or an autobiography, you will probably need to start reading at the beginning.)

4) Read at least 5-10 pages from your book at home.

5) Write 5 questions that you hope that the book will answer.

NOTE: 1) You will be expected to read 5-10 pages at home per night every night this week and to write about what you've read in your journal.

2) You will be using what you've written in your journals to write a short paper about the information presented in the book you have chosen. It is thus important for you to choose a book that is interesting to you and that will at the same time provide you with enough information to write a paper about this information.

3) We will work together decide on a narrowed topic about your subject for you to write about. You will not need to write about everything there is to know about Jamaica, or Mike Tyson, or Amelia Earhart.

Some examples of narrowed topics:

- One Japanese sport
- Mike Tyson's Personal Life
- Mike Tyson Before Boxing
- Mike Tyson: Life in Prison
- Carpentry: How to Build A Shelf
- Baseball: How to Steal a Base (Sports Topics: one aspect of the game or one section of the rules will work)
- Modelling: How to Be A Successful Model, The Dos and Don'ts or Modelling is Not as Easy as It Looks.
- Alcoholism: Teenagers and Their Parents
- Alcoholism: Teenagers and Alateen: The Successes

4) Remember to use what you know as you are reading and to share your own opinion about what you've read as you are writing. Your reactions to your reading are always important.

5) Close the book as you try to summarize a section or chapter--to make sure that you use your own words. A summary is a shortened or condensed version of the original. Do not copy the original or recopy the book. Think of ways to briefly explain what was said in the book about your topic. A complete chapter might easily be summarized in one or two paragraphs.

REMINDER: BRING YOUR BOOKS TO CLASS TOMORROW!

LIBRARY BOOK PAPER

Directions: You will be writing a paper on the library book you picked out. You should have already completed seven or eight prewriting assignments about your book that you should look through and use as you are writing this paper. One previous assignment was the list of words you did not know, the list of repeated words and ideas you saw throughout the book. (This was also called Brainstorming.) You also should have done two different **KWL** forms and a list of five important themes/issues/values/attitudes/lessons that you learned about in the book. You will need all of these assignments with you when you begin to write your paper. You may use any of the ideas, the words, or the questions you have already written about to write your first draft of your paper on one chapter of your library book.

Here is the order of the paragraphs you will need to include in your paper. Each paragraph must be at least 5 sentences in length:

1. Tell your audience the name of the book and the author. Then tell them why you picked the book. What did you know about the subject before you chose this book? What did you want to learn about the subject when you picked this book? What did you think about the person when you picked this book? As the last line of this your opening paragraph, write a one sentence summary of your opinion of this person and your importance of learning about his person to yourself and to others.

2. Write a one paragraph summary of what the whole book is about. Do not look at the book as you write your summary. Write the summary completely in your own words.

3. Now tell your reader in one paragraph which chapter/section of the book is the most interesting one and why it is the most interesting one to you. Also tell your reader why you think he or she might be interested in this book and what they can learn from the information presented in the book.

4. Now look at the questions that you wrote that you wanted the book to answer. Use the book to answer at least two of the questions you asked. Write one paragraph for each of the two questions. You may write more than one paragraph for each question if you wish. Any extra paragraphs are to be written only after you have completed all 6 of the steps on this sheet.

5. Write <u>one paragraph</u> on what you think is the most important fact or piece of knowledge that you learned from the book. Why is this fact or idea important or valuable for you to know? How could others benefit from knowing this fact or idea that you learned in this book? You may include several <u>related</u> or <u>similar</u> facts or ideas in one paragraph only if they are closely <u>related</u> or very <u>similar</u> in topic. If you have more than one very important fact that you learned that you think should be separated by a paragraph indentation, then you may write more than one paragraph. Any extra paragraphs are to be written <u>only after you have completed all 6 of the steps on this sheet.</u>

6. Write a Concluding Paragraph. In this final paragraph, answer the following question: Would you recommend this book to another student? Why or why not? (What useful information in particular do you think another students could learn?)

7. Give your paper a title. <u>Your title</u> must be <u>different</u> from the title of the book. Place the title at the top of your paper.

NOTE:

1) If the questions you have asked cannot be answered through using the book, then you will need to go through the chapter of the book again to find two questions that the book does help you to answer.

2) Do not copy down words exactly from the book unless you need to quote a statistic or something very important that someone said. Make sure to put quotation marks (". . ." around the quote or the words you take from the text.

3) Also make sure that you put the page number where you found the words you have quoted right after the quotation marks like this:

The Queen once said: "Let them eat cake" (p. 45).

4) Cite the bibliography of your book at the end of your paper a few lines below your last paragraph like this:

Childress, Alice. (1978). A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich. New York: Bantam Books.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY/BIOGRAPHY RESEARCH PAPER

General Directions: You will be writing a paper on the library book you picked out. You should have already completed seven or eight prewriting assignments about your book that you should look through and use as you are writing this paper. One previous assignment was the list of words you did not know, the list of repeated words and ideas you saw throughout the book. (This was also called Brainstorming.) You also should have done two different **KWL** forms and a list of five important themes/issues/values/attitudes/lessons that you learned about in the book. You will need all of these assignments with you when you begin to write your paper. You may use any of the ideas, the words, or the questions you have already written about to write your paper.

You will also need to add information from **2 ADDITIONAL REFERENCES OR SOURCES.** Any notecards that you wrote will also come in handy and should be placed in the order that you plan to use them in your paper. Follow all the guidelines for quoting as explained in class and on pp. 889-895 in your literature book.

Remember to put the page numbers where you find the information/quotes in parentheses following the quote that you take from the book. You always need to follow these rules every time you use a quotation or you take three words or more from any text.

Below is the suggested order of paragraphs that should make your paper writing easier and more organized. You will need to write your first draft following this order, but you may, if I am given and **I approve** a **written outline** of the changes you deem necessary, then you may deviate from this order of paragraphs in your final draft.

Remember to try to make the subject of your autobiography/biography come alive and be interesting to your readers. Make them as excited as you are about some of the information presented in the book. Give them enough information about the subject and the life of your person to know about them.

One step at a time, a little bit a day, and a wonderfully well-organized, well-written, and interesting paper will emerge, before you even know it. Good Luck!

AUTOBIOGRAPHY/BIOGRAPHY RESEARCH PAPER

Here is the order of the paragraphs you will need to include in your paper. Each paragraph must be at least 5 sentences in length:

1. **INTRODUCTION.** Tell your audience the name of the book and the author. Then tell them why you picked the book. What did you know about the subject before you chose this book? What did you want to learn about the subject when you picked this book? What did you think about the person when you picked this book? Also tell your reader why you think he or she might be interested in this book and what they can learn from the information presented in the book. As the last line of this your opening paragraph, write a one sentence summary of your opinion of this person and your importance of learning about this person to yourself and to others.

2. Write a one paragraph **SUMMARY** of what the whole book is about. Describe the person your book is about, by explaining the major events in their life, and their outlook on life. Was their outlook on life positive or negative? Or is there another word that would describe their outlook on life? Is there something about this person that you really admire or would like to emulate (imitate)? Do you have similar goals or dreams? If so, what are they? If not, what do you think you and the subject of your book would disagree about? Do not look at the book as you write your summary. Write the summary completely in your own words.

Only after writing answers to the above questions, may you look at the book to choose any short (no more than one or two sentences) quotes that support your view of the person's attitude toward life or that describe the subject of your book very well so that your audience (others reading your paper or those who might be interested in reading about this person or this book in particular) will learn some of what you learned in your reading. You may want to use your Subject Card that you should have on one notecard to help you to organize the sections in your summary. If you need to write more than one paragraph for this section, you may.

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3 & 4. This section is at least **TWO PARAGRAPHS LONG.** Now, pick the **TWO MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS** in the person's life and describe them in detail. Describe the setting (place and time) where the incident happened, describe what happened, describe what the character/person felt about the event at the time and if this information is given, what the person felt years later about the event. First, explain the main problem the person encounters in one or two sentences. Next, describe the climax (the main turning point of the story, or the event that causes things to change rapidly so that a decision can be made, or the conclusion of the event can occur) in one or two sentences. Then, describe also the conclusion (how the story/event/episode ends) in one or two sentences.

After explaining the event by following what I have written above, describe how you feel about what happened to this person. Would you have done anything differently? Why or why not?

If you have done a timeline of this person's life and the important events in his or her life, you will be able to use this now. The favorite passages or events notecards may also come in handy for this section.

5 & 6. This section is at least **TWO PARAGRAPHS LONG.** Now look at the **QUESTIONS** that you wrote that you wanted the book to answer. Use the book to answer at least two of the questions you asked. Write one paragraph for each of the two questions. If your questions can be answered in one word, one date, or in one sentence, you will need to rewrite your questions so that they deal with a larger issue or question that you can write a complete paragraph about. Or, if the questions you have asked cannot be answered through using the book, then you will need to go through the chapter of the book again to find two questions that the book does help you to answer.

You may write more than one paragraph for each question if you wish. Any extra paragraphs are to be written only after you have completed all of the steps on this sheet.

* * * **Add paragraph(s) on additional sources?**

* * * **Look for this symbol for places to add information from the two additional sources you have read on the subject of your paper. If you found another source, or another book or magazine article, that has helped you to answer the question that you asked, add a paragraph directly after this paragraph about the information you found in this book or article. Be sure to give the name of the book**

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or the title of the article <u>and</u> the name of the author in the first sentence of the new paragraph. Also say in this sentence what question the author has helped you to answer or what particular subject the author writes about, is an expert in, or talks about in his or her book or article. You will need to use at least one <u>short</u> (one or two sentences) quote from the book or article.

Remember to use quotation marks and to put the page number in parentheses following the quote. Try to pick a quote that fits the best with the topic of your paragraph and the subject/question the writer is helping you to answer. You may also write a second paragraph using a third source where you give additional information about this topic in a new paragraph.

I have marked with * * * other sections of the paper where you may choose to use your two required additional sources. You may of course choose to add information about one additional source in one section of your paper, and information about the other additional source in another section of your paper.

7 & 8. This section is at least **TWO PARAGRAPHS** long. Now, look at the prewriting exercises that you did on the **IMPORTANT THEMES/ ATTITUDES/ ISSUES/ PROBLEMS/ LESSONS** of your book. Write one paragraph (at least) on the importance of **two** of the themes that are presented in the book. Give examples from the book to show how the person in the book taught you a lesson about this theme. In other words, what are the two most important lessons you learned from the book and how did the information in the book allow you to learn this, or how did the book teach you this lesson?

* * * Add paragraph(s) on additional sources?

9. Write <u>one paragraph</u> on what you think is the **MOST IMPORTANT FACT OR PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU LEARNED FROM THE BOOK**. Why is this fact or idea important or valuable for you to know? How could others benefit from knowing this fact or idea that you learned in this book? You may include several <u>related</u> or <u>similar</u> facts or ideas in one paragraph only if they are closely <u>related</u> or very <u>similar</u> in topic. If you have more than one very important fact that you learned that you think should be separated by a paragraph indentation, then you may write more than one paragraph. Any extra paragraphs are to be written <u>only after you have completed all of the steps on this sheet.</u>

* * * Add paragraph(s) on additional sources?

<u>OR:</u>

Now tell your reader in <u>one paragraph</u> which **CHAPTER/SECTION OF THE BOOK IS THE MOST INTERESTING ONE** <u>and why it is the most interesting one</u> **TO YOU**. Also tell your reader why you think he or she might be interested in this book and what they can learn from the information presented in the book. You may use the notecards you wrote on the passages from the text that you liked the best for this section.

* * * Add paragraph(s) on additional sources?

10. Write a Concluding Paragraph. In this final paragraph, answer the following question: Would you recommend this book to another student? Why or why not? (What useful information in particular do you think another students could learn?) As either the first line of the last line of your concluding paragraph, you will need to choose a nice quote from the book that you think sums up the person's life **and** the information that you have presented in this paper.

11. Give your paper a **TITLE**. <u>Your title</u> must be **different** from the title of the book. Place the title of your paper at the top of the first page.

12. Now that you have finished the first draft of your paper, reread it to look for grammar and spelling errors. words left out. and for strength and clarity of sentences and ideas.

If your version is typed, make sure that you use spell-checker every day at the end of your writing session **before** you print out. You will still need to proofread or edit your paper even if it is typed.

13. When you have finished a draft and have completed #s 1-13 to the **BEST OF YOUR ABILITY**, find someone else in the class to read your draft and to help you to fix your errors and strengthen your ideas. Each student will be required to have their paper edited by at least two different people and to also edit at least two other students' papers. Those reading and editing the papers will need to provide written comments to the author/writer of the paper. The editing work will count for a grade so please do your best. The editors will also be expected to discuss what they've written with the author in a five to ten minute conversation concerned strictly with the person's paper and ways to make his or her paper better.

RULES FOR QUOTING AND FOR DOCUMENTING SOURCES FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

1) Do not copy down words exactly from the book unless you need to quote a statistic or something very important that someone said. Make sure to put quotation marks (". . ." around the quote or the words you take from the text.

2) Also make sure that you put the page number where you found the words you have quoted right after the quotation marks like this:

   The Queen once said: "Let them eat cake" (p. 45).

4) Cite the bibliography of your book and the two additional sources at the end of your paper a few lines below your last paragraph or on a separate sheet of paper in alphabetical order according to the author's last name. For example:

1. Childress, Alice. (1978). A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich. New York: Bantam Books.

2. Washington, George. (1789). GW and Friends. Washington, D.C.: George Washington UP.

3. Zebra, Zed. (1996). How I Outran the Giraffe and Grew From the Experience. New York: Wild African Animals Press.

See pp. 889-895 in our literature book for information on how to cite magazine articles, books with more than one author, and others library sources correctly. Follow the format or the order of the information that the example gives you and ask me to help you if you need some further assistance.

APPENDIX D

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY   Protocol No: <u>94B0011</u>

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

I consent to participating in (or my child's participation in) research entitled:

THE READING AND WRITING OF RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN A DEVELOPMENTAL READING AND ENGLISH CLASS

<u>R. Lee Baginski</u> or his/her authorized representative
(Principal Investigator)

has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my (my child's) participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am (my child is) free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me (my child).

I also acknowledge that my (my child) is willing to be interviewed and taped on the same subject related to the study of the uses of literacy materials in the classroom and that I (my child) am aware that transcripts will be made by the researcher of the interviews so that this data can be used as examples in a written report. I also understand that the tapes will be stored in the investigator's home during the course of the study and that they will be kept in a safety deposit box at the end of the study and that no one else but the principal investigators will have access to these tapes.

I also agree that my (my child's) written work may also be used as samples that may be included as part of the researcher's written work. I (my child) have given my (my child's) written work to the investigator freely for him/her to use. I also understand that the investigator will make a copy of all written materials given to him/her by me (my child) and that I will keep the original.

I understand that my (my child's) name will not be used in the actual written report but that a pseudonym will instead be used.

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Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____   Signed: _____
                                        (Participant/Student)

Signed: _____   Signed: _____
(Principal Investigator or his/her   (Person Authorized to Consent
Authorized Representative)   for Participant--Parent or Guardian)

Witness: _____

HS-027 (Rev 3/87)--To be used only in connection with social and behavioral research.)

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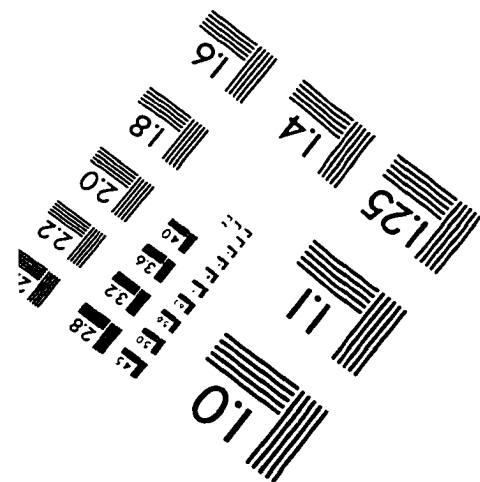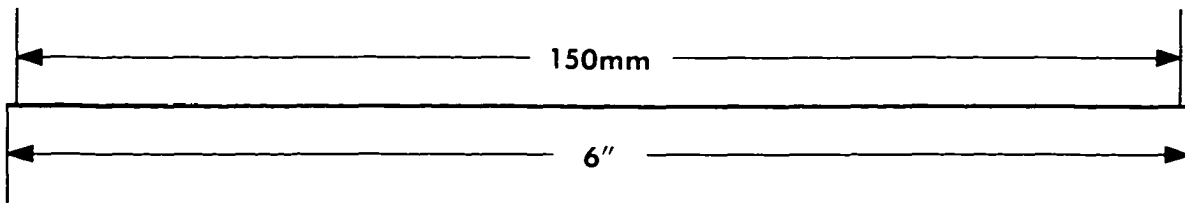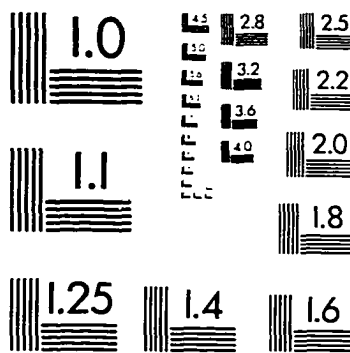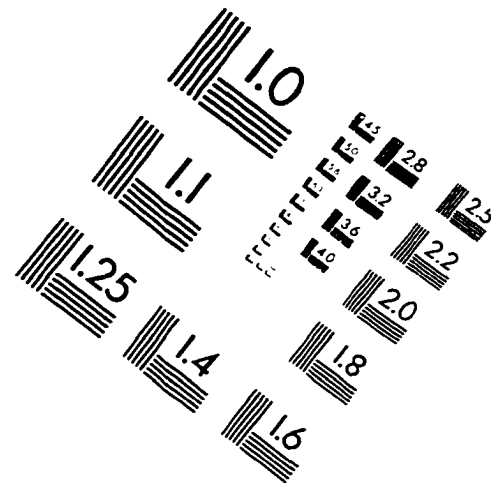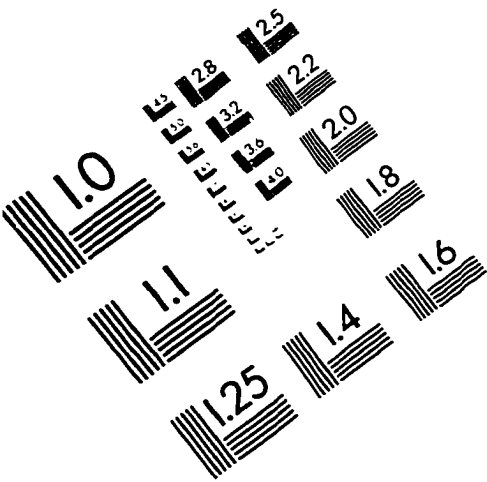
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