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Critical Literacy: An Innovative Approach To Learning Among Students With Reading Disabilities

Karyn Marie Chiapella
Wayne State University,

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CRITICAL LITERACY: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO LEARNING AMONG

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KARYN M. CHIAPELLA

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DEDICATION

This life's work is dedicated to all of my friends, colleagues, and family whose constant support and encouragement I could not have done without; particularly to Dee & Jana- laughter, love, hope, says it all. I cherish you two; "M" for the laughs, and for sharing your time, talent, and energy with me. I am so grateful. to William- for all you have done for me- investing your time into my work, your energy, your hugs, hope, and constant faith in me. And to my two 'sisters'- Pamela and Jodie whose words of wisdom, strength, and constant "cheering me on" were the inspiration that drove me to keep going.

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Introduction

It is undeniable that the landscape in education has changed over the past few decades ("Changing Landscape", 2010; Fry, 2006; NCES, 2007). As classrooms become more and more heterogeneous, it is important that inclusivity be present and proliferated in our classrooms (Peterson, 1992). In schools, knowledge is predominantly created through language use (Vasquez, 2000). As learners use language they learn different literacies (Lewison, et al, 2002; Freire, 1970; Vasquez, 2000). In classrooms, children are only able to speak from the perspectives that are offered by the discourses made available to them (Vasquez, 2000). Without careful attention to student diversity we can unintentionally stifle student voices or miss teachable moments and rich educational opportunities to promote cultural literacy and understanding (Peterson, 1992; Vasquez, 2000). There are many ways in which teachers today can incorporate diverse and critical pedagogy in their classrooms. The problem is that most of our classrooms still operate under traditional methodologies that are not conducive to learning for many of our students, particularly students with learning disabilities (Capra, 1982; Luke, 2003). As a result, many of our learning disabled students continue to be denied access to the general education curriculum despite the fact that critics say traditional methodologies are getting harder and harder to sustain.

A wide range of studies has documented the fact that the typical pattern of classroom discourse is one-sided, following a pattern of teacher question, student response, and teacher evaluation of the response (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003). Viewed from a socio-cognitive perspective, such instruction places a premium on transmission of information, providing very little room for the exploration of ideas, which is necessary for the development of

deeper understanding (Capra, 1982; Dewey, 1938, Kohn, 1999). The problem is many students with learning disabilities do not learn in this manner and often times are excluded and denied access to the general education classroom because teachers assume that these students will not be able to handle or grasp the content that is being delivered (Oglan, 2003; Vasquez, 2000). Applebee et al (2003) found that rather than simply say students "comprehended" or "did not comprehend" what they were reading or writing about, he discovered that students' envisionment of a text at any time was a mixture of understandings, questions, hypotheses, and connections to previous knowledge and experiences; moreover, the envisionment changed and evolved with further reading, writing, discussion, or reflection.

Critical Literacy addresses language and literacy issues and is a term that is getting a lot of attention in the 21st century education world (Read Ontario, 2009). Critical literacy is developing a set of beliefs about reading that move beyond the perception that reading is simply the comprehension of the author's message (Shanklin, 2009). "Teaching" Literature is no longer about having students sit back and silently read a book in order to answer the list of questions at the end; it involves promoting critical literacy as an integral part of classroom practice (Read Ontario, 2009). Critical literacy occurs when teachers allow every student access to literacies and positions them as people who can take action and make a difference (Vasquez, 2000). When teachers promote critical literacy in their classrooms, they bring to life issues that are socially relevant that cause students to reflect, think, dialogue, and develop their own perspectives- and listen to those of others (Shanklin, 2009). Through the critical literacy pedagogy students are encouraged to interrogate texts and develop a language of critique and hope (Lewison, et al, 2002). Educators who utilize the methodology of critical literacy ask students to go beyond the personal in an attempt to understand sociopolitical systems and the legitimacy of unequal power

relationships (Lewison et al, 2002). The critical literacy pedagogy rallies students to use literature to engage in the politics of daily life while seeking to redefine it. Teachers engaged in critical literacy solicit their students to use multiple voices to see whose voices are being heard and whose have been silenced or marginalized (Lewison, et al, 2002). In environments where critical literacy occurs, teachers and students are challenged to 'disrupt the commonplace' by seeing everything through a news lens while encouraging students to find *their* own meaning. By using critical literacy to engage students teachers can redefine literacy.

As students investigate new ways of making meaning with language and connect that knowledge to the complex world of signs and symbols outside the school they gain access to literacies that might not otherwise be available to them (Moore, 1998). Semiotics is how people make meaning and is another critical avenue to literacy. Semiotics is the premise of and evolution *to* critical literacy. Semiotics studies the role of signs in language systems as part of social life (Chandler, 2013). Understanding how semiotics connects to critical literacy pedagogy is vital if we want to support and empower students to be critical thinkers. Semiotics has evolved from a study of how linguistic codes communicate meaning to include cultural elements as well (Moore, 1998). When students study language as an example of a semiotic system, students learn that each human language is peculiar to a specific historical culture and in order to understand the language we must understand the culture (Moore, 1998). Our students read the world that is represented to them, but they also socially construct a world in which they live, one that creates the identity they desire; codes of language, behavior, and dress often are systems they invent contrary to the sign systems the world encodes for them (Chandler, 2013; Moore, 1998). In a critical literacy methodology students can learn to read the world in literature and compare it to their own. Moore (1998) tells us that the ability to read the signs of the systems in which we live

is power. And it is this philosophy that parallels critical literacy and social justice where students begin to recognize but also challenge those who hold the power and further begin to question that power as it marginalizes certain people in our culture, world and in the very texts we read. By merging semiotics with critical literacy into our classrooms we are acknowledging that literacy exists in a world of institutional structures and political forces within which our students live (Moore, 1998). The two worlds are not separate. Our students operate in an endless web of growth, change, interaction, learning and forgetting, dialogue and dialect that is the task of teachers to make this web real and visible and to encourage students to cast out their own strands of thought and text into this network so that they will feel the power, understand how to use it, and know how to protect themselves from those who might abuse it (Moore, 1998). Teachers must open the way between literary text and the social text in which we live (Moore, 1998). Teachers can do this by making available, texts that address current, sociopolitical texts to struggling learners and give purpose to their reading (Vasquez, 2000). When students are engaged and interested in what they are reading, the opportunity for learning increases dramatically (Gainer, 2007). For today's learning disabled population that engagement can occur through critical literacy.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching is not a neutral form of social practice, yet often times it is the position that is taken (Lewison et al, 2002). In terms of classroom practice, particular teaching practices produce particular forms of literacy, knowledge, and power that promote the creation of knowledge and power or the prevention of knowledge and power through language use and writing (Vasquez, 2000). In traditional schools, teaching and teachers give no attention to how sociopolitical systems, power relationships and language are intertwined, and as a result cannot be separated

from teachers (Capra, 1982; Lewison et al, 2002). In systems where teachers are the only ones with power- their discourse of power is the only thing that matters (Vasquez, 2000). In the traditional school model, it is the teacher and administrators who determine how learning is measured, what counts as learning, and how standards will impact and position children in the school (Dewey, 1938; Lewison et al, 2002; Peterson, 1992). In many schools, students with learning disabilities often have lower expectations placed upon them, are given different curriculums often with more rote memory skills, drills and recitation because teachers assume that these students will not be able to handle or grasp the content that is being delivered or rise to the level of expectation that is set in the general education setting (Oglan, 2003; Vasquez, 2000). Further, the current traditional school model operates on prescribed curricula in a one-size fits all model that demands all students operate and be assessed on mastering grade level expectations. As a result, students with learning disabilities are frequently excluded and denied access to the general education classroom and given access only to particular discourses wherein they are powerless in order to avoid differentiation in learning.

Lewison et al (2002) point out that "one cannot take informed action against oppression or promote social justice without expanded perspectives and understandings gained from the four dimensions of critical literacy". Teachers will need to look at where they have been; understand what they are doing now, in order to move beyond (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). If teachers do not know where they stand, what philosophies and methodologies they subscribe to, or what models they prefer to teach from, then it is all for naught (Schubert, 1987). Teachers cannot move for change, or ask it of their students if they are not willing to change themselves (Lewison et al, 2002). To redefine literacy means to redefine teaching practices.

Purpose of the Study

When a Critical Literacy model is infused into daily teaching practice will it change or enhance learning for students identified with specific learning disabilities, and, what affect if any will Critical Literacy have on teachers' attitudes and belief systems?"

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study:

1. Can critical literacy serve as a vehicle for learning?

2. What role does critical literacy play in students identified with learning disabilities?

   a) What are the current teaching practices and belief systems of teachers related to students with LD?

   b) What impact does critical literacy have on these belief systems?

3. What role does Semiotics play in a critical literacy model in regard to how students find and make meaning?

Significance of the Study

The study has implications for American policy makers, educational organizations (i.e., NCTE), teachers, administrators, stakeholders, parents and community members as they continue to question the outcomes/ ramifications of "one-size fits all" initiatives such as NCLB, standardized testing, and the latest national endeavor, the Common Core Curriculum Instruction.

Children in our classrooms need the opportunity for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention into reality (Freire, 1970). Critical literacy requires each and every stakeholder to look at our "age-old" traditions that each of us hold or have held at some point and see whether or not they have value in a global community today (Wink, 2005). The critical

literacy movement powered by progressive teachers is taking a stand by challenging and redefining literacy in the classroom: from coercive to collaborative; from transmission to transformative; and from passive to active (Wink, 2005). Students need chances to stand up for things they believe in, too; to stand and clarify issues and relationships that are important to them and their future (Read Ontario, 2009). Progressive teachers utilizing the critical literacy model open conversation space for students to address these issues and thereby enlarge the space of "possible" (Lewison et al, 2002).

By empowering students, we foster tolerance and respect. By giving them a voice, we create desire for change. Change leads to advocacy and activism on behalf of those who are most vulnerable in our classrooms and society (Wink, 2005). Critical literacy may be just the catalyst for change our schools need.

Overview of Methodology

An ethnographic qualitative research design with a case study format will be used in this study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) report that while the literature is replete with references to case studies… definitions about just what a case study is range from the simple to complex. For the purpose of this study, the ethnographer will refer to the definition by Terry Denny (1978). Denny (1978), states that a case study is "an intensive [examination] of a facet, an issue, or perhaps the events of a geographic setting over time". Case studies may be written with different purposes, at different analytical levels, may demand different actions from the writer, and may result in different products (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethnography research focuses on people- people as individuals and as part of the learning community - 'community' is defined as the school setting as well as the surrounding community at large. Agrosino (2007) states that the ethnographer's research is informed by his/her own worldview and perspectives which further influences how

the researcher interprets what he/she is seeing and hearing. The ethnographer understands that his/her perspective on the school culture may end up being synthesized in multiple paradigms. LeCompte et al (1999) allude to these paradigms as: (1) the positivistic, (2) the critical, (3) the interpretive, (4) the ecological, and (5) the emerging social network and go on to argue that there is value in each one in relation to the research design. The positivistic approach states that reality is observable and understandable and asks that the researcher withhold his or her own biases and prejudices about the research and people involved in it (Agrosino, 2007; Barbour, 2007; LeCompte, et al, 1999). In the critical paradigm, theorists are interested in how the history and political economy of a system exerts domination over the social and cultural expressions of citizens of the learning community (LeCompte, et al 1999). It is the job of the researcher/ investigator to function as advocates and activists by using tools of research to discover inequities in the system and to find ways to bring about change in inequitable distributions of power (Barbour, 2007). The interpretive paradigm states: what people know and believe to be true about the world is constructed as people interact with one another over time in specific social settings (LeCompte et al, 1999). The interpretive view sees culture as being created in a process where individuals share or negotiate multiple interpretations and through which meaning can only be created though interaction (Agrosino, 2007; Barbour, 2007; LeCompte et al, 1999). In some communities these beliefs and interpretations have resulted in the oppression of others (Agrosino, 2007). Paradigm 4 is the ecological paradigm. This paradigm views individuals as functioning in a social context that influences their behaviors. Contexts consist of both the human and physical environment including social levels and sectors (LeCompte, et al, 1999). Finally, the social network, according to LeCompte et al (1999) although still emerging, involves the study of social networks by situating individuals within their families or among their peers

and observing and documenting important exchanges between and among them. Researchers in this paradigm may seek only to understand the way social networks operate, or they may want to understand what influences the development of particular types of social networks- i.e., gender, age, ethnicity.

The data set(s) that supports an ethnographic research design will consist of a case study format which will include participant observation, interviews, collecting artifacts, and audio/text/visual media.

The data collection methods that support ethnographic design that will be used in this research study will include field notes, pre/post reading surveys, informal interviews and conversations, pre/ post questionnaires, as well as narratives, book talks, classroom discussions, reflections/ journaling, vignettes, and photography of student work.

Definition of Terms/ Concepts

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study.

Learning Disabilities: A neurological condition that interferes with an individual's ability to store, process, or produce information (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2014).

Critical Literacy: A way to read, analyze, and evaluate texts within a socio-culture framework (Lenski, 2008).

Ethnography: The scientific approach to discovering and investigating social and cultural patterns and meaning in communities, institutions, and other social settings (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999).

Case Study: Research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied utilizing a holistic perspective in order to gain in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1988).

Triangulation: The method of using multiple research approaches and methods (Yin, 2003).

Semiotics: The study of the role of 'signs' in everyday speech, but also anything which 'stands for' something else as part of social life (Chandler, 2013)

Community: In the learning community, a place where teachers and students seek to ensure that all members are centered- they have confidence, can take initiative in learning, are able to trust themselves and others, and most importantly, experience their existence as being of value to others (Peterson, 1992).

Study Participants

The populations under study are the students in a 7th grade English class, and a general education (English) teacher.

Participant Selection

Participants from this population will be chosen via a selected sampling process. The participants will meet the following criteria: the student(s) must be in 7th grade for the school year 2014-2015 and will have attended school in this particular school for a minimum of two years. There are eleven students who meet these criteria. The teacher will be selected as the only teacher who teaches English with the aforementioned identified students.

Study Setting

The setting for the study will be a rural public school located in a farming community in SW North Dakota, population K-12 is approx. 163 students- primarily Caucasian (98%); class averages ~10 students per teacher. Most students come from farming families. Many of the

teachers' children attend/ have attended the school. The school is divided into elementary (K-6) and high school (7-12).

Summary

This chapter introduces the study for the dissertation as a whole, presents an overview of the background and problem statement, outlines the purpose of the study, states the research question and study significance, presents a theoretical perspective, and defines conceptual definitions used during the course of this dissertation research. Chapter 2 reviews the literature of critical literacy, focusing on the ways students with learning disabilities find meaning and how teacher beliefs and attitudes impact learning as well. Chapter 3 defines the framework used in this qualitative case study, as well as the philosophical foundations, research design and site, participant information, data collection methods and analysis, researcher positionality, limitations, and delimitations. The results of analyses and findings to emerge from the study will be contained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will contain a summary of the study and findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, a discussion, and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction/ Background

Underdeveloped literacy skills have profound consequences for students, families, and society (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2008; National Longitudinal Transition Study II, 2003). These effects are academic, social, emotional, and economic in nature. Students with learning disabilities (LD) are often inadequately prepared for the academic challenges presented across the educational continuum from grade four through postsecondary settings (NJCLD, 2008; NLTS II, 2003). It is reported that secondary students with LD experience have significant deficits in reading and math when compared to other students assigned to the same grade level; for example, 21% of these students are estimated to be five or more grade levels below in reading (NLTS II, 2003). Students with LD and/or low literacy levels drop out of high school at higher rates than the general population (NJCLD, 2008). The dropout rate for this group was estimated at 31.6 % as compared to 9.4 % for students with no disabilities (U. S. Dept. of Education, 2007c). Only 11% of students with LD, as compared to 53% of students in the general education population, have attended a four-year postsecondary program within two years of leaving high school (NLTS II, 2003).

Evidence suggests that the literacy skills of many high school graduates are insufficient for success in the workplace and society (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). It has been reported that low achievement in literacy correlates with high rates of poverty and unemployment (NJCLD, 2008; Wagner, 2000). The impact of these realities is significant to society, and the consequential socio-emotional risks for these individuals are profound (NJCLD, 2008; Snow et al, 1998). As a consequence of these problems, students labeled with LD often have difficulty maintaining positive attitudes and sufficient motivation and persistence needed to meet educational expectations (NJCLD, 2008; NLTS II, 2003; Snow et al, 1998). To further

exacerbate the problem, students labeled with LD, their co-learners, and teachers often experience considerable frustration in negotiating the legal, ethical, educational, and social mazes that learning disabilities present (Osterholm, Nash, & Kristsonis, 2000). As a result, students so labeled are frequently considered simply lacking in motivation or commitment. The confusion and conflict surrounding definition, diagnosis, and treatment of learning disabilities is well documented and begs the question, "does such a diagnosis hinder more than help those so labeled (Osterholm, et al, 2000)?" Several studies suggest that children designated as learning disabled experience emotional and physical isolation as a result (Osterholm, et al, 2000). Poole, Regoli, and Pogrebin (1986) suggest, individuals "are not passive recipients of negative labels; rather, they are actively managing or coping with these labels".

Psychological testing responsible for the 'labeling' of students is a throwback to the Traditional School paradigm (Osterholm, et al, 2000). Labeling theory, a sociological model, proposes that labeling of individuals as "different" in the negative connotation of the word creates a potentially distorted reality for those who bear the label, as well as for their teachers, parents, and peers (Hebding & Glick, 1987). The basic proposition of Labeling Theory falls under the Empirical Paradigm and assumes "that societal reaction in the form of labeling or official typing, and consequent stigmatization, leads to an altered identity in the actor, necessitating a reconstitution of self (Scimecca, 1977)". In one study, students reported that traditional "pullout" programs were especially problematic, feeding the social distancing phenomenon inherent in such segregation, as non-labeled students bore witness when labeled students were called to a 'special' place for 'special' students (Osterholm, et al, 2000).

Developmental characteristics can further create resistance to instructional support, particularly for adolescents with LD (Schumaker & Deshler, 2003). Teens may reject being

singled out in any way from their peers and strive to belong. Perceived social competence, which may be diminished in adolescents with LD, is a reliable indicator of school success and long-term life adjustment and satisfaction (Schumaker, et al, 2003: Snow, et al, 1998). These learner characteristics contribute to widening gaps in literacy skills between students with and without LD that coincide with increasing demands of the curriculum and escalating expectations for independent learning (Goldman, 2012, NJCLD, 2008; Snow, et al, 1998). Yet, there is little evidence to support that children experiencing difficulties learning to read, even those with identifiable learning disabilities, need radically different sorts of supports than children at low risk (Snow, et al, 1998). Childhood environments that support early literacy development and excellent instruction are important for all children (Snow, et al, 1998).

Traditional Schooling

Traditional (Empirical) schooling is the predominant educational approach/ paradigm utilized in American schools today (Hayes, 2003). Historically, most European/ Western societies viewed traditional schooling as what was deemed necessary for the next generation to be successful and it is this paradigm that has dominated our culture for several hundred years, shaping modern Western society, and influencing the rest of the world (Capra, 1982). The origin of the traditional paradigm has its roots in Empiricism, a belief founded on reason, rationality, and logic and that belief still exists today (Capra, 1982). Early Empirical theorists such as Descartes, Cartesian, Locke and Bacon viewed the universe as a mechanical system where reality is "out there" somewhere to be defined, taking the form of cause and effect laws, describing the outside reality in clear, verifiable statements that define and determine relationships between specified variables (Capra, 1982). In the Empirical paradigm, understanding behavior is not as important as molding one to the desired behavior (Dewey,

1938; Kohn, 1999). Empiricists see the world as consisting of separate objects that can be reduced to their most basic parts- an ideology known as Reductionism. Life and science are certain and exact, and therefore can and should be examined in quantifiable measures only (Capra, 1982, Peterson, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978). Descartes et al held the belief that the scientific method was the only valid approach to knowledge. They further argued that knowledge existed only externally- outside the person (Capra, 1982; Dewey, 1938; Peterson, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, central to this paradigm is the belief that there is a separate, material reality that exists apart from the beliefs of the individual, groups, or societies (Capra, 1982, Kohn, 1999).

The Traditional/ Empirical paradigm, according to Capra (1982), holds values associated with eras such as the Scientific Revolution, The Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution. These turning points in American history markedly changed the structure of society and that of education as well. Bell schedules and the like are a relic from the Industrial Era (Nehring, 2006). Standardized tests used to grade and sort students were an innovation of the US Army (Nehring, 2006). This 'assembly line' philosophy transferred over to the school system in an attempt to prepare students for the workforce, the war, and the assembly line (Capra, 1982). Simultaneously, John Watson (1913) was formulating his own school of thought known as behavioral psychology. Watson's focus was studying animals with stimuli- response methods to see how learning affected behavior in humans. Watson (1913) claimed, "The behaviorist, in his efforts to get a unitary scheme of animal response, recognizes no dividing line between man and brute" and further contended that "Psychology as the behaviorist views it is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior (Watson, 1913)". Watson's methods saw each human the same and each human as

being rationalized to that of a lab animal; the goal being to stimulate the animal, get a response, control the behavior, and it was this methodology that became the premise for Educational Psychology. Watson (1913) believed that Psychology had a duty to inform education, stating: "Psychology contributes to a better understanding of the aims of education by defining them, making them clearer; by limiting them, showing us what can be done and what cannot; and by suggesting new features that should be made parts of them". Although Watson (1913) recognized that people had different cultures, disciplines, and knowledge, he did not believe they had a place in education since "no one would be able to agree concerning just what [culture] is or just what is useful".

Watson's beliefs continue to be supported today by modern theorists such as E.D. Hirsch (1996) who emphasizes specific information for students to learn. Hirsch (1996) asserts that "the principle aim of schooling is to promote literacy as an enabling competence" and goes on to argue that 'drill and practice' are necessary for learning and unless 'directed and monitored' by the teacher, secure learning will not occur (Hirsch, 1996). Teachers need to "stay" with a prescribed curriculum under pressure to move on to the next topic; needs of the children are not considered (Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 1992). Unfortunately when teaching solely on concreteness, ideas associated with abstract thinking gets eliminated (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) believed that when left to themselves, children with special needs would never achieve the level of abstract thinking that was intrinsically lacking in their own development. Teaching is based on a "Look and Do" method (Vygotsky, 1978) and learning is a process of getting things right (Kohn, 1999).

Traditional Schooling and Students with Disabilities

Historically, literacy instruction in traditional classrooms, in regard to students with disabilities and other at risk students has largely centered on structured, phonics-based approaches to both reading and writing (Peterson, Feathers, Beloin, 1997). These students have been presumed to be incapable of engaging in a literature rich learning process that is the hallmark of whole language (Peterson, et al, 1997). For example, when observing reading instruction in general and special education classrooms, Allington (1983), found that students with disabilities rarely experienced the meaning-focused interactions that were observed in general education classrooms. Allington (1983) further observed, students with disabilities spent the majority of their instructional time working alone on isolated word or letter-sound worksheets and workbook pages. He concluded that students with learning disabilities are often provided outdated, ineffective, remedial strategies while their nondisabled peers are exposed to instructional strategies that are intellectually stimulating and motivating (Allington, 1983; Park, 1986). Duhaney and Salend (2010) suggest that we have gone backwards throughout the last two centuries with regard to special education. They state that the progress in educating individuals with disabilities was thwarted by the advent of intelligence testing in the early twentieth century as it led to an emphasis on more rigid notions of normality (p. 716). Hebding & Glick (1987), question the propriety of psychological and intelligence testing as it results in a derogatory labeling or negative connotations of students with disabilities. Even students labeled with "LD" who consider the diagnosis a relief or welcome explanation for previously misunderstood "differences" suggest that the traditional model of physical separation from non-labeled peer is disheartening and potentially stigmatizing (Barga, 1996).

The degree to which teachers provide an effective and equitable inclusive education may depend to a large extent on the attitudes and beliefs teachers hold regarding their abilities to teach students with disabilities and their willingness to assume responsibility for the achievement of all students assigned to their classrooms (Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2000). According to Smith, Price, and Marsh (1986), general education teachers' attitudes and beliefs about instructing students with disabilities are learned and appear to be influenced by the amount of knowledge and contact the individual teacher has with regard to a particular individual or group. Sze (2007) found that teachers endorse the general concept of providing support for students with disabilities, yet, only one-third of teachers feel they had the time, preparation, resources, and skills needed for successful instruction. Teachers' attitudes can influence the facilitation of inclusion programs based on their own philosophies and willingness to have students with disabilities in their classroom. Additionally, many teachers still question their ability to teach students with disabilities and some doubt they will be provided with the resources and support necessary for these programs (Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2000).

Progressive Schooling

In more progressive classrooms, one sees a style and belief system much different than its counterpart. Early philosophers of the Interpretive or progressive paradigm were Tao, Dewey, Einstein, Binet, and Kant. In 1912, the world saw the introduction of Gestalt psychology founded by Max Wertheimer which was said to be a direct response/ rebellion to the Structuralist (Empirical) movement. Vygotsky (1978) and others- Dewey, Capra, Kohn and Peterson- subscribed to the Gestalt philosophy's idea that all phenomenon cannot be reduced to psychological atoms. The environment and its surroundings are seen as a whole, with all parts interacting and supporting one another in an intense and dynamic experience. In education this

means active participation by and with the learner; being motivated and involved in the process while finding and sharing meaning with others (Kohn, 1999; Lewison, et al, 2002; Peterson, 1992). Learning and curriculum is centered on and connected to real life- past experiences and the meaningful present (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 1992). Students have a voice which is heard in a safe, open environment and where teaching begins and ends with 'seeing' the student- what they have to bring and from where they are (Kohn, 1999; LeCompte, 1999). Collaboration is key; caring is essential. Life in interpretive classrooms is an intense social experience where students are responsible for their own learning and interaction is a chief principle of the process (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher is the facilitator and catalyst that moves the system in an orderly fashion. It is the expertise of the teacher that will guide the students to see that it is not the will of any one person which establishes order, but the moving spirit of the whole group (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 1999). The Interpretive classroom is a community unto itself operating within the community at large which draw upon each other for strength and sustenance (Peterson, 1992).

Vygotsky (1978) was the first to discuss the mechanisms by which culture becomes a part of each person's nature. The Interpretive paradigm draws upon these traditional cultural forms to interpret human behavior. LeCompte et al (1999) tells us that human behavior and the ways people construct meaning is highly variable and locally specific. So within each community one can observe how it has its own very specific ways of defining the world (Peterson, 1992). The Interpretive teacher draws upon this knowledge to create meaningful, real lessons for his/ her students (Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 1992). Interpretive teachers view their environment as a democratic one where every voice holds value and every person is respected (Dewey, 1938; Peterson, 1992). There is freedom of intelligence and freedom of observation and judgment

(Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1038) strongly felt that democratic, social arrangements promoted better quality human experiences which in turn created better learning. Students learn to cooperate and collaborate; together accomplishing things they might not otherwise do on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). It is these holistic, natural environments where students begin to understand the connections that exist amongst and between each other with that of the world around them and that every experience affects for better or worse the attitudes that help decide the quality of further experiences (Dewey, 1938). People and things move fluidly through and around one another with ease and confidence, and it is in this framework that progressive theorists' believe the strongest learning occurs, as students and adults in the school community and the community at large, connect, support, share and find meaning that strengthens their cultural environment and connects their history indefinitely (Dewey, 1938; Peterson, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978).

Table 2.1: Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Education Models

	Traditional School Model	**Progressive School Model**
Theory Behind	Learning is affected by stimulus/ response; rewards/ punishment; Scientific/ Transmission/ Linear-Concrete/ Reductionism	Learning is affected by observation & experiences; needs & interest; Holistic/ Transformative/Non-Linear/ Natural
Teacher's Role	Source of knowledge; authority figure; transmitter of knowledge/ power	Facilitator, mentor; Works along-side students Students hold power
Instruction	Direct in homogeneous groups	Self-directed in cooperative, heterogeneous groups
Reading/ Language	Phonics	Whole- language
Curriculum	Scope & sequence; uniform/ highly specific; facts, rote skills, drill, repetition; Textbook is authority	Balance academic and social concerns; flexible w/ learning environment; concerned with higher-order thinking; Textbook is a tool

Outcomes	Emphasis on academic skills in traditional core areas; norm-referenced; measured objectively Product Oriented	Emphasis on whole-child that blends psychological, social, & cultural well-being of the child; measured subjectively Process Oriented
Assessment	Standards-based achievement tests; grades are assigned by comparing performance with same age/ grade peers	Assessment tests; rubrics Individual & group grades based on individual and collaborative efforts; focus is on progress
Environment	Learning in Isolation/ Silence/ Routine/ Find one-right answer	Democratic/ Social/ Diversity/ Shared Meaning
Equality	Equal Outcome	Equal Opportunity
Emphasis/ Focus	Academics/ Learning outcomes; Learn the discipline of the social order	Social Concerns/ Responsibilities; qualitative experiences; Learn to question unequal power
Goals	Short-Range; Concrete/ Specific	Short & Long- Range; Flexible with Individual need

(Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Kohn, 2008; Peterson, 1992)

Critical Literacy

Current initiatives in public education continue to support traditional models in public school, yet many critics believe that imposing rigorous state standards, mandated curriculums, and high stakes testing are only restricting teachers flexibility in employing methods other than teacher-centered instruction (Hayes, 2003). Transitions in the American classroom such as the inclusion of special education populations and the growing diversity in more and more classrooms, make the traditional model harder and harder to sustain (Hayes, 2003). What is now moving to the forefront of schooling is the notion that our students need an education that provides critical engagement due to what is undeniably an ever-changing and more global society (Luke, 2003; Kohn, 2008). This critical engagement is known as Critical Literacy and it is this term that is getting a lot of attention in the 21st century education world (Shanklin, 2009).

Critical literacy is a way to read, analyze, and evaluate texts within a socio-culture framework (Lenski, 2008). Critical literacy moves beyond the traditional perception that reading

is simply about comprehending the author's message; it involves developing a set of beliefs about reading that focus on examining a texts social and cultural implications- and it is this approach that has many educators saying, *this* is how we will redefine literacy (Lewison et al, 2002; Read Ontario, 2009; Shanklin 2009). Allan Luke in his article titled "*Critical Literacy in a Global Community*" states that teachers must reconsider the nature of education, specifically, literacy education, in what has become a more interconnected, globalized world (Luke, 2003). Luke (2003) contends teachers can no longer ignore the fact that we have a generation of students whose lives revolve around and are infused with technology (Gainer, 2007). In the critical literacy model teachers take what is called "everyday literacies" and use them with students to deconstruct and find meaning while engaging in popular culture (Gainer, 2007). There is a growing body of literature that explores the power and tensions of social critique and pleasure that exist when space is opened for students to engage in critical media literacy using popular culture texts (Gainer, 2007; Morrel, 2002). The critical literacy model is not meant to replace current progressive pedagogy, nor is it to be used in isolation; rather it is to be infused with and used as a lens for learning that is an integral part of daily classroom practice (Read Ontario, 2009). Further, although there were many definitions of critical literacy, they all formulated around some common factors. The best assemblage of these factors was found in the work of Lewison et al, (2002), who captured critical literacy into four, key, and succinct dimensions: (1) Disrupting the Commonplace; (2) Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints; (3) Focus on Sociopolitical Issues and (4) Take Action to Promote Social Justice.

Learning isn't something that happens to individual children- separate selves at separate desks (Kohn, 2008). Children learn with and from one another in a caring community and as a result develop tolerance for others, higher self-esteem, and greater self-worth (Peterson, 1992,

Kohn 2008). Acquiring a sense of community and responsibility for others is not confined to the classroom; students are helped to locate themselves in widening circles of care that extend beyond self, beyond their own ethnic group, and beyond their own country (Kohn, 2008). The critical literacy model asks for students to be challenged; to go inward and upward, to engage in comparisons and understandings of other possible worlds, discourses, and ideologies (Luke, 2003). Understanding the four critical literacy dimensions is key to implementing a successful model. Additionally, Vasquez (2000) states that no one dimension is more important nor can any one of them stand alone. Let us look at a breakdown of each dimension as it fits into the critical literacy model:

Dimension 1

The first dimension of the critical literacy model, Disrupting the Commonplace, looks for students to problematize all subject areas, interrogate texts, and include popular culture and media to develop a language of critique and hope (Lewison et al, 2002). This dimension is radically divergent from the traditional model of learning where direct instruction is the primary mode of learning (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 2008, Lewison et al, 2002). In traditional models teachers are seen as the holders of knowledge and whose job it is to transmit or bestow that knowledge onto the students through direct instruction- teacher speaks, students listen (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978). In terms of literacy for students in direct instruction models, it is the teacher who chooses textbooks, texts in general, curriculum, assessment and content; further which are administered by the teacher and are not subject to change (Dewey, 1938; Vasquez, 2000). The actual act of teaching in direct instruction follows an I-R-E Model (initiate- response-evaluate) which is scripted by scope and sequence diagrams, curriculum maps, which must all be completed and assessed within a predetermined timeframe (Peterson,

1992; Kohn, 1999). Within this framework there is little room for flexibility- particularly for children with special needs, ESL students, and those at risk (Vygotsky, 1978). Particular teaching produces particular forms of literacy (Vasquez, 2000). When a curriculum is so tightly scripted and offers only one right way to do it, in order to get one right answer, students don't *need* to think critically- they need and seek to find the answer the teacher wants (Gainer, 2007, Schubert, 1986).

In the critical literacy model of Dimension 1, students are encouraged to find their own answers and to challenge the powers that be as they begin to look at literacy through a new lens (Lewison et al, 2002). In order to '*disrupt the commonplace'*, students must begin by problematizing every subject area (Lewison et al, 2002). This means looking at every text with a critical eye supported by teachers who help students not only understand the existing knowledge that appears in their text, but to question it as a by-product of history (Lewison et al, 2002; Shanklin, 2009). As students begin to study the language of the text, they also begin to see that every text is influenced by its author and positions people in certain ways to shape identities or construct cultural discourses (Gainer, 2007; Lewison et al, 2002). As students dive into the text they can begin to consider questions of power, fairness, and equity (Dewy, 1938; Capra, 1982). When students question texts and engage in dialogue as a result of text interrogation, they begin to reveal their own perspectives as well as that of others (Vasquez, 2000). Further dialogue will develop into critiquing where students now consider whether their perspectives (and others) have credibility or not (Shanklin, 2009). Therefore, teachers will want to expose children to varying texts which helps strengthen the critical literacy experience (Lewison et al, 2002; Vasquez, 2000).

Teachers who subscribe to critical literacy pedagogy can engage students in selecting texts that are of interest to them that have a socio-culture theme (Lewison et al, 2002). When students are given choice, the first step of engagement in learning can occur (Dewey, 1938, Lewison et al, 2002; Shanklin, 2009). Teachers need to help and model for students which texts are worth reading and writing about and how, where, and to what purpose they serve (Luke, 2003). Presenting multiple formats, historical as well as current texts is critical to students' interests. Students need a literacy education that provides critical engagements with globalized flows of information, image, text, and discourse (Luke, 2003). Students can focus on popular culture and media as everyday parts of the curriculum, while learning that studying the language is key to analyzing how it shapes identities, constructs cultural discourses, and supports or disrupts the status quo (Lewison et al, 2002; Luke 2003). Getting students engaged by providing relevant, current literacies peaks their interest and prepares them for studying historical and other necessary texts (Morrell, 2002).

When students are engaged in critical literacy, they are positioned as people who can take action and make a difference and they are given purpose and power through literacies they are exposed to (Lewison et al, 2002; Shanklin, 2009; Vasquez, 2000). In the critical literacy model that looks like empowered students. Teachers utilizing a critical literacy model develop an activist perspective toward their role and responsibility as educators, redefining what 'basic skills' means, continuing to empower students, and understanding the importance of literacy and how it can help marginalized readers find authentic purpose in reading(Franzak, 2006).

Dimension 2

Dimension 2 of the critical literacy model focuses on interrogating multiple viewpoints and the use of language as power- giving voice to the voiceless (Lewison et al, 2002). This

dimension is generally not comfortable for those who prefer traditional teaching methods as the 'conclusions reached generally are not neat and tidy' and lead only to more discovery (Lewison et al, 2002). Critical literacy in this dimension takes a stand towards language learning and use-where discussion is key and the products that are created from it are what motivate learners (Shanklin, 2009). Students are freely able to hold dynamic conversations in order to examine conflicting perspectives (Lewison et al, 2002). In a traditional direct instruction format, this kind of engagement can be uncomfortable for teachers who tend to view productive rooms to be equated with silent rooms. Further, it moves the power from the teacher to the students (Dewey, 1938; Lewison, et al 2002; Peterson, 1992). Teachers implementing a critical literacy model recognize that they bring values and judgments to everything they do (Lewison et al, 2002). What is different in this forum is the teacher does not impose those values & judgments onto the students; rather students are given access to literacies in order to empower and take ownership of their own learning (Vasquez, 2000). Critical literacy seeks to create classroom environments where students make connections and respond in thoughtful ways through dialogue, personal writing, drama, visual arts and technology/ media (Creighton, 1997).

Vygotsky (1978) believed that from social interactions, language developed for the purpose of communication. Later language ability becomes internalized and known as "inner speech" and thought according to Vygotsky is the result of language (Vygotsky, 1978). Students who can use language to enter into dialogue can have their voices heard, struggling learners can benefit even more by gleaning and using the words of their peers to inform their thinking and push their learning (Vasquez, 2000). According to Vygotsky (1978), this is known as the Zone of Proximal Development, where a child can do more with the help of others than he/ she could otherwise do alone. Freire (1970) believed that human nature is dialogic and that all

communication had a leading role in life and learning. When we are continuously in dialogue with others, we create and recreate ourselves (Freire, 1970). When we teach using critical literacy models, voices matter and authentic thinking that is concerned with reality comes to life when it occurs in communication with one another (Freire, 1970). Lewison et al (2002) call this "making difference visible", not hiding our differences and opinions, but celebrating them and as a result communities of respect and tolerance are created because that is what is fostered (Peterson, 1992).

Dimension 3

In Dimension 3 of the critical literacy strand, there is a call to focus on socio- political issues where teachers and their students go beyond the personal, redefine literacy, and use it to reshape their lives (Lewison et al, 2002). Teaching is not a neutral form of social practice, yet often times it is the position that is taken (Lewison et al, 2002). In traditional schools, teaching and teachers give little attention to how sociopolitical systems, power relationships and language are intertwined, and as a result cannot be separated from teachers (Capra, 1982; Lewison et al, 2002). In systems where teachers are the only ones with power- *their* discourse of power is the only thing that matters (Vasquez, 2000). The result is students are given access only to particular discourses wherein they are powerless (Vasquez, 2000). In the traditional school model, it is the teacher and administrators who determine how learning is measured, what counts as learning, and how standards will impact and position children in the school (Dewey, 1938; Lewison et al, 2002; Peterson, 1992). When the teacher is seen as the authority figure, critical literacy cannot occur- because it is the teacher alone, who screens, filters, and makes judgments on what can and cannot be used in the school setting (Gainer, 2007). The purpose of critical literacy is not to tell students what to think or how to act but to empower them to speak and act for themselves

(Gainer, 2007; Lewison et al, 2002). "Doing" critical literacy means that an important purpose in the classroom experience is to have students freely engaging in dialogue about sociopolitical issues and to critique those issues in regard to the community in which they live- as well as, the global community (Wolk, 2003). The goal of the dialogic action is always to reveal the truth (Freire, 1970).

Freire (1970) distinguishes very clearly those dialogic actions which promote understanding, cultural creation, and liberation- and those non-dialogic actions which deny dialogue, distort communication and reproduce power. A teacher incorporating the critical literacy model, will choose dialogic actions to engage students and redefine literacy, use multiple texts and literacies that address current, sociopolitical issues and make these literacies available to all learners (Lewison et al, 2002). These strategies found in critical literacy can help struggling readers to think about what they have read because it is relevant to their lives (Shanklin, 2009). Teachers can also use popular culture to engage students (Morrell, 2002). Students today have so many strong beliefs and opinions about all kinds of issues: race, gender, war, poverty, culture- they are bombarded with these ideas and beliefs every day of their lives through technology and mass media (Morrell, 2002). Critical literacy pedagogy requires teachers to not only recognize students and their belief systems, but incorporate them into their daily teaching practice (Gainer, 2007; Morrell, 2002). Popular culture draws all levels of students in and allows them to indulge in "everyday literacies", the by-product of which are complex literary transactions (Gainer, 2007). Popular culture can help students deconstruct dominant narratives and contend with oppressive practices (Morrell, 2002). The ultimate goal of critical literacy in this dimension is a reading of 'the politics of daily life' that 'rewrites' the world in a more democratic fashion (Gainer, 2007; Lewison et al, 2002). Critical literacy is about having as a regular part of one's

life, the skills and desire to evaluate society and the world, and thus, create people who live lives of "wide-awakedness" (Wolk, 2003).

Dimension 4

The final dimension involves what many call the 'essence' of critical literacy- *praxis* (Lewison et al, 2002). One of Freire's (1970) focuses in <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u> was learning the art of "praxis". He states: "One must engage in praxis- reflection and action upon the world- in order to transform it". Praxis is more than just reflection. It is deep reflection that results in action (Freire, 1970). Although many see this dimension as the most significant, Lewison et al (2002) are quick to point out that "one cannot take informed action against oppression or promote social justice without expanded perspectives and understandings gained from the other three dimensions". And it is here in this dimension Lewison et al (2002) state that teachers need to rely on the advice of the progressive fore-fathers to look at where teachers have been and understand what teachers are doing now, in order to move beyond (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). If teachers do not know where they stand, what philosophies and/ or paradigms they subscribe to, what models they prefer to teach then it is all for naught (Schubert, 1987). Educators cannot move for change, or ask it of their students if they do not know where they stand themselves (Lewison et al, 2002). The traditional paradigm stands firm on the ideology that 'what worked then, works now' (Dewey, 1938; Capra, 1982). Traditional methods hold to traditional values – which includes a hierarchy of learning (Capra, 1982). The critical literacy paradigm is not founded on these principles. It is founded on the ideology that has evolved from Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget- one that believes that children hold their own knowledge and experience long before they ever get to school (Freire, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). It is the job of

educators to bring that knowledge to life and give it voice, a place in education, and from there our children will flourish (Dewey, 1939; Freire, 1970). It begins with having a voice.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that language developed from social interaction; that is not to say without communication thought cannot develop- rather that thought is mediated by communication and this develops to a much higher level of sophistication. Freire (1970) stated that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world. Children in classrooms need the opportunity for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention into reality (Freire, 1970). Critical literacy requires educators to look at the "age-old" traditions that they hold or have held at some point and see whether they have value in a global community today (Wink, 2005). The critical literacy movement powered by progressive teachers is taking a stand by challenging and redefining literacy in the classroom: from coercive to collaborative; from transmission to transformative; and from passive to active (Wink, 2005). Students need chances to stand up for things they believe in, too; to stand and clarify issues and relationships that are important to them and their future (Read Ontario, 2009). Progressive teachers utilizing the critical literacy model open conversation space for students to address these issues and thereby enlarge the space of "possible" (Lewison et al, 2002). By empowering students, we foster tolerance and respect. By giving them a voice, we create desire for change. Change leads to advocacy ad activism on behalf of those who are most vulnerable in our classrooms and society (Wink, 2005).

Table 2.2: Critical Literacy- The Four Key Dimensions

Dimension 1 Disrupting the Commonplace	Dimension 2 Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints	Dimension 3 Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues	Dimension 4 Taking Action & Promoting Social Justice
• Problematize all subjects • Interrogate texts • Include popular culture & media • Develop the language of critique & hope • Study/ analyze language	• Reflect on multiple & contradictory perspectives • Use multiple voices to interrogate texts • Pay attention & seek out voices that have been silenced or marginalized • Examine competing narratives • Make difference visible	• Go beyond the personal; attempt to understand sociopolitical systems • Challenge the unquestioned legitimacy of unequal power • Use literacy to engage in the politics of daily life • Redefine literacy as a form of cultural citizenship & politics	• Engage in praxis • Use language to exercise power • Analyze how language is used to maintain domination • Challenge & redefine cultural borders.

(Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002)

Semiotics

Current practices in special education and literacy education are causing practitioners to create, discover, and describe approaches that will enhance the literacy experiences of all children, in particular those children with disabilities who increasingly stay in general education classrooms (Peterson, Feathers, Beloin, 1997). For example, it is known that reading to children is a holistic strategy which significantly enhances literacy development; and that children with disabilities develop socially and academically when they have increased opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers (Peterson, et al, 1997; Vasquez, 2000).

As students investigate new ways of making meaning with language and connect that knowledge to the complex world of signs and symbols outside the school they gain access to

literacies that might not otherwise be available to them (Chandler, 2013). Semiotics is how people make meaning and is another critical avenue to literacy. Semiotics is the premise of and evolution *to* Critical Literacy. Semiotics is the study of signs in language systems. Understanding how semiotics connects to Critical Literacy pedagogy is vital if we want to support and empower students to be critical thinkers. Semiotics has evolved from a study of how linguistic codes communicate meaning to include cultural elements as well (Chandler, 2013; Moore, 1998). When students study language as an example of a semiotic system, students learn that each human language is peculiar to a specific historical culture and in order to understand the language we must understand the culture (Moore, 1998). This notion is particularly helpful when addressing many of the classic works of literature in our classrooms. Moore (1998) tries to help students see that literary works such as Shakespeare do not exist in some pure realm of thought but exist in a world that is the same world as theirs. Our students read the world that is represented to them, but they also socially construct a world in which they live, one that creates the identity they desire; codes of language, behavior, and dress often are systems they invent contrary to the sign systems the world encodes for them (Chandler, 2013; Moore, 1998).

Table 2.3: Semiotics- A Basic Model

Interpretant/ Signified:

The sense made of a sign

Referent/ Object:

What the sign "stands for" or represents

Representamen/ Signifier:

The symbol- the form of the sign

(Hjelmslev, 1961)

In a critical literacy methodology students can learn to read the world in literature and compare it to their own. Moore (1998) tells us that the ability to read the signs of the systems in which we live is power. And it is this philosophy that parallels critical literacy and social justice where students begin to recognize but also challenge those who hold the power and further begin to question that power as it marginalizes certain people in our culture, world and in the very texts we read. By merging semiotics with critical literacy into our classrooms we are acknowledging that literacy exists in a world of institutional structures and political forces within which our students live (Chandler, 2013; Luke, 2002; Moore, 1998). The two worlds are not separate. Today's students operate in an endless web of growth, change, interaction, learning and forgetting, dialogue and dialect that is the task of teachers to make this web real and visible and to encourage students to cast out their own strands of thought and text into this network so that they will feel the power, understand how to use it, and know how to protect themselves from those who might abuse it (Moore, 1998). Teachers must open the way between literary text and the social text in which we live (Moore, 1998). Teachers can do this by making available, texts that address current, sociopolitical texts to struggling learners and give purpose to their reading (Vasquez, 2000). Garnering critical literacy skills helps struggling learners to think about what they read because it is relevant to their lives (Gainer, 2007). When students are engaged and interested in what they are reading, the opportunity for learning increases dramatically (Gainer, 2007). For today's students that engagement can occur through critical literacy in many forms and ways. This does not mean traditional forms of literature are discounted. What it does mean is teachers can redefine how they teach traditional literature to make it meaningful, exciting and relevant to all kids.

Table 2.4: Semantics Framework for the Systematic Analysis of Texts		
	Substance	**Form**
Signifiers: plane of *expression*	*Substance of expression*: physical materials of the medium (e.g. photographs, recorded voices, printed words on paper)	*Form of expression*: language, formal syntactic structure, technique and style
Signifieds: plane of *content*	*Substance of content*: 'human content', textual world, subject matter, genre	*Form of content*: 'semantic structure', 'thematic structure' (including narrative)

Poplin (1988) suggests that it is the duty of schools- and its teachers to help students develop new meanings in response to new experiences rather than to learn the meanings others have created. In the critical literacy model, there is no rote memory answer- there is only exploring, analyzing, questioning and questioning again (Kohn, 2008; Poplin, 1988). Facts and skills will matter, but only in a context and for a purpose (Kohn, 2008). Dewey (1916) argues that educators must begin with the learner's interests that are embedded in their own experiences, moving from the psychological to the logical. Interests of the child are not momentary whims; rather they lie deep within the human spirit (Dewey, 1916). Having students be actively participating in every stage of the process is consistent with an overwhelming consensus of experts that proclaim learning is a matter of constructing ideas rather than passively absorbing information and practicing skills (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). The purpose of curriculum is not to "teacher-proof" the instructional process (Schubert, 1986). Implementation is not the following of orders but the development of learning experiences based upon

knowledge derived from continuous flow of interactions with learners (Dewey, 1938; Schubert, 1986).

Table 2.5: Sociocultural Framework

Social speech becomes inner speech

Learning is Social

Language drives thought

Development occurs by input from others

Children work with others to build knowledge
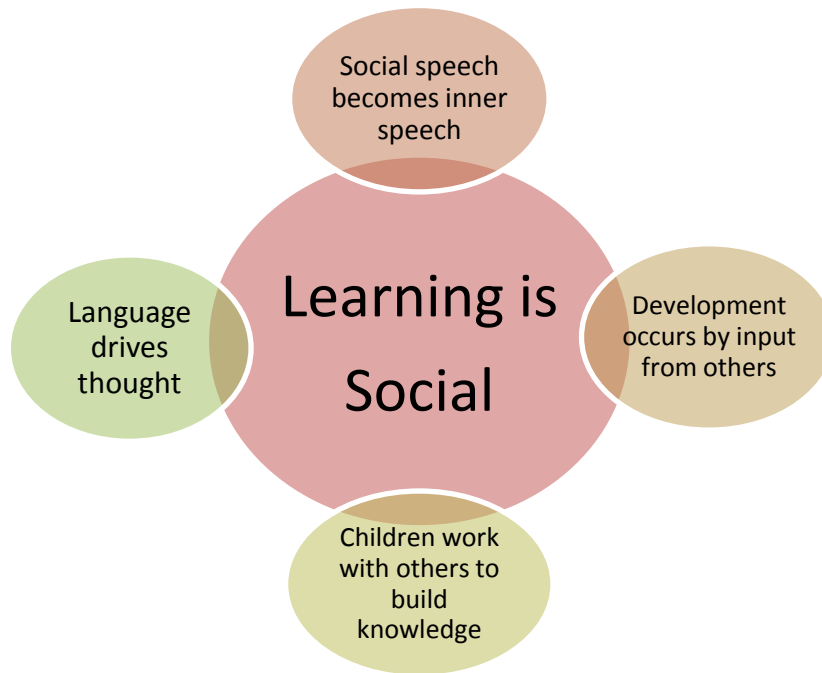
(Vygotsky, 1978)

Teacher Current Practices, Attitudes & Belief Systems

The word attitude (from Latin aptitūdō) is defined within the framework of social psychology as a subjective or mental preparation for action (Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2000). It defines outward and visible postures and human beliefs. Attitudes determine what each individual will see, hear, think and do (Booth & Sheehan, 2008). Consequently if a teacher feels apprehensive about including certain students in the classroom, these feelings may produce negative perceptions about these students and surface in more complex and harmful attitudes. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers recognize the importance of a teacher's role as an active agent in constructing student perspectives and taking action to encourage student learning. What

this means is that teachers assume a critical function as the driving force behind inspiring and facilitating learning in their students. Teachers are the energy that motivates the learner to want to find answers and meaning in the world around them. If a teacher holds a negative attitude towards certain groups of students, their learning experience will be jeopardized. Furthermore, if teachers feel negatively toward students with disabilities appropriate strategies are less likely to be successful (Sze, 2007).

The degree to which teachers provide an effective and equitable inclusive education may depend to a large extent on the attitudes and beliefs teachers hold regarding their abilities to teach students with disabilities or those deemed 'at-risk' and their willingness to assume responsibility for the achievement of all students assigned to their classrooms (Van Reusen, et al, 2000). According to Smith, Price, and Marsh (1986), general education teachers' attitudes and beliefs about instructing students with disabilities are learned and appear to be influenced by the amount of knowledge and contact the individual teacher has with regard to a particular individual or group. Sze (2007) found that teachers endorse the general concept of providing support for students with disabilities, yet, only one-third of teachers feel they had the time, preparation, resources, and skills needed for successful instruction. Teachers' attitudes can influence the facilitation of inclusion programs based on their own philosophies and willingness to have students with disabilities in their classroom. Therefore it is imperative to the success of all learners that teacher express and foster open and caring attitudes and environments. Additionally, to avoid or dismember stereotypes that result in marginalization, it is critical that teachers work together as they take a questioning stance to teacher practice. Such collaboration has the potential to ensure that findings do not reinforce stereotypes or ineffective teaching practices. Friedrich & McKinney (2010) support collaboration by stating, that the unintentional role of

perpetuating the pattern of student success and failure based on SES, race, and language continues to be predictable and persistent and in order to dispel these issues they must be confronted. These confrontations cannot be false. Teachers must be genuine in their self-reflection, they must acknowledge their own shortcomings, fears, and apprehensions- or their students will see through their own falsehood and the movement again will become paralyzed (Friedrich, et al, 2010).

In order to avoid this downward progression, a good teacher must stand where personal and public meet, dealing with the thundering flow of traffic at an intersection where "weaving a web of connectedness" feels more like crossing a freeway on foot (Palmer, 1998). As teachers try to connect themselves and their subjects with students, educators make themselves vulnerable to indifference, judgment, and ridicule. Opening one's self to vulnerability is risky particularly in the field of education that historically has feared the personal and sought safety in the technical, the distant and the abstract (Palmer, 1998).

Having time to collaborate and expose one's fears without the fear of repercussion or condemnation allows a teacher to take the beginning steps to realize change. Teachers working together for the greater good of the student can be a powerful force- a force that can change the learning community forever. When teachers love their work that much- and many teachers do- the only way to get out of trouble is to go deeper in. We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace, not only to guard our own spirits but also to serve our students well (Palmer, 1998). As teachers collaboratively work towards interrupting patterns- or stereotypes- they become invested in each other's work, they sense mutual accountability while they develop relationships grounded in analyzing their teaching and its impact on student learning and development (Kohn, 2008; Schubert, 1986).

Along the way, teachers work to implement structures that maintain a focus on student learning, bring multiple perspectives into conversations, and balance safety and risk (Friedrich & McKinney, 2010). Freire (1993) refers to the focus on learning as 'teacher generosity'. He states, "True generosity in teaching lies in striving so that the hands of the learner- whether of individuals or entire peoples- need to be extended less and less, [so that] more and more they become human hands which work, and working, transform the world (Friere,1993)". Teachers must be willing to put themselves out there- to be exposed to and connect with other teachers before they can connect with their students. Palmer (1998) calls this the 'inward teacher' and tells us,

> "…the inward teacher is unpopular because it compels us to look at two of the most difficult truths about teaching. The first is that what we teach will never take unless it connects with the inward, living core of our students' lives, with our students' inward teachers. The kind of teaching that transforms people does not happen if the students' inward teacher is ignored. The second truth is we can speak to the teacher within our students only when we are on speaking terms with the teacher within ourselves" (p 31)

Taking students' voices and perspective seriously often provokes teachers to confront their own assumptions and prejudices, particularly with regard to race, language, and culture- and this in and of itself, generates fear. Palmer (1998) calls on educators to remember that students, too, have fears. Fears of failing, not understanding, of being drawn into issues they would rather avoid, of having their ignorance exposed or their prejudices challenged, of looking foolish in front of their peers (Luke, 2000; Palmer, 1998). If educators fail to recognize not only their own fears but those of their students, then the students' fears mix with the teachers, fear multiplies geometrically- and education is paralyzed (Palmer, 1998). In today's global world, teachers cannot afford to have anyone paralyzed; therefore, they must be the catalyst that brings to a close this movement of oppression and marginalization that too long has been at the

forefront of the education system and it eats away at our children, causing them to lose faith in themselves and come to believe what has been told them (Luke, 2000; Freire, 1986).

Teachers must engage in the systematic study of one's practice in order to strengthen teaching- and establish a sense of efficacy (Friedrich, et al, 2010). They must sustain authentic opportunities for collaborative inquiry in order to interrupt patterns of oppression and they need to be at the forefront of this movement to advance past their inner fears, circumvent stigmas and stereotypes and embrace all learners in a place of equity (Dewey, 1936; Palmer, 1998; Peterson, 1992). Today's educators must open their hearts and their minds to all students in their classrooms and begin to listen to their students before they speak. What does it mean to listen to a voice before it is spoken? It means making space for the other- or as Lewison, et al posit "enlarging the space of possible" (2002). It means not rushing to fill students' silences with fearful speech of one's own and not trying to coerce them into saying the things we want to hear. Effective teachers hear the unspoken voices of their students, fosters them so that one day they can speak with truth and confidence (Lewison, et al, 2002; Palmer, 1998' Vasquez, 2000). Teachers should tirelessly seek to find a new way, a new diagnosis for struggling learners, special needs students, and those who are at risk (Peterson, 1992; Schubert, 1986). Education needs a new diagnosis of our students' inward condition, one that is more perceptive about their needs, less defensive about the educators own role in their plight, and more likely to lead to creative models of teaching (Palmer, 1998).

Today's teachers are being called upon now more than ever to provide inclusive education programs in their schools in order to better meet the needs of students with disabilities as well as those who are at risk of failing (Hayes, 2003; Reeves, 2006). Schools are now going through vast paradigm shifts in order to restructure or transform the school setting. The result of

this global shift in teaching practice has caused many educators to reconsider the nature of education and disrupt current policies and assumptions that state the purpose of education is the scientific production of job skills (Lewison et al, 2002; Luke, 2003).Often the result of this appears as fear and anxiety among staff members feeling inadequate that they are equipped to successfully meet these ever increasing demands (Reeves, 2006). Parker Palmer (1998) contends that if teachers were better able to confront their own fears they would be less intimidated by the ever-changing school system. He states, "The external structures of education would not have the power to divide us as deeply as they do if they were not rooted in one of the most compelling features of our inner landscape- fear- it is there when I ask a question, when I feel like I have lost control, when a class that has gone badly mercilessly ends- I am fearful; that I am not just a bad teacher but a bad person".

There is no doubt this is a time of intensifying pressure for teachers to produce results and meet a widening range of needs (Kohn, 2008; Schubert, 1986). According to Sze (2007), the importance of teacher attitudes is not only important to the profession but to how it can impact the learning environment. Sze (2007) goes on to say, "Teachers must believe that their behaviors can affect the education of their students. They must recognize that they have the capacity and the power to make key decisions which will affect their role and their students' production". As teachers educate students whose world views are markedly different from their own, they frequently marginalize and deliberately create distance with their students, particularly those with learning disabilities (Peterson, et al, 1997; Macedo, 1987). Freire and Macedo (1987) argue that education should begin by recognizing the humanness each individual brings to the classroom.

Teachers who embrace a critical literacy model understand that teaching is an interactive process that begins and ends with *seeing* the student (Kohn, 1999). In a critical literacy classroom, students are respected and have a voice (Peterson, 1992; Vasquez, 2000). This occurs by building positive and democratic learning communities where students are empowered and given responsibility for their learning (Dewey, 1938; Peterson, 1992). Empowering students does not mean 'losing control', nor does it mean 'giving' a child their freedom. Teachers do not need to control classrooms; they need to respect students (Kohn, 2008). Empowerment means students have a voice- they are listened to, they are respected, and they have a choice in how their learning occurs (Peterson, 1992). Knowing that their voices count motivates students to express their ideas and act in a responsible manner (Simmons et al, 2010). Students will need meaningful opportunities to practice close reading of literature (Calkins, et al, 2012). The methods most schools in America have used to teach reading have not produced readers who demonstrate the skills of critical literacy (Calkins, et al, 2012). Therefore, teachers will need to take stock of their current teaching practices (Calkins, et al, 2012). Beers (2003) showed that the very teachers, who most loved literature, were too often the ones who kids report 'killed' reading for them. The one and only thing that has been shown repeatedly to make all the difference in the world is the presence of a good teacher (Calkins, et al, 2012).Teachers can ignite interest in books by giving readers opportunities to choose from a wide-range of high-interest texts and have ownership over their intellectual work (Calkins, et al, 2012). The first step is to provision students with texts they can actually comprehend, and the next step is to ensure they have extended amounts of time to read (Calkins, et al, 2012).

Teachers/ schools should think carefully about how they can make the transition from seeing reading texts as a way to download facts toward seeing reading as a way to wrestle with

ideas and discourses, and ultimately, to form their own opinions and perspectives (Calkins, et al, 2012). If you are going to take important steps to radically improve your students' experiences in reading, you will need to start by owning the problems in your classroom and school (Calkins, et al, 2012). There is a way of talking about hard work as if it is a challenge; and there is an alternate tone that makes it seem as if hard work is put on us by outside forces (Calkins, et al, 2012). Put the work of disentangling narrative threads into the hands of the students- let them question it; let them find the multiple voices; let them see the purpose and then find authentic meaning (Calkins, et al, 2012; Lewison, et al, 2001). When it is the teacher who continually chooses texts, curriculum, etc., the resulting efforts are embedded in his/ her passions, the things he/she want to accomplish, and are important to his / her daily comings and goings- but if your students are not devouring these texts, it is probably because they have had no choice in them (Calkins, et al, 2012). The meaning of texts resides in the interaction of the reader with the text (Rosenblatt, 1995).Teachers will need to build text sets that offer multiple perspectives and get at deeper issues within topics and address the various sides of those issues (Calkins, et al, 2012). If you empty reading of meaning and purpose, young people won't step up to the hard work it takes to become powerful readers; entering the wondrous lives of others- that will fascinate readers, developing a sympathetic imagination; learning how to live your life (Calkins, et al, 2012).

Educators will always need to examine the congruence between their beliefs and actions in creating curriculum and the classroom (Short & Burke, 1996). When educators become satisfied with surface changes in their practice and stop searching and asking questions, they are in danger of actually continuing the status quo which they think they are transforming (Short & Burke, 1996). When one questions how literacy functions as an inquiry tool in our lives, we can no longer separate learning to read from reading to learn- discussion in literature becomes a

place where children use literacy as a tool for thinking critically about the world and their lives (Shanklin, 2009; Short & Burke, 1996; Wink, 2005). Instead of making sure that students comprehended according to the teacher's interpretation, teachers need to provide opportunities for readers to construct and explore their understandings with others through conversation and dialogue (Power, 1990; Short & Burke, 1996). Change should be the result of continuous inquiry as educators (Short & Burke, 1996). Critical literacy calls for the line of teacher and student to be blurred (Freire, 1970; Lewison et al, 2003; Luke, 2002). The emergence of new methods, which call for teachers to be researchers, researchers to continue their learning processes as students, and children to take on peer teaching roles, also calls for teachers to analyze their belief systems and to look for new metaphors for what they do (Power, 1990).

All too often educators plunge into new ideas/ reforms as if zeal and passion alone can guarantee success. Fullan (2007) presents this scenario: if a well-informed, trusted authority figure said you had to make difficult and enduring changes in the way you think and act, and if you didn't you would die…." And goes on to state that the scientifically studied odds are nine to one against you. If the threat of death does not motivate people who are ill to change, what on earth is going to motivate teachers to change (Fullan, 2007)? The answer is, deep engagement with colleagues and with mentors in exploring, refining, and improving their practice as well as setting up an environment in which this not only can happen but is encouraged, rewarded, and pressed to happen (Fullan, 2007). Luke (2003) tells us that our aim is to shape literacy practices that are about engaging and managing the images, representations, and texts that engage with other cultures as a means for building cosmopolitan world views and identities. The key is to give students their voice, present learning opportunities that are real, foster curiosity, and peak imaginations (Schubert, 1986).

Summary

Chapter 2 summarizes the profound consequences students with LD experience due to underdeveloped literacy skills that result in significant deficits in reading and math. These effects impact both academia and social conditions as reports show that low-achievement in literacy directly correlate to high rates of poverty and unemployment (NJCLD, 2008; Wagner, 2000). Students with LD experience greater difficulty in maintaining the high self-esteem and motivation necessary for educational success. "Labels" are a result of psychological testing students with special needs undergo in order to have their disabilities identified and to receive the help, support, and services they require (Osterholm, et al, 2000). The unintended result is that this 'labeling' creates emotional and physical isolation (i.e., social distancing) for these students. These learner traits contribute to widening gaps in literary skills for students with LD; yet there is little research to support the notion that these students need radically different supports to be successful (Snow, et al, 1998).

Traditional schooling is the predominant approach utilized in our school system today. Traditional schools operate on a behaviorist model- that is the prediction and control of behavior where the teacher is the one who directs and monitors the drill and practice of students in order to meet the demands of a uniform curriculum (Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 1992). Unfortunately, in this model, students with special needs often get left behind, because the prescribed curriculum takes precedence over the needs of the children (Kohn, 1999). Literacy instruction in the traditional school model focuses on structured, phonics-based approaches to reading and writing, rather than the whole-language approach used in more progressive schools (Peterson, Feathers, Beloin, 1997). Allington (1983) found that students with LD rarely are exposed to the meaningful interactions that their counter, general education students experience because they

are often separated, and given outdated, remedial lessons that don't stimulate and motivate (Allington, 1983; Park, 1986). Teachers' attitudes and beliefs may only intensify the problem if teachers feel unprepared or 'fearful' of meeting the needs of students with LD. As a result, students with learning disabilities are often segregated from their peers as their general education teachers feel they will not be able to keep up with the intensity of the curriculum (Sze, 2007).

In a progressive school model, teachers seek to include all students and see learning as an intensely social experience (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978). The interpretive paradigm believes that one needs to draw upon traditional cultural forms to interpret human behavior, while looking at the ways people construct meaning specific to their own world (LeCompte, et al, 1999; Peterson, 1992). Transitions in the American classroom have begun to open the door for non-traditional models. One such model is that of Critical Literacy which seeks to provide all students with critical engagements in an ever-changing and more global society (Luke, 2003; Kohn, 2008). Critical literacy is a way to read, analyze, and evaluate texts within a socio-culture framework (Lenski, 2008). There is growing research that looks at the power and tensions of social critique when all students are given access to read and analyze multiple texts for their social and cultural implications. This social critique is known as critical literacy. LeCompte, et al (1999), define four dimensions that outline the critical literacy model: (1) Disrupting the Commonplace; (2) Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints; (3) Focus on Sociopolitical Issues and (4) Take Action to Promote Social Justice. By utilizing a critical literacy model- every student is given access to everyday literacies and every student is given a voice (Vasquez, 2000). Even students with learning disabilities can find success under this model because they can relate to the issues presented in a variety of historical and popular culture texts, while working side-by-side with their peers and gleaning knowledge from them to enhance their own thinking and

learning (Lewison et al, 2002; Shanklin, 2009). When students are engaged in critical literacy, they are positioned as people who can take action and make a difference; they are given purpose and power through literacies they are exposed to (Lewison et al, 2002; Shanklin, 2009; Vasquez, 2000).

Another aspect of the critical literacy model is that of semiotics- the study of signs and sign systems and how people make meaning. When students learn about semiotics under the critical literacy model, they learn that human language is peculiar to specific historical culture; understanding the culture helps understand the language. This is particularly helpful when studying classic literature such as Shakespeare, which can be extremely challenging for even the brightest of students. Moore (1998) suggests helping students to see that Shakespeare existed in a world the same as theirs and that students can seek to read their world of signs (language, behavior, dress, etc) in relation to the world of Shakespeare (Chandler, 2013; Moore, 1998). By merging semiotics with critical literacy into the classroom, we acknowledge that literacy exists in the world in which our students live. Students need to understand the power of their voice, how to use it, and how to protect themselves from those who might abuse it (Lewison, et al, 2002). Teachers can help students through this process by opening the way between literary text and the social text in which we all live (Moore, 1998). Garnering critical literacy skills helps struggling learners to think about what they read because it is relevant to their lives (Gainer, 2007). When students are engaged and interested in what they are reading, the opportunity for learning increases dramatically (Gainer, 2007).

Chapter 3 outlines and describes the methodology for the study.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A qualitative approach supported by an ethnographic-method, using a case study format is being utilized for this study for several compelling reasons. First, ethnography is the work of describing a culture. Ethnography is based on the assumption that knowledge of all cultures is valuable. The central aim is to build a systematic understanding of another way of life from the native point of view; the goal being to realize the native's point of view, his/ her relation to life, and vision of his/ her world (LeCompte, et al, 1999; Spradley, 1980). Ethnographic Designs are qualitative procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time.

The ethnographic research method was developed by anthropologists as a way of studying and describing human cultures by immersing themselves into the lives of the people they study (Abalos, 2011). Ethnography is also the study of a culture through symbolic interactionism, or Semiotics, a theory that seeks to explain human behavior in terms of meanings. Human beings act toward things based on the meanings they have for them and those meanings are derived from, or arise out of, the social interaction one has with others within their culture (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980). Rather than study people, the ethnographer's role is to learn from people (Spradley, 1980). People learn their culture by making inferences. Every ethnographer employs this same process of inference by going beyond what is seen and heard to find out what people *know* (Spradley, 1980).

When ethnographers study other cultures, they must deal with three fundamental aspects of human experience: what people do, what people know, and the things people make and use (Spradley, 1980). A qualitative study allows the researcher to explore experiences and trends that

are difficult to extract or learn about through conventional research conventions. LeCompte et al (1999) affirm, "Ethnography is a peculiarly human endeavor" and the researcher is the primary tool for collecting data. A qualitative approach is warranted when the nature of research requires exploration (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research often begins with how or what, so that the researcher can gain in-depth understanding of what is going on relative to the topic. This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. Can critical literacy serve as a vehicle for learning?

2. What role does critical literacy play in students identified with learning disabilities?

   a. What are the current teaching practices and belief systems of teachers related to students with LD?

   b. What impact does critical literacy have on these belief systems?

3. What role does Semiotics play in a critical literacy model and how do students find and make meaning?

Research Methods and Design

This study will attempt to identify an understanding of how critical literacy can serve as a vehicle for learning in students identified with learning disabilities. The construct of the research study will be that of a qualitative case-study. This section describes the background of case study research, defines case study methodology, examines the relevance of case study methodology, explores the characteristics and misconceptions of case study methods and describes case study research designs as being created from case study research.

An ethnographic case study research design provides an understanding of the themes and patterns portrayed by the study's participants and are the reporting mode of choice for Lincoln & Guba (1985). Lincoln et al report:

> Such a format is most useful in achieving what we believe to be the two major purposes of reporting- raising understanding and maintaining continuity- and further, this format has certain characteristics that are especially advantageous to the naturalistic inquirer, particularly that the case study is an effective vehicle for demonstrating the interplay between inquirer and respondents. (1985, p. 359)

In terms of the importance and contributions of case studies, Flyvbjerg (2006) believed that greater numbers of good and relevant case studies would strengthen social science. However, he also indicates that case-studies are grossly misunderstood, and therefore warned researchers to be mindful of five misunderstandings of case study research: (1) general, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical knowledge; (2) one cannot generalize from a single case; therefore, the single-case study cannot contribute to scientific development; (3) the case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, whereas other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building; (4) the case study contains a bias toward verification; and (5) it is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies. Flyvbjerg (2006) concludes his thoughts with the notion that a scientific discipline without a large number of thoroughly executed case studies is a discipline without systematic production of exemplars, and thus is ineffective.

Case Study

Robert Stake (1995) points out that crucial to case study research are not the methods of investigation, but that the object of study is a case: "As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used". He states:

Much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others. Two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others. The case will not be seen the same by everyone. Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities. (Stake, 1995, p.64)

A case is a phenomenon specific to, and bounded by, time and space (Stake, 1995). The "case" should be (1) a complex functioning unit, (2) investigated in its natural context with a multitude of methods, and (3) be contemporary (Johansson, 2003). The notion of "case" is complicated in another respect. The kind of case on which a case study focuses may change over time. It may change both in the hands of the researcher and in the hands of the researcher's audiences (Ragin & Becker, 1992). A major step in designing and conducting a single case is defining the unit of analysis (or the case itself). For this study, the unit of analysis is Critical Literacy as a model for learning. Within the single case may still be incorporated subunits of analyses, so that a more complex—or embedded—design is developed (Stake, 1995). The subunits can often add significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing the insights into the single case. In this design, the subunits will be semiotics, students in 7th grade English class and the classroom English teacher. The aim of current day case study methodology is that is has become explicit and inclusive (Stake, 1995). The essence of case study methodology is triangulation, the combination of different levels of techniques, methods, strategies, or theories.

Yin (2009) named five components of effective case study research design: (1) research questions; (2) propositions or purpose of study; (3) unit analysis; (4) logic that links data to propositions; and (5) criteria for interpreting findings. The most appropriate questions for this type of qualitative case study research were "how" and "why" forms of questions. Specifically, I asked 'why' and 'how' critical literacy enhances learning in students particularly those with learning disabilities. Additionally, I inquired as to 'how' semiotics and teacher beliefs impact learning in a critical literacy model. Yin (2009) also suggests choosing a rationale for the specific case design one chooses, that is, holistic versus embedded case studies. The same single-case study may involve more than one unit of analysis. This occurs when, within a single case, attention is also given to a subunit or subunits (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This case design will use an embedded, single-case design that looks at critical literacy as a model for learning, how it impacts learning in students with learning disabilities, how semiotics relates to learning in a critical literacy model, and finally, what changes, if any occur in teacher's attitudes and belief systems when this model is implemented.

The second component of case study research design is to define the study purpose clearly. This component is most commonly recognized as the purpose statement. The purpose in this case study will be to understand how critical literacy impacts learning in students with disabilities.

The third component of the case study research design is the unit of analysis. Yin (2009) described the unit of analysis as the area of focus that a case study analyzes. Yin wrote that an appropriate unit of analysis occurs when primary research is accurately specified. The unit of analysis is directly tied to the research questions developed by the researcher as the cases to be studied (Merriam, 1988). This study's unit of analysis is Critical Literacy as a model for

learning. Sub-units will be the role of semiotics, the students in a 7th grade English classroom identified as having learning disabilities, and the classroom teacher who teaches English.

The fourth component of case study research design is to connect data to propositions. This connection is made following the data collection phase, as themes emerge. As data is analyzed, the researcher attempts to match patterns that appear in the data to the theoretical propositions of the case study. The themes that emerge in this study will thus serve as answers to the research questions posited in Chapter 1.

The fifth component of case study design is the criteria for interpreting findings. Commonly, the case study researcher codes the data prior to developing themes (Yin, 2009). Following the theme development stage, the researcher will carefully extract meaning from the findings to determine recommendations for practice and future research.

Participants

Purposeful sampling will be used to select the students in this study. If a case is purposefully selected, then there is interest in generalizing in findings (Johansson, 2003). Generalizations from cases are not statistical; they are analytical, based on reasoning (Johansson, 2003, Yin, 2009). In single- case designs, Johansson (2003) states, "A single- case design may be purposefully selected in virtue of being information-rich, critical, revelatory, unique, or extreme." The single- case study can represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory-building and can even help refocus future investigations in the field (Yin, 2009).

This set of participants for this study will be chosen because of their shared experience in their classroom as students with and without learning disabilities. The selection criteria will be based on each student's potential to add to the understanding of the processes and procedures used by students particularly those with varying learning disabilities. There are three (out of 11)

students in this study who have all been identified as having a learning disability. Student 1 has a FSIQ of 80 with identification in basic reading, math calculation, and written expression. Student 2 has a FSIQ of 72 with discrepancies in basic reading and written expression with a determination of dyslexia. Student 3's FSIQ is 100 with identification in reading with a diagnosis of Irlen Syndrome. Participation in the study will be voluntary and the participants may end their participation in the study at any time without risk or harm. There will not be any compensation for participating in the study. Demographics will not be identified nor recorded to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Materials/ Instruments

Case study research is not limited to a single source of data; in fact, good case studies benefit from having multiple sources of data (Yin, 2006). Yin (2006) identifies six common sources of evidence in doing case studies: direct observation, interviews, archival records, documents, participant observation, and physical artifacts.

One open-ended interview will be conducted by a neutral third party at the end of the study. Informal interviews can offer richer and more extensive material than data from surveys or even the open-ended portions of survey instruments (Yin, 2006). The flexible format permits open-ended interviews, if properly done, to reveal how case study participants construct reality and think about situations, not just to provide the answers to a researcher's specific questions and own implicit construction of reality (Yin, 2009).

Each participant's informed consent will be obtained by a neutral third party who has participated and passed Citi training in order to be a recruiter. The recruiter will provide a detailed explanation of the study and inform both the parents and students that the researcher will not be present during the consent process, nor will the researcher have access to any of these

records or related data/ information until the end of the study/ semester. In this way, the researcher remains blinded throughout the study as to those students who chose to participate and those who did not. The participants will also be informed that the study is voluntary, and withdrawal from the study can be done at any time without risk to the participant. Ample opportunity will be given to the participants to ask questions related to the construct and procedures of the research study. All of the participants will receive the identical set of open-ended questions for the surveys and exit interview, allowing them to expand their responses as appropriate. All of the participant's responses will be coded to ensure confidentiality, appropriate reporting and data analysis.

Data Collection, Processing and Analysis

A carefully conducted case study benefits from having multiple sources of evidence, ensuring the study is as robust as possible (Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006; Yin, 2009). The concept of methods refers in general to the appropriate use of techniques of data collection and analysis (Prasad, 2005). In a case study, it is important to converge sources of data, also known as triangulation, as a means to ensure comprehensive results that reflect the participants' understandings as accurately as possible.

LeCompte et al (1999) affirm, "Ethnography is a peculiarly human endeavor" with the researcher as the primary tool for collecting data. The purpose of utilizing multiple sources of data is for what LeCompte et al (1999) call the process of redundancy or triangulation- providing confirmation and corroboration to one another in order to further support the data. Yin (2009) and Stake (2000) concur that triangulation is crucial to performing a case study reliably. Additional sources of data allow case study researchers to create a story—one that honors participants' meaning-making (semiotics) processes.

One of the characteristics of good ethnographic research is using inductive, interactive, and recursive processes to build upon theories in order to explain the behavior and beliefs under study (LeCompte et al 1999). The researcher needs to look deeper into the attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and perceptions of the people under study which will require face-to-face interaction in order to help develop a theory of the culture that is predictive (LeCompte et al, 1999). The researcher must seek to hear multiple voices and ensure that all of these voices are included in the text of the ethnography. Ethnography sees the sum of the people through an interpretive lens (LeCompte et al, 1999).

Seidman (1991) supports this same view, stating, "I interview because I am interested in other people's stories. Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness" (Seidman, 1991). Based on the scope of this research, which focuses on how students make meaning in a critical literacy model, open classroom discussions will occur throughout the semester with one exit interview conducted by the third- party in an attempt to have students verbalize their meaning-making processes.

Case study researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. Common means of collecting data include interviewing, focus groups, document analysis, participant observations, research diaries, and life stories (Abalos, 2011). It is not the data collection techniques that determine whether the study is ethnographic, rather the "socio-cultural interpretation that sets it apart from other form of qualitative inquiry and the lens through which the data are interpreted (Merriam, 2002)".

The pilot study will involve giving a survey questionnaire to the student participants and the classroom teacher. The data gathered through the pilot study will provide related information

about the challenges and factors that may influence experiences of students with learning disabilities. However, these surveys will be coded by the third party recruiter and will not be accessible by the researcher until the end of the study/ semester, again to keep the researcher blinded throughout this process. In the case of the exit interview, it will be conducted by the third-party recruiter and will be audio-taped; the tapes will then be transcribed into word documents by the researcher, reviewed, and data will be coded for emergent themes. Merriam (2009) identifies six types of questions to be employed during the interview process for case study research: (1) experience/behavior, (2) opinion/belief, (3) feeling, (4) knowledge, (5) sensory, and (6) background/demographic. Esterberg (2002) described a pattern for general and specific questions, called, "open-ended" questions, and cautioned against dichotomous or leading questions, which could lead to a closed style of questioning. Open-ended questions offer flexibility and opportunities for respondents to construct reality, think about situations, and bring to light other factors that were not mentioned in the surveys (Yin, 2009).

Data Collection Timetable

The researcher will spend approximately 12 weeks in the school teaching in the English classroom. The data collection will be conducted at the following points: (1) During the baseline/ pre-teaching phase (2) During the implementation/ teaching phase; and (3) After/ post the implementation/ teaching period. Classroom observations, research diaries/ journals, exit interviews, and field notes were previously defined as the study's primary data sources.

Table 3.1: Data Collection Timetable

Data sources	Collection Methods	Purpose	When/ How Often	Who
Sample survey	Paper/ pencil and/ or online survey, structured interview	Determine variation in attitudes, knowledge, perceptions	Pilot- 1x before study	Students and Teacher

Open-ended Questionnaire	Paper/pencil; online; face-to-face	Can provide answers in own terms or in a manner that reflects the respondents' own perceptions	At the end of the study (the same as the initial survey questionnaire	Students and Teacher
Interview- individual and/ or group	Audio interview/ transcribing	In-depth information on select topics/ Identify/ clarify unclear or incomplete information, and/ or to ask for narratives of experience	At the end of the study as an exit activity	Students and Teacher
Observations	Written or taped field notes, informal classroom discussions	Record situations/ meanings as they happen	Notes-Daily 1/week/ 12 total	Researcher
Research Diaries/ Life Story Journals	Notebooks/ online journals	In-depth, individual perceptions/ thoughts, feelings, & meanings	1/ week minimum/ 12 total	Students, Teacher, Researcher
Content Analysis	Observation, coding, enumeration	Elicitation of themes or content in a body of written or visual media	At the end of the study	Researcher

LeCompte & Schensul, 1999

Informed consent

The respondents will receive a complete overview of the research endeavor so that they can be as objective as possible, though no certain method exists to control objectivity. The informed consent document will communicate to the prospective research subject(s) the purpose, procedures including time commitment of the subject, risks and benefits of the study, and the confidentiality of their information. The participants will have the right to participate in the research, and the freedom to decline at any time.

The participants will be informed about the interview process prior to any interviews occurring. Data collection will be conducted during the exit interview through tape recorder. Data will be reviewed after the interview at the end of the study, analyzed, and interpreted into

themes and meanings to lay the foundation of codification. The recruiter will provide a detailed explanation of the study and inform both the parents and students that the researcher will not be present during the consent process, nor will the researcher have access to any of these records or related data/ information until the end of the study/ semester. In this way, the researcher remains blinded throughout the study as to those students who chose to participate and those who did not.

The respondents will need to sign an informed consent form before the research process begins. This will give full assurance of the confidentiality of their responses. The signed informed consent forms will initially be retained in a secure location by the recruiter and will be accessible only to him. Once the study/ semester has ended the recruiter will turn the documents over to the researcher who will keep them for a maximum of 3 years. The collected information will be stored in a file maintained on a password protected flash memory data storage device. The hardcopies of the transcripts including the signed consent form and instrument paper which include the participant feedback on will be kept in sealed envelope and stored in a locked cabinet, which only the researcher will have the access to. After 3 years have elapsed, these hard copies will be shredded in order to protect the participants' identity information.

The participants will be given the opportunity to obtain further information and answers to questions related to the study before, during, or even after the study. The researcher will provide contact information to the participants. The participants may contact the researcher for any concerns about the study.

Confidentiality/ Ethical Assurances

Ethnographers should make every effort to keep confidential the identity of specific individuals (LeCompte et al, 1999). Each participant will be aware that participation in this study is voluntary and confidential. The identity of the participants will remain confidential and will

not be directly associated with any data. Further identities of those students who chose to participate in the study and those who did not will remain unknown to the researcher until the end of the study in order to keep the researcher blinded. Additionally, the privacy and confidentiality of the participants will be ensured by (a) not requiring them to reveal their names or department in order to ensure anonymity of their responses and protect them from any retributive action, and (b) ensuring that the data collected are not disclosed to unauthorized persons. Care will be taken to minimize any harm caused to the respondents, by ascertaining at the outset whether they have any objections to participating in the study or whether they foresee any negative impact being caused to them by participating in the study.

Data from the research project will be coded to protect confidentiality. Following acceptance of the completed dissertation and after 3 years; the files will be erased from the memory data storage device. The transcripts including consent form and the instrument paper will be shredded as well.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a way to figure out what to do with the mountains of data that ethnographic research projects generate and turning this data into a patterned "story" or interpretation that responds to the questions that guided the study (LeCompte et al, 1999). Qualitative analysis is a form of intellectual craftsmanship. There is no single way to accomplish qualitative research, since data analysis is a process of making meaning. It is a creative process, not a mechanical one (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Similarly, a qualitative study capitalizes on ordinary ways of making sense (Stake, 1995). Stake reminds qualitative researchers that, "there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis," he explains, "essentially means taking something apart" (p. 71), which in this case, not only means understanding the ways

students use and make sense of texts, but also identifying and defining the patterns that emerged from that meaning making process.

Methodologically, Esterberg (2002) suggests, "getting intimate with the data" (p. 157), and describes the main objective of immersing oneself in interview transcripts is to "load up your memory" with the collected data. This research study will follow the data analysis and coding procedures suggested by Creswell (2009) and Esterberg (2002). Specifically,

Esterberg (2002) suggests that open coding is a process where "you work intensively with your data, line by line, identifying themes and categories that seem of interest" (p. 158). Additionally, Creswell (2009) states, data collection in the field can take a long time; however, the researcher can continually reflect, analyze and then adjust the research during this time. Creswell (2009) offers the following steps as being helpful in data analysis:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis

2. Read through all the data. Gain a general sense of the information and reflect on the overall meaning.

3. Conduct analysis based on the specific theoretical approach and method (e.g. narrative, content, grounded theory, discourse, archival, semiotics and phonemic analysis techniques). This often involves coding or organizing related segments of data into categories.

4. Generate a description of the setting or people and identify themes from the coding. Search for theme connections.

5. Represent the data within a research report. (i.e., advance how the description of the themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative)

6. Interpret the larger meaning of the data. Creswell recognizes that a researcher's own background plays just as important a part of the meaning making process as a researcher's fidelity to a theoretical lens.

Reliability and Validity

Accounting for validity and reliability in qualitative research projects looks quite different from quantitative projects. Reliability is an examination of the stability or consistency of responses (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative validity is based on determining if the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant or the readers (Creswell 2009). Rigor in a study comes from the validity of the research, the reliability of the findings, and the use of triangulation in data collection (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). A valid work must be supported, acceptable, and convincing. Each piece of research adds to the particular discipline and often does so by adhering to the guidelines for proper research.

According to Trochim and Donnelly (2008), validity refers to the best estimate of the truth of any proposition or conclusion or inference described in the research. Validity will be used to assess the quality of the research conclusions. The internal and external validity of the research will be evaluated to determine the cause and effect relationship between the variables identified in the research questions. According to Creswell (2003), validity plays a significant role in a qualitative study in that it is a powerful source used to determine the accuracy of the study's findings. To increase the validity of this study, triangulation will be used. Triangulation is the method of using multiple research approaches and methods. Such a technique can help in overcoming the bias and unproductiveness of a single method. It can be applied to both quantitative validation and qualitative validation (Yin, 2003). Validity and reliability involve checking the status of the data collected to determine if they are valid and reliable (LeCompte et

al, 1999). Internal validity calculates the extent to which the responses from the respondents reflect the same attributes (LeCompte et al, 1999; Yin, 2003).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth. Trustworthiness involves establishing:

- **Credibility** - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings

- **Transferability** - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts

- **Dependability** - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated

- **Confirmability** - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe a series of techniques that can be used to conduct qualitative research that achieves the criteria they outline. These findings have been supported by other researchers such as Merriam (2002), Stake (1995), and Yin (2009). Some of the techniques for establishing credibility are (1) triangulation, (2) member-checks, (3) Peer debriefing, (4) Prolonged and persistent observation/ engagement and (5) Referential adequacy which involves identifying a portion of data to be archived, but not analyzed then returning to this archived data and analyzing it as a way to test the validity of the findings. Lincoln et al (1985) go on to describe a technique for establishing transferability known as 'thick description' referring to the detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context (p. 359).

Finally, Lincoln et al (1985) & Merriam (2002) address techniques for establishing confirmability: (1) audit trail, providing a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study (2) triangulation, and (3) reflexivity, engaging in critical

self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, biases, and the relationship to the study, which may affect investigation

The researcher will validate the questions in the survey instrument before the commencement of data collection. Preliminary interviews will be conducted among the three respondents to identify any difficulties that may affect the respondents' feedback. The validation exercise will also identify unreliable/ bias questions. This qualitative study will focus on the perspectives of a group of individuals, as Merriam (2002) suggested, "Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities; that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception" (p. 17).

Methodological Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

In qualitative research certain limitations might mean that the findings cannot be generalized to the larger population. Limitations are matters and occurrences that arise in a study beyond the researcher's control and limit the extensity to which the study can go, thus, affecting the end result and conclusions that can be drawn (Simon & Goes, 2013). In case studies, the behavior of this one unit of analysis may or may not reflect the behavior of similar entities (Simon, et al, 2013). There are limitations and delimitations to this study. Although the study will be conducted in a public high school, the study will focus on data collected from students and teacher in a 7th grade classroom, as opposed to gaining insight from other students or teachers in the building. The scope of this study will be limited to research at only one school district and, therefore, results may not be applicable to similar contexts.

Further, although this study will include the 7th grade students, it will be looking at learning as it relates to those students with learning disabilities. The results will not include those of general education or special education students in other grades and therefore will have results

different/ varying than the outcomes that could occur if students from other grades had been included. Since the respondent pool and the participants will be limited to eight general education students, three special education students, and one teacher, a larger sample including administrators, teachers, counselors, other students, and/or parents could give additional insight into the overall teaching/ learning profile, or processes, by adding information according to their respective understanding.

Simon and Goes (2013) define the delimitations of a study as those characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of the study and by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made by the researcher during the development of the study plan. Among these are the choice of objectives and questions, variables of interest, choice of theoretical perspective, the paradigm, methodology and theoretical framework and the choice of participants (Simon, et al, 2013). This study will focus specifically on 7th grade students with learning disabilities and how their learning compares to their 7th grade peers. This study seeks to find the impact of using a critical literacy model with students with learning disabilities as these students tend to have more reading/ comprehension problems than their general education peers.

Additionally, this research study will occur in an English classroom and include the English teacher. The researcher will be in a collaborative teaching setting with said English teacher for the duration of twelve weeks. As previously stated, reading/ comprehension is a critical issue for students with learning disabilities, the English classroom seems to be the most appropriate setting to conduct the research as the basic introductory and underlying methods for reading, writing, and comprehension occur in English classrooms. For this reason other classrooms/ content teachers were not chosen. Additionally, this particular teacher was most receptive to the idea of the research design.

Time is another delimitation factor of this study. Given that the researcher works full time in the school under study, restrictions were placed on the amount of time she could be out of her own classroom in order to conduct the study. Having the ability to be in all of the high school English classrooms would provide a broader scope of study, greater insight and outcomes for this study.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlines the epistemological and theoretical grounding, methodology and design for this study, and the ways in which these decisions anchored the research design and process of analysis. The case study design was described along with rationale for qualitative research methodologies. This chapter also provided the rationale for the methodological decisions for this study. The theoretical perspectives, methodology, and methods helped to illuminate the various complexities and experiences of the students included in this case study research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the strategies that will be used to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

Chapter 4 presents the results and findings for this study, and will describe the systematic application of the methodology.

Chapter 5 will address the research questions that guided this study in regard to findings, conclusions, and implications of the study, while making recommendations for further/ future research.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

<u>Introduction</u>

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the data collected during the time of this study. This chapter examined students' learning and teacher perspectives when a Critical Literacy Model involving themes of social justice was infused into the curriculum. The following questions guided the study:

1) Can critical literacy serve as a vehicle for learning?

2) What role does critical literacy play in students identified with learning disabilities?

   a. What are the current teaching practices and belief systems of teachers related to students with LD?

   b. What impact does critical literacy have on these belief systems and

3) What role does Semiotics play in a critical literacy model and how students find and make meaning?

This chapter revisits the research participants, describing the interviews conducted, and will provide results of the data analysis.

<u>Participants</u>

The participants of this study were comprised of eleven students and one teacher from a rural PreK-12 district in a Midwestern state. The students were 12-14 years of age at the time of the study; three were female, eight were male. Of the eleven students in this study, three were identified as having a learning disability. The teacher was the only teacher of English in the junior high/ high school. Criterion-based selection was used given the criteria listed below:

- Students were in the 7th grade English classroom (2014-2015 school year)

- Students had attended the school for at least two years

- The students identified with a Learning Disability held a current IEP and have had this diagnosis for at least two years.

- The teacher was a certified teacher in English in the state/ district under study

- The teacher has worked in the school for at least two years

- Parents gave permission for their children to participate in the study

- The teacher gave her permission to participate in the study

The three students identified with learning disabilities were coded as A, B, and C. They were 12-14 years old at the time of data collection and all in 7th grade general education classes. All three received support services from the Resource Room (RR), but only one- Student B- received additional one-on-one intervention support from the RR for reading and writing. All three students received varying accommodations in their classrooms.

Student A

Student A was the most social of all the participants. He was always willing to talk, often times straying off topic by sharing other stories and laughing. He had to be redirected throughout the course of this study. Student A was very open with his thoughts and emotions, though often could not find the 'right word' or 'thought' he wanted. Student A's teachers described him as a kind and respectful young man who seemed to have a variety of friends at school and was well liked by all. He appeared comfortable with the researcher and was eager to be part of the process.

Student A comes from a divorced family that has been extremely volatile. There were two siblings from this marriage- a brother, who is a sophomore, and a younger brother, who is in pre-school. All three boys split their time weekly between both families, which has proven to be very hard on them. There are often fights and disagreements about how to raise and educate the

children, causing a great amount of stress in the educational life of Student A. Often times he does not have his homework done or can't remember whose house he left it at. Though Student A desires to be successful, he is described by his teachers as 'scattered', very forgetful and often unorganized, although he has gotten better as the year has gone on. Student A's father is remarried with one child, a girl, approximately two years old, from that marriage. The wife has two other children from a previous relationship, a boy in 12th grade, and a girl in 6th. Student A's biological mother is single and has another son, 21 years old, from a prior relationship. She claims she does not know the father. Student A's mother works in the local grocery store and would be classified as low income. The father works in the oil field; the wife is a family counselor. Their income would be considered upper/middle Socio Economic Status (SES).

Student A was diagnosed in 2008 with a Learning Disability in basic reading, math calculation, and written expression. Student A received minimal accommodations in the general education (GE) setting. His tests and notes get accommodated to 50% of the work of his peers. Student A's last IEP and re-evaluation were both conducted on 09/14/2014 with the last full evaluation in September 2008. Data from that revealed the following:

Table 4.1: Student Evaluation (WISC-IV)   Avg. Composite Score: 100

Full Scale IQ (FSIQ)	78
Perceptual Reasoning Index (PRI)	86
Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI)	89
Processing Speed Index (PSI)	75
Working Memory Index (WMI)	77

Table 4.2: Student Evaluation (WJ-III)   Avg. Standard Score: 100

Oral Language	98
Brief Reading	74
Brief Math	71
Brief Writing	67
Academic Skills/ Application	68

The IEP suggests in the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

(PLAAFP) the following:

> *Student A's overall cognitive abilities fall within the borderline range. Student A's lowest scores are in working memory (77) and processing speed (75) which affects Student A's ability to concentrate, reason, have mental control, and pay attention. "Thinking" takes a bit longer for Student A'- He needs to think about information he has and then he needs to decide what to do with it. Previous testing indicated that Reading, Writing, and Math scored in the low range; specifically letter-word identification, passage comprehension, writing was negligible; calculation, spelling, and word attack were very limited.*

Student A's IEP further states the following goal(s) for Reading/ Writing for the current school

year (2014/2015):

Table 4.3: Student IEP Goals/ Objectives

Measurable Annual Goal (1 of 1): The learner will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Short-Term Objective	Evaluation	Criterion	Schedule for Evaluation
The student will correctly organize and construct/ sequence a written essay or story	Student sample/ Teacher observation	80% accuracy	Quarterly

Student B

Student B proved to be the most challenging of the three, having the most severe reading and writing issues. He is a kind, quiet young man, but lacks self-esteem and maturity. He doesn't seem to have many friends as his social skills are also lacking. He admittedly spends most of his free time playing video games, which are the central part of his communication system. He is described as very immature by his teachers, often telling stories and jokes related to his favorite video game, Minecraft, that don't make sense to others. He will also often make odd or funny noises injecting them into his or others' stories. His obsession with Minecraft has evoked concern from the staff at Student B's school because he seems at times not able to discern reality from fantasy. Student B has a very limited vocabulary, which also impacts his ability to engage both academically and socially.

Student B comes from a low-middle income family. His father is military, traveling often and gone for long periods of time. His mother works in a bank. He has three older sisters, all who with the mother are fiercely protective of him. On several occasions when Student B has not done his homework and/ or lied about it, he was questioned about it. In one instance, Student B attempted to lie to the researcher about having done his homework. He finally admitted he had not been truthful, rather he had chosen to play video games over his homework. However, shortly after this encounter, the researcher saw Student B go to one of his siblings and start crying. The other siblings soon joined and could all be seen comforting and consoling him. The mother then called the school wondering why he was upset and who was picking on him. The researcher did clarify for the mother the actual story, which the mother was receptive to.

Student B was retained when he was in 2nd grade. He received significant accommodations on his work. His assignments were accommodated to 30% of the workload of

the other students. Any grade level reading must be read aloud to him or available on tape as his reading fluency and comprehension are at approximately a 1st grade equivalent. Despite all of the challenges Student B faced, he remained an active and thoughtful participant in this study. The interactions with Student B demonstrated significant academic and emotional struggles. Yet, his responses were surprisingly, also the most poignant.

Student B's last IEP was conducted on 09/29/2014; his last re-evaluation was done February 2013/ last full evaluation September 2009. Data from these reports revealed the following:

Table 4.4: Student Evaluation (WISC-IV)   Avg. Composite Score: 100

Full Scale IQ (FSIQ)	72
Perceptual Reasoning Index (PRI)	86
Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI)	69
Processing Speed Index (PSI)	83
Working Memory Index (WMI)	71

On the Woodcock- Johnson, Student B performed as follows:

Table 4.5: Student Evaluation (WJ-III)   Avg. Standard Score: 100

Brief Reading	59
Brief Math	76
Brief Written Language	65
Oral Language	79
Brief Achievement	60

In the CELF- 4 (used to determine receptive and expressive language skills) Student B scored:

Table 4.6: Student Evaluation (CELF- 4)   Avg. Composite Score: 85-115

Core Language	56
Receptive Sentences	73
Expressive Language	51
Language Content	72
Language Memory	54

The IEP states in the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) the following:

Student B has a FSIQ of 72 with discrepancies in basic reading and written expression with a determination of language disorder (mixed expressive/ receptive). Student B continues to struggle with reading- mostly with fluency, due to his lack of ability in pronunciation and enunciation. The primary task for him is going to be practicing and mastering the basic skill in each of his goal areas in order to move forward. Student B will continue with SPL, working on increasing his vocabulary and grammar skills as well as phonics and site word recognition. Student B will also continue to improve his reading comprehension by working on fluency building by practicing decoding skills. Language continues to be difficult for him. He has a difficult time using grammatically correct sentence, giving the definitions of words, understanding and using multiple meaning words, synonyms and antonyms. When completing a worksheet Student B often needs help reading the material and questions.

The current goals/ objectives in reading/ writing for Student B can be summarized as follows:

Table 4.7a: Student IEP Goals/ Objectives

Measurable Annual Goal- (1of 2): Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression

Short-Term Objective	Evaluation	Criterion	Schedule for Evaluation
Student B will work on increasing vocabulary skills by defining and describing words, using grammatically	Student work	90%	Quarterly

correct sentences (with subject/verb agreement), and understanding and correctly using multiple meaning words, synonyms and antonyms with 90% accuracy in 3 out of 4 trials as measured by informal therapy data collection.	Teacher observation		

Table 4.7b: Student IEP Goals/ Objectives

Measurable Annual Goal- (2 of 2): Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Short-Term Objective	Evaluation	Criterion	Schedule for Evaluation
Student B will use a variety of strategies to find evidence in the text to support his opinions/ arguments	Student work Teacher observation	80%	Quarterly

Student C

Student C's interactions with the researcher were the most vacillating of the three. Student C was diagnosed with a learning disability as well as a vision impairment, known as Irlen Syndrome. Student C wore color corrective lenses and used color overlays and magnifiers in his academic work. He was often moody. Some days he appeared to be happy and upbeat, and willing to participate. The next day, he would be quiet and withdrawn, slumped down in his chair, and offered little to no response. He was described by his teachers as the same. He has also had several encounters of bullying other students, particularly, Student B. He has been reprimanded but showed little remorse. Yet, when he struggled and/ or needed help and support, Student C became very emotional, often breaking down and crying, fearful he would be sent to the office. He showed a sense of humor and was respectful to staff. It was hard to know where he stood socially- sometimes he was seen talking with peers and other times he was alone.

Student C comes from a farming family. This was a very important piece of Student C's identity. He was very proud of who he is and where he comes from. He loves to work on the farm and stated that this will be his life. He did not express any desire to do anything else. His farm is part of a long legacy of his family's. Students C's father and his father's parents run the family farm. Students C's mother is an elementary teacher at the school he attends. She also works the farm. Student C has a brother who will graduate this year. Student C is very proud of him and has expressed he would like to be like him. The family is of a low- to middle SES status.

Student C's last IEP was conducted on October 14, 2014. His 3-year re-evaluation was due May 2015; the last one having been done May 2012. Data from these documents revealed the following:

Table 4.8: Student Evaluation (WISC-IV)   Avg. Composite Score: 100

Full Scale IQ (FSIQ)	96
Perceptual Reasoning Index (PRI)	86
Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI)	106
Processing Speed Index (PSI)	100
Working Memory Index (WMI)	94

Table 4.9: Student Evaluation (WJ-III)   Avg. Standard Score: 100

Brief Reading	83
Brief Math	93
Brief Written Language	90
Oral Language	110
Academic Skills, Fluency, Application	88, 84, 92

The IEP suggests in the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) the following:

> *Student C shows a significant discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal reasoning. Student C is an auditory learner- he is a good listener and comprehends better when he listens to others read. He works hard, asks questions and does advocate for himself- having no problem asking for his work to be enlarged and/ or reduced. At this time most of Student C's work is accommodated to 50% and he is completing it without too much stress. At times he struggles with conceptualizing what he needs to do and can get himself overwhelmed. Student C was screened June 1, 2012 for vision and diagnosed with Irlen Syndrome. He wears Irlen filters on his glasses and uses a special color combo overlay for his assignments.*

The current goals/ objectives in reading/ writing for Student C are summarized as follows:

Table 4.10: Student IEP Goals/ Objectives

Measurable Annual Goal- (1of 1): Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Short-Term Objective	Evaluation	Criterion	Schedule for Evaluation
Student C will provide a summary/ main idea after reading a short passage	Student work Teacher observation	80%	Quarterly

<u>Analysis of Findings</u>

The study consisted of three phases analyzed and the findings presented here in this chapter. Data sets were used to develop the ethnographic record, which included interviews, surveys, student work, journals, and talking circles. An analysis of the data involved domain and taxonomic analysis as well as member- checking to support the analysis. Member-checking is a way to validate and encourage trustworthiness in the findings thus far (Saldena, 2009). Trust is a developmental process to be engaged in daily: to demonstrate to the respondents that their confidences will not be used against them; that pledges of anonymity will be honored… and that the interests of the respondents will be honored…and they will have input into, and actually

influence the inquiry process (Lincoln, et al, 1985). The multiple sources of data will result in a case study report.

Phase 1: The researcher's role in the classroom

The first phase of the study consisted of the research joining the classroom and establishing rapport with the students. The researcher discussed the purpose of the study, what the students' role would be should they consent to participate, and communications with teachers, participants, parents, and administrators.

Blending into the enculturation

Prolonged engagement at the site was the biggest factor in the researcher's ability to ease into the classroom setting and establish rapport. Karen Saucier Lundy (2008) explains prolonged engagement in the following way:

> Prolonged engagement refers to spending extended time with respondents in their native culture and everyday world in order to gain a better understanding of behavior, values, and social relationships in a social context. The immersion of the researcher in the culture of the respondents on a long-term basis involves the development of congenial relationships between the researcher and members of the respondent community. The use of prolonged engagement allows the research study to go farther in the investigation of certain phenomena that cannot be adequately explored with short-term study designs.
> (2008, para. 1)

Lincoln & Guba (1985) state that prolonged engagement involves the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the culture, testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of self or of the respondents, and building trust. Since the researcher had been involved with the students and staff at the school for several years, the transition to blend into the

school and classroom environment occurred with minimal disruption. However, LeCompte & Schensul (1999) tell us:

> Even the existence of long-term relationships cannot ensure that research participants will not withhold information, act out roles different than normal, distort information, or give socially acceptable answers, thus biasing the data they provide to researchers. LeCompte, et al (1999) further state that in order to overcome these barriers researchers must engage in the process of building rapport, and go on to say that this practice of building and maintaining rapport in the field is continuous- it does not end until the ethnographer leaves the research site. (1999, p.11)

Initially, the students did have questions about the role of the researcher and what would be expected of them. For example, one student wanted to know if their names would be used. Another student asked if they would receive a grade for this. The researcher assured students their names would not be used nor would they receive a grade for their participation. Students seemed comfortable with the researcher's responses; questions remained minimal throughout the duration of the study. The teacher participant also appeared at ease with the researcher's admission into the classroom. The teacher and researcher had previously discussed their roles during the study as well as classroom expectations, lessons, and activities. Therefore, there was minimal disruption to the flow of lessons and curriculum. The teacher participant's teaching style and classroom environment did not appear to change during the study. Overall, the units designed took longer than planned. Positive and negative comments were documented in regard to the units and the 'time factor'.

Initial Interviews: Students

The initial student interviews were conducted using a third-party recruiter as per HIC requirements. Three domains/ themes emerged from these interviews: confidence/ self-esteem regarding reading, how students find meaning in reading, and struggles/ aspirations concerning reading.

The student survey addressed students' views on reading. Students were told to be as honest as possible. They were also given the choice to skip/ not answer questions and to stop at any point as well. Questions ranged from whether students liked to read, where they liked to read, how they found meaning in texts to what was easy/ hard about reading (See Appendix A). Overall, general education and special education students' thoughts, opinions, and needs about reading did not differ greatly according to this survey. Five general education (GE) students and two special education (SE) students stated they liked to read for reasons' ranging from it is '*how they learn'* to reading *'takes them to other worlds'*. One SE student said they did not like to read because it was "hard". All students had specific places/ settings for reading: "*quiet", "soft light", "comfy chair*". When asked what the students would like to be able to *do* in reading, 4 GE and 1 SE said "*to be fluent*"; while 2 GE and 2 SE students said they would like to be able to "*be in the book*".

In another section of the survey, students were asked to describe the ways/ strategies that helped them to understand/ find meaning in texts. Student responses were as follows: 6 GE said "*someone else reads it aloud*", 6 GE; 1 SE said "*talk about it with others*"; 1 GE, 1 SE liked "*drawing/ art"*; 8 GE; 1 SE "*talk in groups"*; and 7 GE; 1 SE liked to "*talk as a clas*s". Furthermore, when students were asked what they do when they 'get stuck' trying to find meaning in a text they responded as such: 10 GE, 1 SE said, "*re-read it*"; 8 GE said, "*ask others*

for help"; 7 GE, 1 SE opted to "*look at other info on the page*" (i.e., captions, pictures, etc.); and 3 GE, 1 SE thought "*explaining to someone else*" was helpful. Two questions on the survey addressed student perceptions about reading. The first asked the student to 'describe him/ herself as a reader'. One SE student asserted, "*I try but eventually give up if it is too hard*". A GE student proclaimed, "*I understand most of what I read but not as well as I would like*" and another SE student said, "*I recognize there are certain texts I can't read yet*". The second question was a multiple choice and addressed how students felt about reading and success in the world. Two GE students did not answer this question. 3 GE, 1 SE thought '*reading was crucial to success in the world'*. 2 GE, 2 SE agreed that '*reading was more important than ever'*, and 1 GE, 1 SE felt it was '*not important/ you know everything you need by 6th grade'*. Finally, the survey asked students what their preferences in books were. 6 GE, 1 SE students commented that they liked books that challenged their beliefs; 2 GE, 1 SE students preferred books that did not make then think about unfamiliar things, and 3 GE, 1 SE students liked to read books about how to do things.

Initial Interviews: Teacher

The teacher pre-survey addressed beliefs and philosophies about teaching and learning. Initial questions addressed how long the teacher had been teaching and in what capacity she had taught (See Appendix B). One question asked how the role of teacher had changed, if at all, over time. The teacher responded, "*early on it was more of a leader role, now it was more mentor and adviser*". The teacher was also asked if there were different demands on teachers today, and if so, how this impacts teachers. The teacher participant affirmed that there was more demands on teachers due to rigorous content being required at younger levels, the addition of technology, and that teachers are held to higher standards and are more accountable for their subject matter.

Having said that, the teacher felt that the administrators in this school supported teachers by providing frequent training through in-services, professional development, and book studies.

Another part of the teacher survey spoke to students with special needs in the GE classroom. The teacher was asked how these students were viewed as learners in comparison to their peers and to discuss those views on how/ where a 'best fit' for students with disabilities lies. This teacher stated, "*Time is a big factor. It takes these students longer to complete certain tasks than their peers, but can be alleviated through accommodations. I also know that the students want to be with their peers and treated equally. This is a 'big deal' for them*". Additionally, the teacher was invited to discuss her comfort level teaching students with disabilities. Her comments were that she felt "pretty comfortable" and that she had had her "fair share of students with all abilities". The teacher described that she had been to "*trainings on disabilities and accommodations throughout her career, but as more and more students get diagnosed with autism spectrum, etc. a refresher course would be beneficial*". Finally, the teacher participant was asked to discuss any other thoughts/ concerns she had. "*Sometimes people tend to make decisions for students without their say. Sometimes just asking the student what they need/ want in their education for them to succeed would be the most helpful. I feel some are able to do a lot more than parents allow them to do.*"

Phase 2: Facilitation of Lessons

Phase two involved the implementation of three units each with its own theme of social justice: Unit 1- '*Slavery*', Unit 2- '*Mental Health*', and Unit 3- '*Helping Others*'. All samples were conducted in the general education classroom with all 7th grade students and the English teacher present. This setting was the natural environment that the researcher was seeking for the purposes of this study. The three units were implemented over the course of almost three months

during the English period for approximately 40 minutes, five-days/ week. The time is approximate due to days off for teacher in-services, holidays, etc. Unit 1 took the longest time to complete. Interviews were fully transcribed by the researcher. Several domains emerged and will be examined in detail in the following paragraphs.

Unit 1: Slavery

The first unit focused on the historical and present-day aspects of slavery. Students were given a pre and post survey to assess their knowledge of the topic (See Appendix C). The survey consisted of six true/ false statements. The majority of the statements focused on whether or not slavery still existed today. Examples of these were: *Slavery does not exist in the United States; Slavery does not exist in North Dakota; Slavery ended after the Civil War; and Slavery still goes on today but only in undeveloped countries*. Nine of the eleven students agreed that slavery did not exist in North Dakota on the pre-survey; one general and one special education student marked 'false'. Students were not given any answers/ information about what they had marked on their surveys. The information was used only to obtain prior knowledge, to see what students learned over the course of the unit, and to ascertain whether or not students' answers/ ideas had changed over time. Although the researcher did not anticipate the level of involvement and time that would be committed to this unit, the subsequent units were altered in order to allow students the time they needed to take action for this cause. In a critical literacy model, taking action is the final step in the sequence. The researcher had to allow the students to act on their own timeframe, to see what outcomes might be revealed.

Upon completion of the pre-survey, students were engaged in multiple literacies as they began to read and assess the historical perspectives of slavery. Class discussion at the onset of the unit confirmed that all of the students had a good working knowledge of Harriet Tubman,

some '*knew of*' or had '*heard of*' Nat Turner and Frederick Douglass and all students attributed this knowledge to their elementary education. Beyond these few names aforementioned, students could not name any other figures associated with historical slavery or any major events that occurred around the time of the Civil War.

Multiple literacy formats consistent with a Critical Literacy model were infused into the curriculum for this and all subsequent units. The following is a sample list of variant literacies used in the Slavery Unit:

- Picture book (Henry Box Brown)

- Audio and video excerpts (Slavery 101; The Horror of Slavery, Free the Slaves)

- Select readings/ photos from Scholastic Magazine:

    o 'Slavery Happens Here' (Teaching Tolerance) and 'To Be a Slave' (Lester, 1968)

    o 'The Horror of Slavery' (Photograph; January, 2014)

    o Historical sketches attacking slavery

    o Frederick Douglass, "I Would Rather Die" (January 2014),

    o "A Child Slave in California" (September 3, 2012),

- Case studies- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (discoverhumanrights.org)

- Research- internet (Case studies, current issues of slavery in North Dakota, present-day 'abolitionist' organizations in USA and ND)

- Reflective Journals

- Word Study

- Dialogue Board

- Talking Circles (Restorative Justice Model; Teaching Tolerance)

Most of the above the researcher determined to be self-explanatory, except for two: the *Talking Circles* and *Dialogue Board*, both key components in Critical Literacy. "Talking Circles" is an activity that helps teachers use restorative practices to engage students in dialogue in a safe and democratic manner. A Talking Circle, sometimes called a Peacemaking Circle, uses a structural framework to build relationships and to address conflict within a community (Bintliff, 2014). Talking Circles serve other purposes as well: They create safe spaces, build connections and offer teachers a unique means of formative assessment (Bintliff, 2014). In this Talking Circle, dialogue is started by whoever is holding the 'talking piece', generally a stuffed animal, rock, etc. The researcher chose a wooden croaking frog for this study. The only person who can talk in the circle is the person holding the frog. When that person is done with their thoughts/ comments, he or she passes it to whomever they choose. Anyone is allowed to pass (not speak) at any time during the circle.

The "Dialogue Board" is another way to foster dialogue amongst students. A dialogue board is a place where students write short comments or thoughts to a particular question, quote, picture or other piece of literacy. Students in this classroom were walked through the process on the first day of the research project. The process for dialogue board is as follows: A question/ comment is posted on a bulletin board, poster or white board. Students are given an array of post-it notes and colorful pencils and markers to choose from. When the students come into the classroom and see a dialogue board posting, they grab a sticky note and marker and write their response on it. They can only use the front of the sticky note and write their initials on the back. When complete, the students will post their note on the board. When all students have posted their responses, the teacher or a student volunteer, reads all of the responses. Students can comment on the responses as read but must use positive statements. For example, *"I agree with*

that statement because…" *"I disagree with that statement because…"* *"I need more clarification on that statement…"* Students also have the right to not have their response read, made known by a pre-determined mark on their paper. Some sample prompts posted on the "Dialogue Board" for this unit were:

Table 4.11: Sample Dialogue Board prompts & responses

Dialogue Board prompt	Select Responses
What is slavery?	▪ *It's when one person owns another person and treats them bad* ▪ *Slavery is when one person takes another and makes them work for them for nothing* ▪ *People taken away from their families in the Civil War and made to work for white people*
Slavery is…	*Horrible, Illegal, Wrong, A bad thing*
"One Word" activity… (Response to video)	*Hate, Disgust, Fear, Scared, Angry, Sad*

Throughout the unit students were engaged in thoughtful response and reflection. In a critical literacy model, thoughtful reflection is necessary in order [for students] to better understand the power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships (Coffey, 2008).

In one of the reflective journal activities, students were read an excerpt from "To Be a Slave" and asked to respond. A sample from this activity is below. The researcher used 'Versus' and 'In Vivo' coding on this activity to establish domains. Special Education student responses are marked with a blue (*) asterisk.

Table 4.12: To Be a Slave- Journal Reflection

Emotions	Treatment of (Like…)	Reactions
Disappointed	Like animals, not human	They hurt and get hungry, too
*Scared	A piece of land	Slaves will not be free until someone do something
Anger	Like a table, not human, hatred	Why would America start something like this?
*Wrong	Treated "less than a table"(quote from text); calling people 'things'	They were not just slaves; they were people
Crude, sorrowful	"Less than a table", ruthless dictators	Should be no difference; we did this to our own people
Wrong	As a car, a house	Why do we do this? Why do we have slavery?
Heartbreaking, devastating, anger	Not human	To know that despite the suffering & deprivation, you were human (quote from text)
Not happy	Not human; a 'thing'	It made it seem more real than before; how a person can even imagine doing any of these things to another human being

As students became more engaged and knowledgeable in the subject matter, their emotions grew stronger as did their desire to do something. In a mini-research project to find out about slavery in their home-state, students were deeply bothered to learn that slavery did in-fact, exist not only in their nation, but their own state- and as close as one hour away. A group discussion to determine what they had learned and what if anything they wanted to do about it, led the students to decide they wanted to do a fundraiser for a local charity that helped to rescue women from slavery, also known as human- trafficking in modern-day language. The students decided they would take donations at an upcoming parent-teacher conference and sell bracelets they made. The students established a goal to raise $300- they grossed over $700. The students sent a check and included letters they wrote to the founder of the charity.

Two weeks later, the founder called the school, to say she wanted to come out personally to thank the students for their efforts. Two days later she arrived, news reporters and TV crews were abundant. The kids were deeply moved and excited, more so when they later learned their efforts and attention to this matter helped to establish new, stronger laws in their state against human trafficking. Excerpts from the letters were put into a table using Versus and In Vivo Coding to help establish domains. Special Education student responses are marked with a blue (*) asterisk. A samples of students' letters is also included below (Figure 4.1)

Table 4.13: Excerpts from letters

What I Learned	What I/ We did for change	What I think	Most Important to Know
Slavery has gone up 300% in ND	Fundraise/ donate to free slaves	No one deserves to be scared, in pain, hungry	[Slavery] is happening everywhere
Slavery in ND is up 300%	Fundraise to build a shelter	Now people will start saving slaves	Slavery is happening all around us
*People are cruel to others	Fundraise to free slaves	I hope we can make a difference	They are mean to people; they torture them
*Slavery has gone up drastically; it is mainly young women	Raised money to build a safe house	Slavery is bad and it should quit	[Slavery] has gone up 300% and it still exists today
Slavery is close to us; we can help	Fundraised to free slaves and build a shelter	Slavery is a crude and brutal way of life	You and I can be difference makers
*Slavery is up 300%	We fundraised to help slave victims get on their feet	…Putting thoughts in our mind so we will be the generation to end slavery	Slavery happens closer than people think
[Slavery] exists near us and is why so many kids disappear around the world	Fundraised to stop slavery from ever happening again and to build a shelter	To help them forget their horrible life and look into the future	As long as one of us is a slave, none of us is free (Quote from one of our readings)
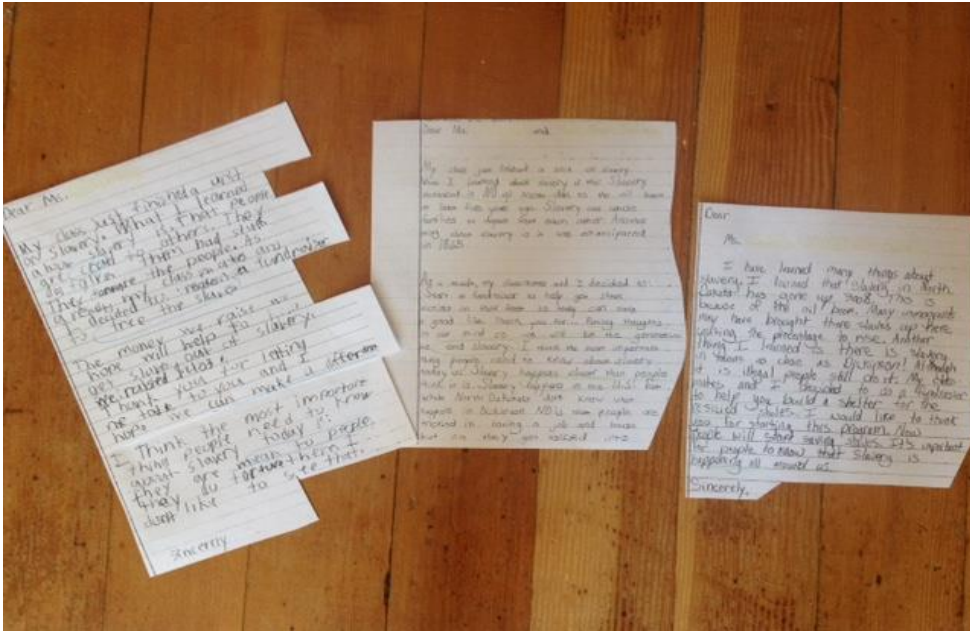
Figure 4.1- Student Letters (Sample)

Teacher/ Researcher Reflections

Both the classroom teacher and the researcher completed an end-of-the-unit reflection. The classroom teacher started out by saying that the students seemed 'really engrossed' in the topic of historical slavery. They were further shocked to learn that slavery still existed and so close to their own homes. The teacher went on to say how involved the students became in the process of making bracelets for their fundraiser and commented,

> *"I was worried that they had set themselves up for failure. I was worried they would raise $20-$30 and be disappointed. Boy, was I wrong!* They raised $777.00- I was flabbergasted! Not only did they have a plan of action, they succeeded it. This will be an experience they will always remember."

The researcher reflected upon feelings of both nervousness and excitement about teaching in the classroom- "*I felt like a first-year teacher*". The researcher's noted goal was to bring awareness to the students about slavery- both historically and present-day and further noted a 'hope' that "*maybe the students would want to create posters or ads to bring awareness to others*".

Additionally noted was the observation that although the students had a basic working knowledge in regard to slavery, they didn't appear to have a grasp on the sheer horror of it until they read several memoirs, quotes, and saw some photos; one in particular was that of the back of a slave shredded due to repeated whippings. The writer referred to it as "that of parchment paper". That seemed to strike a chord in the students' emotions and 'grounded' them in this historical aspect. What they were not prepared for was the issue of modern day slavery. When students learned of this- once they read these stories- they were outraged, their comments, poignant. Emotions peaked rolled into actions played out. The students went beyond this researcher's expectations emphatically. They took the ball and ran with it- independently planning and implementing a fundraiser that brought in over $700. The letters they wrote to the founder of the charity they 'adopted' were detailed with facts and emotions, and spurred the founder to visit the students and their school to thank them in person for all they had done. Below is a Sample from the Domain for Unit 1. The remainder of this domain can be found in Appendix D.

Table 4.14: Unit 1- Slavery: Sample Summary of Domain: Open-Ended Questions/ Group Discussions

Purpose	Example	Actual Text, quote, exchange **(R)= Researcher A= SE; B= GE**

Facilitating positive social change
 	
• Activate prior knowledge/ pre-conceptions [1 & 2]
	Critical Literacy
	
	Pre survey [1]
		[1] (True/False):
		
		Slavery ended w/ Civil War
		   2 GE, 2SE (T); 5GE, 1SE (F)
		Slavery does not exist in the US
		   5 GE (T); 2 GE, 3SE (F)
		Slavery does not exist in ND
		   5 GE, 2 SE (T); 1 GE, 1 SE (F)
		There is nothing I can do about slavery
		   8 GE, 3 SE (F)
		_____

	Dialogue [2]	[2] Dialogue- whole group **(R) What are your thoughts about slavery today?** "I'm glad slavery is over" [B] "I'm just happy that slavery doesn't exist anymore" [A] _____
• Expose students to real life through multiple literacies [3]	Memoirs, quotes, photos [3]	[3] "Shocked how many slaves there are" [B] "That [slavery] still exists" [A] "More slaves [now] than any other time" [B] [3a] "His back was shredded like…what that poem said…" [A] (R) "parchment paper" _____

• Empowering students
  o Semiotics [4]
    - Tap emotions
    - Create desire for action
	Questioning 'legitimacy of power' [4]	[4] "Wait, isn't the United states a free country?" [A]
		
		"Why do we have slaves?" [B]
		
		"Wait, I have a plan!" [A]
		
		(R): "Do we have the power to change it?"
		
		Students unanimous: "Yes!"
		_____

• Empowering students
  o Semiotics [5]
    - Motivation
    - Tap emotions
    - Create desire for action
	• Take Action[5]
	
	  o [a] Fundraiser
	
	  o [b] Letters to Windie
		[5] Vignette describing interaction/ dialogue of students as they made bracelets for the fundraiser
		[a] (insert visual attachments)
		
		[b] No one deserves [to be] scared, in pain, hungry [B]
		
		I hope we can make a difference [A]
		
		Slavery is bad and it should quit [A]
		
		Slavery is a crude & brutal way of life [B]
		
		[thank you]…for putting thoughts in our mind so we can be the generation to end slavery [A]

		…Help them forget their horrible life and look into a new future [B]
		_____
		[c-] Natalie* calls after receiving our letters- "I am speechless. I have been praying for a miracle and you guys were it. I want to come and thank and hug the kids in person."
	o [c-] Response from Natalie* *pseudonym	[d-] "What? No way!!!" (cheers, hugging, high-fives) "We are rock stars!"
	o [d-] Student reactions	

Unit 2: Mental Health

This unit incorporated a condensed play format of the historical text, "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". Students were then also provided multiple other literacies about modern day mental health issues in teens, such as: teen suicide, depression, and school shootings. Students were given a pre-survey to assess their prior knowledge on these issues. The survey asked merely for students to 'agree' or 'disagree' with the statement. A sampling of accounts from this survey is shown in the table below. The researcher used Structural Coding to help establish domains. Responses have been split between general education (GE) and special education (SE) students.

Table 4.15: Pre-Survey- Unit 3: Mental Health

Statement	Agree	Disagree
I know someone with a mental illness	5 GE/ 1 SE	1 GE/ 1 SE
I have knowledge of school shootings	4 GE/ 2 SE	4 GE/ 1 SE
I have knowledge of teen suicide	5 GE/ 1 SE	3 GE/ 2 SE
Someone who shoots schools has a mental illness	1 GE/ 1 SE	7 GE/ 2 SE
Someone who commits suicide has a mental illness	1 GE/ 1 SE	7 GE/ 2 SE
My school is prepared for an intruder	6 GE/ 1 SE	2 GE/ 2 SE
Teen suicide is not a problem in North Dakota	0 GE/ 0 SE	8 GE/ 3 SE
Awareness of mental health issues will reduce violence	4 GE/ 1 SE	4 GE/ 2 SE
Depression is not a disease	5 GE/ 1 SE	3 GE/ 2 SE
Asking for help is a sign of weakness	2 GE/ 0 SE	6 GE/ 3 SE
One person's actions can lead to others taking action	6 GE/ 2 SE	2 GE/ 1 SE

Additionally, on the back of this survey students were asked to tell anything more they knew about mental illness in regard to suicide, school shootings, and depression. On the pre-test, very

few students commented and those that did write were vague. Special education students' comments are asterisked in blue (*). Some of the remarks written were: *it can happen anywhere, the suicide rate is jumping, people are depressed when they commit suicide*, *I know of depression* *, and one student just wrote: *the Sandy Hook shootings*. However on the post-test, all of the students wrote something. Samples from those comments were: *59% of victims from shootings are age 10-19; 69% of shooters are age 10-19; 1 out of 12 teens suffers from depression; 2.1 million people suffers from depression worldwide; we need to start a group to help teens with mental illness; any of [these] are possible for anyone*; more teens commit suicide than [other] diseases combined*; there are quite a few suicides, shootings, and teen depression**

In this unit, the multiple literacies incorporated were: Talking Circles, dialogue board, vocab study, reflective journaling, online research/ I-Movies, case study, and drawings. Some examples of these activities will be discussed in greater detail in this section. To begin with, one lesson included a question on the Dialogue Board titled "Who am I?" which challenged students to look deeply into themselves at who they are and find empowerment. The need to feel empowered was critical to establish not only for a critical literacy model, but also for this particular unit on mental health. Barclay and Moncivaiz (2013) state that alienation is common among adolescents; feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement can lead teens into depression and other mental health issues. The three questions students were asked to answer were: '*Who am I?'* '*Why am I here?'* and, '*What am I doing to help others?'* Students were provided these questions at the beginning of this unit and again at the end of it so the researcher could determine if students' self-concept had changed or not over the course of the unit. Samples from the pre and post are classified below. Most students in both the pre and post dialogue board wrote their names under the *"Who am I?"* For the

purpose of confidentiality, this information has been omitted, or if that was the only thing a student wrote in their answer, {Name} is inserted in that section. Special education students' comments are asterisked in blue (*).

Table 4.16: Pre/ Post Dialogue Board- "Who am I?"

Who am I?		Why am I here?		What am I doing to help others?	
Pre	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**	**Pre**	**Post**
• Loves to read • Hates tech	• Lives on a farm • Loves animals	• To raise animals • Have a family	• Have kids • Raise animals	I don't think a lot	•Set an example •Help [others] without them asking
{Name}	I am an artist	I am awesome	To show my beauty	Helping	Helping
{Name}*	Student of {school}	To make a change	Stop world hunger	Help them get through rough times	• Help through bad times • Encourage people • Help people who don't understand
{Name}	A successful person	Make the world a better place	To serve God's will	Raise awareness about slavery	Help [people] through their problems
{Name}*	• Kid, boy, teen • Likes to read • Watch TV • Play games	Help kids	• To learn • To have fun • Help hunger to stop	Help slaves	• Help [people] out • Give good-food, money • Give food to homeless people
{Name}*	• Farmer, rancher • Student, friend	To learn	To learn, behave, pay attention	Help people out	• Respecting them • Helping them
{Name}	I am strong	Change the world	To live my life	Donating money	• Helping them • Set a good example

After this dialogue board activity, students' read/ acted out the play, "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". A short Talking Circle followed the reading. The researcher asked several guiding questions to initiate dialogue. One excerpt included:

Researcher: *Can any of this relate to today? Meaning did Jekyll have a mental illness?*

Student responses included, *"yes", "I think he was depressed", "Bi-polar".*

Researcher: *What about the violence form Hyde- is this what you would expect from someone with a mental illness?*

Students: *"yes", "I don't know, maybe".*

Researcher: *Where was the power in this story? Who held the power?*

Students: *"Hyde"*

Researcher: *Did anyone have power over Jekyll before Hyde came out?*

Students: *The old guy! Danvers!*

Researcher: *Did he have power over anyone else?*

Students: *That girl- Mabel! Remember when she came out to their house and that kid said, "Your hands are dirty".*

Researcher: *So who was Danvers in that house?*

Students: *A doctor.*

Researcher: *Who was he in society?*

Students: *Rich*

Researcher: *and the people he held his power over, were what?*

Students: *Poor.*

Researcher: *Are there any conclusions you can or did draw from this?*

Students: *The wealthy people looked down on the poor people*

Researcher: *Does that still happen today?*

Students: *Yes*

In one journal reflection, students were asked to reflect on several concepts/ themes that were prevalent in the play/ movie (Jekyll and Hyde). Samplings of these topics were: whether or not *everything* could be forgiven. Overall, students felt that most everything could be forgiven. One student commented that murder could not be forgiven; another said God would forgive even if you didn't. One student (*) said, "Nothing is too bad to be forgiven", and another student (*) said that some people will forgive and others won't, but also not if you lie. Another topic addressed, "duality" and whether or not Jekyll- and ultimately any person- were responsible for their 'Hyde'. Every student believed that every person is responsible for his/ her own actions. For instance, some comments students wrote stated: *You are responsible for both good and evil in you*; *you control your own actions (*); It is good vs. evil (*); you are responsible for yourself.* In another reflection, students were asked to consider, "Why good people sometimes do bad things". Versus coding was used in this instance to establish patterns for initiating and facilitating positive social change. Special education students' comments are asterisked in blue (*). Results were put into the table below:

Table 4.17: Journal Reflection- "Why good people sometimes do bad things"

Emotions connected with…	Reason why…	Reaction to…
Angry, sad	Human nature	No comment
No comment (*)	Wants something; poor, need food	No comment
Depressed, mad	[They think] it's cool, doing drugs	Everyone can be bad no matter how much good they have done
No comment	Peer pressure, mistakes	A good person may think what they're doing may benefit another person, when it's not
No comment (*)	To avoid being made fun of	I would do good as long as I

		could for the rest of my life
[Sadness] of school shootings in Connecticut	Drugs, peer pressure	No comment

At the end of the unit, students were left to decide what, if anything needed to be done or should be done about mental health issues in teens. One of the final activities students engaged in was a case study about some high school students in Michigan who wrote for their school newspaper. The two girls learn that each takes medication for depression and decide to collaborate on an article to bring attention to this issue in hopes of helping other students in their school facing similar issues. The administration denies the girls the opportunity to print the article. The task for the students in this research study was to work in a small group to read, review, and discuss the story. Then, based on the two girls' experience, students worked collaboratively in groups of three, to respond to their story by answering four questions. Each group then presented their responses to the whole class for further discussion. A sample of a Carousel- style analysis of the text is shown below. In a "Carousel" students are put into groups equal to the number of questions posed. Each group is positioned at one question and given a certain color marker to write their responses. After one minute each group moves to the next question and answers it. The pattern repeats until all questions have been answered by all groups. Answers are shared aloud and discussed whole group.
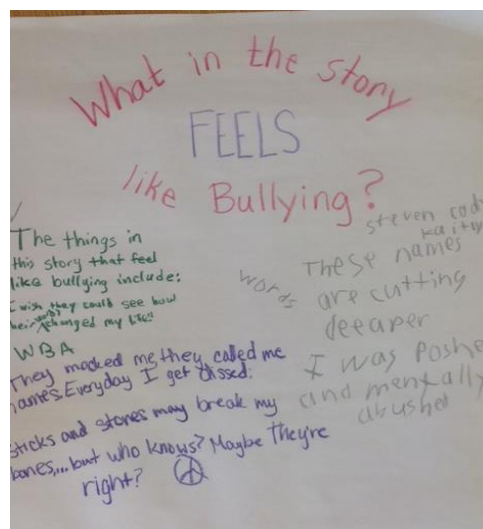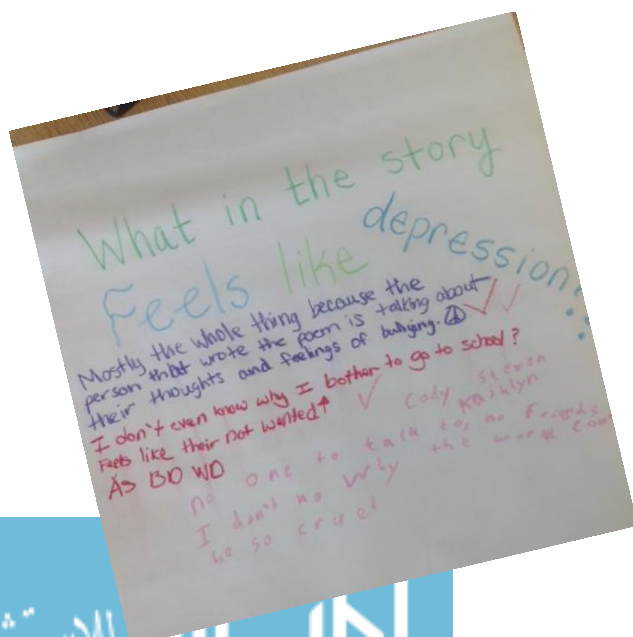
Figure 4.2- Carousel Questions with student group responses
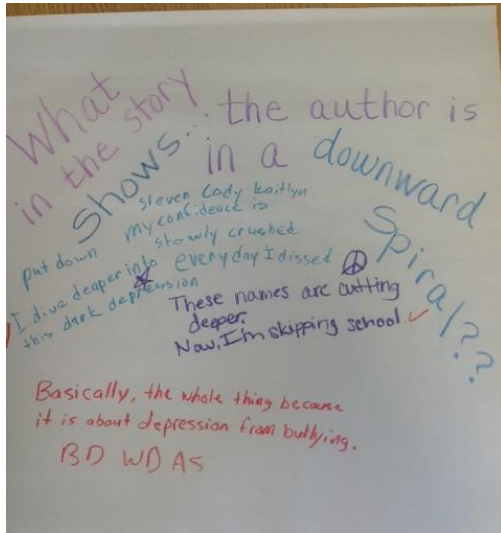
A closing Talking Circle followed. Samples from the case study discussions are documented in the table below. Special education students' comments are asterisked in blue (*).

Table 4.18: Case Study- Small group discussion & responses

Q1: Do students at your school discuss mental health issues, or is it taboo?	Q2: Is your school a safe space for students to discuss mental health issues	Q3: Does mental health still have a stigma in our society today?	Q4: Should students be allowed to publish mental health stories in the school newspaper?
No –we don't have a group to talk about them	Yes- we have people to help	Yes, people may stay away from people with mental illness	Yes- they should be allowed to express themselves
	It won't be safe, but good to tell about their problems (*)		
No students don't talk about their issues			No- their stories might lead to bullying
The topic is taboo	I think it is- not a lot of bad things happen here		No- you should not be able to write- other people know, could cause more depression
Students do not talk about their problems- you would be bullied (*)	Yes- you could tell teachers	Yes- it would mark you as a person who has lost their home or has depression	You should not publish about kids with problems

No we don't have a group (*)	Yes they can talk to adults	Yes- people stay away from them	Yes- you should hear their feelings and help people with illnesses
			Yes- we can get help and raise awareness!

In the closing Talking Circle, students appeared to this researcher in a different light- more confident in themselves, but also there seemed some uneasiness, a holding of more emotion, almost a sense of sadness, in regard to the reality of mental illness in teens, in particular in our region and even in their own school. The students were left to take the lead in the Talking Circle. The teacher and researcher commented only when/ if it seemed necessary to redirect or provide clarity. The goal was to decide how the unit should end- leaving with a sense of new knowledge or was there more that needed to be said and/ or done. An excerpt from the discussions follows. Special education students' comments are asterisked in blue (*).

Student 1: *We should start a group- it could bring the suicide rate down*

Student 2(*): *No one really expresses themselves here*

Student 3: *If we start a group, how do we do that? It would be hard to do but we could do it.*

Student 4 (*): *I'm concerned about people telling other people*

Student 5: *Popular kids might think it's dumb*

Student 6: *It could get on social media- you could be bullied or it could help*

Student 1: *If people were open, people would be more accepting*

Student 2 (*): *what if teachers bully?*

Student 1: *You might not want to hang out with people with stigmas*

Researcher: *May I just offer a question and give some input? How would you find out who needs/ wants help? And could you come to [a group] just to support someone? Who that help ease stigmas?*

Student 5: We should share our videos with everyone- get the message out

Student 6: Maybe we could put all of our movies together and make one big one!

Student 3: Then we need to talk to everyone about it and let them know it's ok.

Researcher: if I may make a suggestion here, you could put out a simple survey to all the high school students and see if there is any interest.

Student 8 (*): that's a good idea. We could give it our after our presentation

Researcher: ok, I love your enthusiasm and I will help in any way I can. Unfortunately due to time constraints in our classroom, we will need to continue this on our own time- lunch, mornings, after school, etc. If that's cool with you guys and you want to do this, I'll be there.

A vote was taken. The students unanimously voted to start the group. The group met a couple of times during lunch and homeroom. The researcher noted it was difficult to get kids together outside of the classroom for varying reasons- different schedules, time spent with other groups/ clubs, kids who rode the bus versus those who didn't, all appeared to play a factor in the idea losing momentum and eventually ceasing.

Teacher/ Researcher Reflections

Both the classroom teacher and researcher did end-of-unit reflections. The teacher recorded that she took on the role of 'observer' in this unit. She did not explain why. She did note that this unit was shorter due to time constraints, but did feel that the unit was a 'success'. She liked the idea of the small groups researching various mental illness issues and then creating "infomercials" about them. She was surprised and pleased that the students wanted to share their movies with the rest of the high school students for 'awareness to these topics'.

The researcher documented that this unit 'fittingly' began around Halloween- "scary" with the Jekyll and Hyde story. The students enjoyed the play and the movie, but really became engaged when they created their infomercials. There were three topics: ten school shootings, suicide, and depression. Students took on an action plan to merge the movies into one, then showing it to the rest of the student body. They also hoped to start a support group. The

researcher became somewhat frustrated with the lack of time and flexibility within the classroom schedule. As a result the researcher discussed with the classroom teacher the idea of continuing this topic outside of class. The classroom teacher concurred, stating it was a great idea, yet she never got involved. For example, one day when looking for a place for us to meet, she was asked if her room could be used. Her response was, "The library should be open". The researcher held the meeting in the library with the students; the classroom teacher did not show. Following is a sample from the summary of the domain for Unit 2. The remaining script from this domain can be found in Appendix E.

Table 4.19: Unit 2- Mental Health: Sample Summary of Domain: Open-Ended Questions/ Group Discussion

• Empowering students
  o Giving students a voice [3]
	o [3-] Unpacking Identity
	  [a1-] Who am I?
		[3a1-] "I am an artist"; "I love to read"; "I am a student and friend"; "I am a farmer"; "I am a kid"; "I am a rancher"

	[a2-] Why am I here?	[3a2-] "to show my beauty"; "to make a change"; "because of God"; "help others in need"; "to help the world"; "to stop world hunger"; "to help kids"; "to change the world"; "to learn"

o Semiotics [4]
  - Motivation
  - Tap emotions
  - Create desire to take action
	[a3-] What am I doing for others?	[3a3-] "set an example"; "trying to be nice"; "feeding the world by farming"; "help them through rough times"; "encouraging"; "raising awareness about slavery in the US"; "respecting them"; "helping slaves"; give good, food, money"

	[4-] Find Value/ Connect	_____ [4-] **(R) Do students at your school talk about mental health issues? Or is this topic taboo?** *"No, because we don't have a group for it/ for people to talk about it"* *"No- students don't talk about their issues"* *"Students do not talk about their problems; you would be bullied"* [A] *"People might make fun of them"* [B] *"No- we don't have open groups to talk about it"* [B] *"No- because we don't have a group"* [A] *"people can be cruel"* [B] **(R) Is your school a safe space for students to share their struggles?** *"It won't be safe but you should be able to tell people about the problem so people will help"* [A] *"Yes- we have people to help"* [B] *"I think you could tell the teachers"* [A] [A] *"No- I believe that people at our school would judge you"* [B] **(R)Should students be allowed to publish in their school paper personal struggles w/ mental illness like the girls in the article did?** *"Yes. People should be able to express themselves"* [B]

		"No- their stories might lead to bullying" [B]
		"We deserve to express our illnesses- freedom of speech" [B]
		"No- it might mark you" [A]
		"Yes- if it is their story they deserve a chance to tell it" [B]
		"yes- they will get help and it will raise awareness" [B]
		"It could help other students" [B]
		"people should hear their feelings and help people out with their illness" [A]

Unit 3: Helping Others

The third unit facilitated the infusion of a critical literacy model with the novel A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. The theme of this unit was "Helping Others". Students were given a pre-survey containing seven questions about the novel and author. A summary of the survey is incorporated into the table below. Student responses are marked as GE (General Education) or Special Education (SE).

Table 4.20: Pre- Survey- A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens is…	Writer GE; 2 SE	Painter: 1 GE	Politician 1 GE; 1 SE
A Christmas Carol is based on Dickens's own life	True 5 GE; 2 SE	False 3 GE; 1 SE	
The story A Christmas Carol is about:	A mean man who doesn't believe in Christmas 8 GE; 2 SE	People singing carols 1 SE	
In Dickens early life…	His father spent their money; he was poor; he had to work as a child 5 GE; 3 SE	He was born into wealth 2 GE	He traveled the world with his family 1 GE

The setting of the story is:	London, in the past 6 GE; 3 SE	New York, present day 2 GE	
A workhouse is:	A place where poor people worked & lived 7 GE; 1 SE	A nice place to work 2 SE	A place for rich people to live/ work 1 GE
One of the 'themes' in <u>A Christmas Carol</u> is:	The power of change and redemption 5 GE; 3 SE	You can't judge a book by its cover 3 GE	

In this unit several literacy strategies used in the prior units were similarly included in this one: reflective journaling, illustrations/ visualizations, symbolism, motifs, vocab/ word walls, dialogue board, and Talking Circles. Furthermore, two new strategies were initiated in this unit. The first was an "I-Search" project. The second was a strategy known as "Talking to the Text" (T4). Both were utilized for introducing and reading the Dickens's novel to help increase students' comprehension skills when trying to navigate through the difficult language often found in classic, historical texts.

The "I-Search" is inquiry-driven that emerges from an area of genuine interest instead of an assignment by a teacher that may have little relevance or interest for a particular student (Lyman, 2006). It empowers students by making their questions about themselves, their lives, and their world the focus of the research process (Filkins, 2015). Since the students had never been exposed to this skill, the researcher provided some direction to guide the students through the first-time experience. The I-Search when used in conjunction with a reading is done prior to reading the text in order to provide students with as much background knowledge as possible to support them as they commence reading. In this case, students were given several topics related

to the novel <u>A Christmas Carol</u> (Dickens, 1843/ 1979). For example, some of the topics were: Dickens childhood/ background; Dickens, the author; Workhouses- (subtopics: conditions, children in, tramps and vagrants); Life in 1824 London- (subtopics: medical care, work/ poverty, Christmas). Each topic was written on a slip of paper and put into a jar for students to draw from. All students were given the option to choose their own topic if they wished; none did. For this I-Search, students were informed this would be a 'mini- research' project. Students were given 45 minutes to find as much information as they could on their topic, jot it down on sticky notes, notecards, etc. and be ready to present their findings to the class. The researcher and teacher had topics as well, but were also available to support any students who were struggling. Upon completion of the research, students have one minute to share their findings to the class. The findings are then posted on a bulletin board to refer back to throughout the reading of the novel.

In the next strategy, students who use Talking to the Text (T4), use it as a tool to assist with constructing meaning as they interact with the text (Rowlands, 2007). T4 addresses the cognitive domain helping the reader break apart the text in order to find/remember critical information (Asaro & Chute, 2006). In the standard design, students are given a passage to read independently and encouraged to write in the margins, make notes, designate unfamiliar vocabulary, ask questions, and make comments and predictions (Rowlands, 2007; Asaro, et al, 2006). In pairs and then as a class students use their notes to help each other clarify meaning. Since the students in this study were not familiar with this strategy, the researcher modeled it and interacted with the students throughout the course of the novel to ensure they had a proper understanding of the method and to scaffold those learners identified as struggling/ at-risk readers. In conjunction with this, students were also assigned vocabulary from each stave. Each student received no more than two to three words. Each student had to find the definition as it

related to the text and be prepared to provide meaning in one word (synonym) or phrase using laymen's terms. The excerpt below demonstrates the researcher modeling the T4 strategy using a passage from A Christmas Carol. The researcher's comments are in bold, parentheses. The words underlined were assigned vocabulary words.

It was a strange figure -- like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man… **(I am picturing an old man who is the size of a 2-year-old…weird [*students giggle*]),**

…viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. **(Who had supernatural medium? Diminished? [*Students provide their working definitions/meanings to the class*])**

Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. **(Bloom was on the skin…I don't know what that means… Maybe, it was new, fresh skin????)**

The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. **(I am hearing the word 'white' used along with lustrous and sheen…white in literature is symbolic of purity- who had the word 'luster'? Can you clarify that meaning for us? [*Student provides definition*]. That makes sense then that it would have luster and sheen…)**

It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. **(I wonder why there is this contradiction- opposites with winter and summer…is it a motif? Or symbolic of young and old? Good and evil?)**

But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; **(there is the use of those words again: bright, clear, light…what does that symbolize again in literature? [*Students respond: "purity"*])**

(Dickens, p.29-30)

In another activity, students reflected upon a quote from the novel, *"There are many things that do us good without making us rich (Dickens, 1843/ 1979)"*. Students were asked to

reflect on what this passage meant to them and what if anything should or could be done to put their words into action. Excerpts from students' journals are documented below. In vivo, emotion, and versus coding were used to help identify themes and patterns. Special Education student responses are asterisked in blue (*).

Table 4.21: Journal Reflection- Quote

Emotion	Reason/ Explain	Action and/ or Reaction
Feel good (*)	If you do something good, you feel better. If you don't you feel bad- think about it.	Give food, blankets, water, shelter
Kindness	These are all nice things everyone should do	Give food, money to homeless; give someone bullied a high 5 or smile
We gained the feeling of doing something good for others	Think of others; help others	For example, we raised money for slavery in ND
❖ Satisfaction (*)	This [charity] will reflect on you in the future	Do something amazing; charities, help people
❖ Kindness	We can do good things without benefitting from it- don't be selfish; make the world a better place.	Give money to the poor Help others
Caring	Do something helpful to society not for money, because you care	Volunteer at a homeless shelter; work at home for elderly; search for missing people
Great	When you are rich, it means you are wealthy, not that you did good things	Fundraiser for our charity

❖ **Emotion Coding**

In a cross-text analysis, students were provided a quote from Calvin Coolidge on the dialogue board. The students were asked to assign an emotion to the quote, give a reason and/ or

explain his/ her interpretation of the text, and finally, state an action or reaction that supported their feelings or interpretation. The goal of these reflections was to ultimately have students acknowledge their thoughts and feelings, and voice them, then in turn allow others to do the same. The result of this creates a sense of empowerment supported by the critical literacy model. Samples of this activity have been entered into the table below. Special Education student responses are asterisked in blue (*).

Table 4.22: Dialogue Board- "Christmas is not a time nor a season, it is a state of mind" (Calvin Coolidge, n.d.)"

Emotion	Reason	Action/ Reaction
Peace (*)	[It's] not about presents; wars should stop	People who've done bad and the poor should get presents
Happy	Be good so people will be good to you	Feed the poor
Cheer (*)	Have a good heart	Give to the poor
Thankful	Think of others	Have patience and forgiveness because people make mistakes
Peace, goodwill	Christmas is Life. Always believe	It is a time of giving
Be good (*)	It is a time to stay together, to give to people with no home, no family	Have fun; spend time with family; care for others
Grateful, peace	Think of others	Be grateful of others for what they do and give

Other activities used in this unit to help students find meaning in texts (Semiotics) were through the use of vocabulary walls and visualizations. Examples of this are found below.
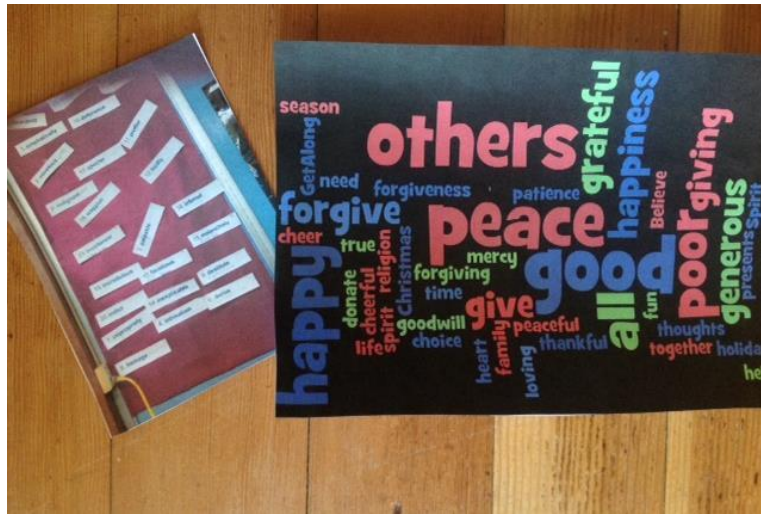
Figure 4.3- A vocabulary wall and Word Cloud help students find meaning in texts

Figure 4.4 & 4.5 - Students use visualizations and adjectives to compare and contrast Scrooge and Marley

In one of the final/ closing activities, students were led to a discussion to determine what the 'point' of this last unit was and what, if anything, they felt they needed to or should do in regard to taking action. It is necessary to point out that during this time, the school was engaged in a lot of activity in regard to donating. Additionally, the researcher is the founder of an organization that adopts soldiers overseas every year. Consequently, at this point the school was already doing a food drive, a blanket drive, and collecting goods and writing cards to the soldiers. The researcher was concerned about how this would impact the students' thoughts or

decisions to take any further action related to this last unit, 'helping others'. Additionally, it was one week prior to the holiday break, and time was of the essence. The guiding question asked of the students was, *"Why is it important to take care of those in need- especially at Christmastime? And how does this relate to any/ all of our units we have engaged in this past semester?"* (I.e., Slavery, Mental Health, Helping Others) Students chose to discuss this question in a Talking Circle. Each student had an opportunity to respond or pass. None of the students chose to pass. A synopsis of the discussion has been consolidated in the table below. Special Education student responses are asterisked in blue (*).

Table 4.23: Talking Circle- Closing Discussion

Why is it important…?	How does this relate to this/ other units?
Others can have a happy life, knowing they have a friend; Christmas is about giving	Got Scrooge to be kinder [Natalie*] is giving her time/ talent to help human trafficking victims We support and care for those with mental illnesses * Pseudonym
It is a time to stick together. People with no family, we make them happy (*)	Scrooge is sad, alone; wished he had a family Slaves are people too, so we treat them the same Suicide and depression happens more at Christmas
Spread hope, joy through the world (via our soldiers); helping across the world (*)	It is important to give thanks
Give, be kind- it is the giving season. Come together for those in need	We don't want to end up grumpy like Scrooge Our soldiers are helping others so they deserve gifts, too [People] need comfort; feeling awfully lonely out there
Soldiers give us safety and hope; they make us stronger; families are worried about them	[Those with] mental issues are people too. Our soldiers free slaves
Power of one (*)	If we don't give, it's like we don't care- like Scrooge in the past; when we give we are like Scrooge in the present No one did anything about slaves 'til Abe Lincoln Nobody has done anything about mental illness

Christmas is a time of hope, happiness, to be with family, but soldiers don't get to come home at Christmas. We need to show we care	The nephew in <u>A Christmas Carol</u> says, "people help others by giving them hope and happiness"
It makes people feel cared about; feel good about yourself- and good deeds	The ghost is trying to show Scrooge happiness from his past We did good deeds to help end slavery
We should care about and help soldiers	The ghosts are trying to help Scrooge; we are trying to help soldiers Soldiers are away from their families; slaves are separated from theirs
Christmas is a time to help one another	Ghosts help Scrooge realize what he had to do People do good deeds by getting kids out of slavery Those who do their best to help others [with mental illnesses]
Christmas is a time of giving, a time of happy. People in need are not – we need to help	Scrooge realizes he needs to do good deeds It takes generous people to help them survive [slaves and those with mental illness]

At the end of the Talking Circle, the researcher told the students they had all given many valid reasons as to why it was important to take care of others, particularly at this time of year. It was likewise pointed out that the students had done a wonderful job relating their thoughts to all of the units addressed during the semester. The final point that needed to be addressed was what did the students want or feel needed to happen to end this unit and semester. After much dialogue amongst the students, the overarching theme and final unanimous decision came down to the students feeling like they as a student body were already doing so much to help people at this time that the only thing left to do was to contribute to at least one of the organizations, if you hadn't already, and to make sure that the school kept doing these things in years to come because they were so important.

Teacher/ Researcher Reflections

The English teacher noted that she had been teaching A Christmas Carol for "*some time*" in 7th grade and at this time of year when "*one is asked to show goodwill towards others*". She also pointed out that this is the time when several school organizations conduct food and blanket drives, and have the adopted soldier mission, giving her concern about what more the students may want to do. The teacher went on to mention the I-Search projects and the even she learned "*where we get treadmills from*". She further commented on the 'Talking to the Text' strategy and noted that it was a "*great technique for this age group…it allows one to stop and discuss the questions they have about the text.*" She went on to say, "I would certainly like to use the T4 in my other classes as we read novels." Overall, the general education teacher rated this unit as a "good one". She noted,

> "*Students seemed to dig deeper into the text when going through the book using the T4. [The researcher] also spent more time on each stave than I normally do, but by doing so, students could get a clearer and deeper understanding of the story. Overall, it was a success!*"

The researcher provided thoughts of feeling very stressed and rushed approaching this unit: "*The time constraints were weighing in on me. All the things I wanted to do/ needed to do were falling by the wayside in lieu of 'finishing' by Christmas*"

Overall, the researcher felt the I-Search projects were a success. The students appeared to enjoy them and had fun learning what others had found out about their topics. The researcher also noted one question with the vocab/ word wall strategy- students really only learned about their assigned word(s) and had only minute exposure during reading of the other word. Given the amount of difficult vocabulary in historical texts and the time constraints of the classroom, the

researcher was not sure how to resolve this dilemma for future teaching moments. The researcher concluded her reflection stating, *"We finished the book before Christmas though I felt 'under the gun'...there were so many more things I wanted to do- I could have gone on for another two months! But overall, my experience with these kids and what they taught me, I will never forget"*. A sample from the summary of domains for the third unit follows. The balance can be found in Appendix F.

Table 4.24: Unit 3- Poverty/ Goodwill: Sample Summary of Domain: Open-Ended Questions/ Group Discussions

Purpose	Methodology / Example	Strategy/ Actual text, quote, exchange **(R)= Researcher; A= SE; B- GE**

• Empowering students[6]
  o Semiotics
   - Making connections
    - To life
    - To the text
    - Perceptions
	Journal Reflection[6] **3** w/ whole group discussion after
	
	a- Why is it important?
	
	b- How does this idea relate to what we have learned thus far?
		[6]- **Ex 3:** *"Why is it important to take care of those in need- especially at Christmas time?" And… how does this idea relate to any/ all of our units from this semester? (slavery, mental health, helping others)*
		
		a- So others can have a happy life; Christmas is about giving [B]
		
		Makes us stronger [B]
		
		It is a time to stick together; people with no family, we make them happy [A]
		
		Spread hope, joy, through the world; helping across the world [A]
		Give, be kind, it is the giving season; come together for those in need [B]
		
		[shows] the power of one [A]
		
		Christmas is a time of hope, happiness, to be with family; show we care [B]
		
		Makes people feel cared about; feel good about ourselves [B]
		
		We should care and help [B]
		
		Christmas is time to help one another [B]
		
		Christmas is a time of giving, time of 'happy'; people in need are not- we need to help [B]
		
		_____
		
		b- If we don't give, it's like we don't care- like Scrooge [A]
		
		In Christmas Carol, the nephew says, "People help others by giving them hope & happiness" [B]
		
		Slavery: we did a good deed to help end slavery [B]
		
		The ghosts [in Scrooge] are trying to help Scrooge; we are trying to help our soldiers [B]
		
		Slavery: people do good deeds by getting kids out of slavery [B]
		
		Slavery & Mental Health: it takes generous people to help these people survive [B]
		
		Scrooge is sad/ alone; wishes he had a family- slaves are people, too so we treat them the same [as us]; suicide and depression happen more at Christmas [A]

		Those with mental health issues are people, too [B]
		Windie is giving her time/ talent to help victims of human trafficking; we need to support and care for those with mental health issues [B]
		Our soldiers help to free slaves [B]
		It is important to give thanks [A]
		We don't want to end up grumpy like Scrooge; [our soldiers] need comfort- [they] are feeling awfully lonely out there [B]

Summary

The semester and subsequent end of this study was culminated with a final Talking Circle (transcript in Appendix E) and exit interviews completed by both students and the teacher.

Phase 3: Perceptions and Attitudes

Talking Circle (Closing of the unit)

To culminate the end of the third unit and the end of the research phase, the researcher conducted a final Talking Circle to get insight into how students found meaning in their learning during this time; specifically, what strategies, if any, were used during this research phase that helped students to find deeper meaning in the texts. An excerpt from the Talking Circle transcript is below. The entire transcript can be found in Appendix G. The researcher was noted as "R". A pseudo-name was assigned to the English teacher, "Mrs. M". Special Education student responses were asterisked in blue (*).

R- ok, what I want you talk about now is…your thoughts on how we approached learning about Dickens' and A Christmas Carol…ok…basically, how you found meaning in the book. For example, did it help you that we did research before you read the book? Did it help you that I read the book out loud? Did journal

questions, dialogue board questions, talking to each other…all those different things we did, focus in on maybe one, two, three things that you think helped you to understand this book better than you might have done on your own…because Dickens is a very challenging author to read, its old, its tough language, um its tough to interpret what he's talking about, so I'm trying to understand if any of the things we did in here helped you better understand or helped you enjoy the book better, and if not….you can say that, too…I'm just trying to get your read on how it went, this unit.

S1- I think that reading it out loud helped because…and you stopping to explain it sometimes because he writes with…like he writes for more adults, that's the way it seems…with different terminology that I don't understand…so it helped for me to read out loud

S2- umm…the reading out loud helped, cuz it kind of helped explain some of the stuff we didn't understand since it was like "English talk", kind of hard to understand…then the vocab, the stuff we did on the wall and stuff, that helped, too and um…the…questions we did..the…

R- the focus questions?

S2, yeah, those helped to understand the story better…yeah

S3*- I absolutely have nothing to say

R- ok, well, we're going to come back to you on this one, so I want you to think

S3*- ok

R- because there must be something that happened (inaudible) with your learning over the past month or so

S4- what was...can you repeat the question again?

R- The question is…how did we help you to get meaning from this book? Were there things that we did that helped you to understand this novel, cuz it is a tough novel. Some of the strategies we used in class that helped you to understand what this story was really about.

S5* um…I think reading it out loud helped cuz, like, there were some really big words that we wouldn't be able to pronounce…and you pronounced 'em, and if you didn't know them you had Mrs. M look 'em up which helped us figure out what the words meant.

S6 um…I liked the part when we'd be reading and there came upon something we didn't really understand…we would like stop reading and like…talk it over, and discuss and try to help the class figure out what the word or phrase actually meant.

S7- I think it helped looking up what some of the words were on the computer and like workhouses and all that…

R- the pre-research we did?

S7- yeah and because now then we probably wouldn't have known what they were

S8- I liked when you read it cuz you sounded more fluent the like the rest of us would be…so it sounded better…and it wasn't different voice, it was just one voice, so you kinda grew on it

S9- I think reading it out loud helped because we could umm... know what it was and if we didn't know what a word was, you would look it up and, um, when we didn't understand it we would talk it over, and that really helped for the focus questions.

S10- I think doing the research ahead of time help cuz otherwise we wouldn't, I wouldn't have known what…like…a workhouse was or what they did

S11 - I think the journal entries helped cuz it helped you know what happened and reflect on it and uh… reading out loud and the focus questions

S12*- what helped me the most is the vocab because…I learned the definitions when I wrote them down and I knew what the words meant and what pictures that it would create in my…our…minds when I thought about it.

R- Excellent

Additionally, the researcher asked the participant teacher her perspective on how students found meaning throughout the course of these three units. An excerpt from that conversation follows. The transcript in its entirety can be found in Appendix H. The researcher was noted as "R". The English teacher is noted as "M"

R- Overall, your opinion/ assessment/ interpretation…I read all three of your unit reflections, but maybe just kind of in a summary ...what are your thoughts…[how students found meaning]…

M- ok, I think the students got more in depth in their understanding…with the methods that you brought into them…they haven't been exposed to them before, and I think they really got some meaning…the Frederick Douglas story… I think they really know things about slavery now…and have opened their eyes to it, you know even how we brought it into ND, the human trafficking kind of thing, ummm, and even the Christmas Carol, I liked how you talked to the text with them and I thought that brought it out, cuz then you could stop whenever, and you didn't just read the chapter and then, "Oh, let's go back''-ok, you did it as you came to it, if they had any questions…

Summary of Taxonomies

The four tables below consist of samples from two student and two teacher analyses of taxonomies. They appear in the following order: (1) Student Entry Survey; (2) Teacher Entry Survey; (3) Student Exit Survey; (4) Teacher Exit Survey. The taxonomies in their entirety can be found in Appendices I- L.

Table 4.25: Themes for Perceptions about Self/ Reading (Student Entry Survey Sample)				
I read when I'm…	**Bored** Need to **escape** **Sad** **Want to learn** something My **friends** are reading the same book **Feel alone**/ need company I **want to think** about something I **do not ever choose** to read I read all the time for **many reasons**	**Emotion** *Motivational Triggers* **Social Acceptance** **Choices**	**Bored** Need to **escape** **Sad** **Want to learn** something My **friends** are reading the same book **Feel alone**/ need company I **want to think** about something I **do not ever choose** to read I read all the time for **many reasons**	**Emotion** *Motivational Triggers* **Social Acceptance** **Choices**
Improve up to three things as a reader…	Interest in **other genres** Read aloud & **not**	**Goals/ Aspirations**	Read **harder words** Be more **fluent** **Knowledge of**	**Goals/ Aspirations**

	stutter **Remember** what I read Read **harder words** Be more **fluent** Read **faster** **Concentration** To **read well** **Understand** better Read **bigger books**		**words** To **read well**	
Help you understand the text better…	Have **someone else read aloud** to you **Talk** about what you've read **with others** **Take notes** **Read silently** to yourself during class **Talk in groups** about what you read **Talk as a class** about what you read	**Ways kids find meaning** *Semiotics*	Have **someone else read aloud** to you **Talk** about what you've read **with others** **Drawing/ doing art** in response to what you've read **Read silently** to yourself during class **Talk in groups** about what you read **Talk as a class** about what you read	**Ways kids find meaning** *Semiotics*
Strategies I use when I am "stuck" in reading…	**Skip** the **difficult part**/ **Come back** later **Reread** it Read it **aloud** Put into my **own words** Look at **other info on page** (pictures, graphics, headings, etc) **Explain to someone else**	**Learning Strategies** *Semiotics*	**Skip** the **difficult part** & **come back** later **Reread** it Read it **aloud** Put into my **own words** Look at **other info on page** (pictures, graphics, headings, etc) **Explain to someone else**	**Learning Strategies** *Semiotics*

	Ask others for help		**Ask others** for help	
	Try to **draw it**		Try to **draw it**	
	Ask **someone else to read aloud** to me		Ask **someone else to read aloud** to me	

Table 4.26: Themes for Perceptions about Self/ Teaching (Teacher Entry Survey Sample)		
Question	**Response**	**Cover Term**
I. What are your perceptions about teachers/ teaching? o Reasons you became a teacher o Current role as a teacher o How has this role changed, if at all, over time? o Are there more demands on teachers today? o How does knowing this impact how you teach?	[1-] **Inspired** by teachers; wanted to **inspire others** [2-] Not so much instructor as **adviser** [3-] Early in my career it was more of a leader in the classroom; now it is more **mentor** [4-] Much more **demanding**- more **technology**, more **rigorous content** [5-] **To stay relevant I must** also **change** with the class	**Emotion** **Role** **Demands** *Reflection/ Self-evaluation*
II. Philosophy of teaching o What is your philosophy? o Views on students with special needs (learning disabilities) in the GE classroom? o Views on collaborative teaching? o Comfort level teaching	The practice of gaining knowledge **empowers people**; **knowledge is power**; **words** are power **Time** is a big factor- it takes these students longer to complete certain tasks than their peers. This can be alleviated with **accommodations** I know the student(s) **want to be with their peers** and **treated equally**. That is a **"big deal"** for them. I absolutely think [teachers] should- they get a **better view of the issues** the other has to deal with. It could be an **"eye-opener"** for both teachers I am **open**; this **ensures the accommodations** are being followed according to the student's IEP Pretty **comfortable**; I have had my	**Teaching philosophies** *Empowerment* **Demands** **Democracy** *Inclusiveness* **Collaboration** *Open to Growth* *Experience*

students with LD?
  - Training you have had to teach students with LD
  - Training you need
	fair share of experience with students of all abilities.
	
	I have **been to [such trainings]** throughout my career
	
	More and more students are diagnosed with Autism; it would be **beneficial to take a refresher course**.
		Comfort level/ Confidence

III. Other thoughts/ concerns you have about the education of students with LD?	Sometimes people **make decisions for students without their say**. Sometimes just **asking the student** what they **want/ need** in their education for them to succeed would be most helpful. I feel **some are able to do a lot more than parents allow** them to do.	**Empowering students**

Table 4.27: Themes for Perceptions About Self/ Learning (Student Exit Survey Sample)

Question	Response GE	Cover Term	Response SE	Cover Term
Should ALL kids be part of (inclusion) the same learning environment & experiences?	Yes- you need people that are **good at different things** **Find a method(s) we all can understand**- to be able to **work together** and **take apart stories** and learn. [All kids] should have the same experience. **Learn to be you; stand up for yourself, make a difference**	**INCLUSION/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING** *Positive Learning Communities*	[Separating kids] is **not fair**. Kids **need to learn the same**- if they miss out they don't know what to do and everyone is ahead of them. We all should be **happy, laughing- coloring, working in group, talk together, work together**	**INCLUSION/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING** *Positive Learning Communities*
	I think they should take a **separate class**- then they wouldn't feel so **pressured** to do something at a higher level	**SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS**	**No one gets left out** **Some should not be**- they might **not be at as high a level of reading** but **reading aloud** is helpful so they can **be a part of class**	**EMOTIONS/ ISOLATION** **SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS**
	Yes- **we are a class/ team** and **shouldn't break up**. Everyone should be included- **learning together** so you can **communicate better** with each other Yes- **a person does not feel good when they are left out**	**INCLUSION/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**		

	In some ways **no**- if they don't understand what is happening, they **need education on their level** I don't think they should because some kids **have disabilities and with help, they can overcome** them	**EMOTIONS/ ISOLATION** **SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS**		
Themes of Social Justice- necessary & important in learning or not	yes- then we are **acknowledging the situation** Very **important** to know before you take action so you **know how to help** So if [someone] came into contact with something like this they **wouldn't be scared or surprised**	**ROLE/ ~~IMPORTANCE~~ OF SOCIAL JUSTICE** *Social Awareness* *Sociocultural Perspectives*	Yes- to **take a stand**; to **help others** in need Yes- because **if you don't know** about these things, **how can you help**? It is **necessary** you might be able to **take action and you could save lives**	**ROLE/ ~~IMPORTANCE~~ OF SOCIAL JUSTICE** *Social Awareness* *Sociocultural Perspectives*
What strategies (if any) helped you find meaning-or learn better?	Talking To The Text (**T4**) "The T4 helped because then I **understood what Dickens** was talking about." "Definitely!" **Dialogue Board/ Journal** **Group**	**~~HOW KIDS FIND MEANING - SEMIOTICS~~**	Talking To The Text (**T4**) **Dialogue Board/ Journal** **Group Discussions** **Think-Pair-Share** **Visualizations** **I-Search** Projects [pre-reading] **Vocab** [pre-	**~~HOW KIDS FIND MEANING- SEMIOTICS~~**

	Discussions		reading]	
	Think-Pair-Share		"sometimes **hard for me to find definitions**"	
	Visualizations			
	I-Search Projects [pre-reading]		Watching the **movie** before or after the text	
	"The I-search **helped me to know** what workhouses and other things like that were"		"It **helped me get a picture in my head**"	
	Vocab [pre-reading]		**Connecting** the novel/ text **with current issues** in the world	
	Watching the **movie** before or after the text			
	Connecting the novel/ text **with current issues** in the world			

Table 4.28: Themes for Perceptions about Self/ Teaching (Teacher Exit Survey Sample)

Question	Response	Cover Term
I. Teaching Beliefs/ Practices o **"Talking to the Text"** (Reading strategy) - So, is that something you had not done before? - Is that something you would do in the future?	Correct, we would **just read the chapter;** [the students] would **listen on tape** Yah, probably. I thought it was a **more effective** way	**Teaching Practices** *Reflective Practitioner*
o **"Buckle Down"** workbooks vs. **Critical Literacy** What is the choice to use the BD books versus continuing a lesson like…the way we did this semester? [1] And in order to do lessons like we did it would also take more time are you saying? [2]	The reason I teach BD…is to **get them used to the vocab**….it's also my way of **hitting all the standards**…I tend to do Scope, I know I'm hitting some…this is my reassurance that I'm **teaching what I'm supposed to be teaching**	**Teaching Practices**
o **Making decisions** What decision do you make as a teacher to stay with the kids if they want to take action (Critical Literacy model) or move on because you have curriculum to 'cover'? [1]	I think **we could go off** from this, **get deeper** into….like today we did author's craft- today was my introductory; they know it now, so I could go into Scope and talk about author's craft in that story. So this is **giving them the foundation**	**Teaching Practices**
II. Semiotics Overall, throughout the whole unit, were there things that stood out to you about how kids found meaning and particularly how special education	Well, I think **everybody finds meaning when it relates to them**, ok? So if it…I like the fact that they **each had their vocab**	**Finding meaning- Semiotics**

		Teaching Practices
students- our kids with LD- how did they find meaning? We had originally talked about bringing Shakespeare into the classroom…and it ended up being Dickens at the 7th grade level, which is still just as much a historical author [these texts] are generally hard for kids to understand Multiple ways to represent? Any teaching practices you would now employ in your classroom?	**word** and as you came to it in the book, they had to **jump in and tell what it was**…it **found meaning, brought meaning** to those [words] very much so Because they are in that **old time language**…they're **not used to** how we spoke back then….it was a lot of 'these' and 'thous'…so [students] would **really struggle** with that…when I teach it, we have the **modern version** right next to it Right I have already put to use the **Dialogue Board** and "**tickets out**". I observed the **Talking Circles** and would like to see how older students would view that.	**Struggles in learning** *Comprehension* *Exposure to varying texts* **Effective Learning Strategies**

Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the data collected during the course of this study. It addressed each of the three main questions posited for this study through a qualitative, ethnographic methodology. In general, the data supports the use of a critical literacy model to engage and enhance learning in students with learning disabilities. The next phase of the study, Chapter 5, will weave together common threads as well as unravel some of the unique insights that each participant contributed to this exploration. A detailed discussion of the research questions in relation to the data analysis will follow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of a critical literacy model on teacher perspectives and student learning when it is infused into the daily curriculum. Most specifically the goal of this study was to identify the role that critical literacy plays in students with learning disabilities and whether or not their learning was enhanced as a result. Further, the study sought to ascertain the impact of a critical literacy model on teacher belief systems and finally, whether or not semiotics has a purpose in learning as well. To accomplish these goals it was necessary to gain some pre-insight into the perspectives and beliefs of the students- both general and special education, as well as the classroom teacher. It was of particular interest to analyze the perspectives of the general education students compared to their special education peers to see if there were vast differences in their learning preferences, styles, and perceptions. Additionally, it was important to understand the philosophies and perceptions of the general education teacher prior to implementing the model to see whether or not her perspectives and/ or belief systems influenced the study, changed over time, or remained the same. Related to this effort it became necessary to reach an understanding of how students learn best, how they find meaning in texts, and what, if anything, motivates them to not only learn, but to take action from their learning experiences. Determining what 'motivation' is and how that ideal connects to learning assumed a high degree of importance in this study. Once these fundamental steps were achieved, the researcher was able to move forward. This chapter reports the conclusions and recommendations that resulted from this study.

Discussion

Three fundamental questions framed this research:

1) Can critical literacy serve as a vehicle for learning?

2) What role does critical literacy play in students identified with learning disabilities?

    a. What are the current teaching practices and belief systems of teachers related to students with LD?

    b. What impact does critical literacy have on these belief systems?

3) What role does Semiotics play in a critical literacy model and how students find and make meaning?

The research questions were answered by themes that emerged from interview data, transcript/ data analysis and were reported in Chapter 4.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Theme One: Critical Literacy can serve as a vehicle for learning

Researchers agree that what is now moving to the forefront of schooling is the notion that our students need an education that provides critical engagement due to what is undeniably an ever-changing and more global society (Luke, 2003; Kohn, 2008). In a *Critical Literacy* model, students read, analyze, and evaluate texts within a socio-culture framework (Lenski, 2008). Critical literacy moves beyond the traditional perception that reading is simply about comprehending the author's message; it involves developing a set of beliefs about reading that focus on examining a texts social and cultural implications (Lewison et al, 2002; Read Ontario, 2009; Shanklin 2009). Participants in this study were exposed to a wide range of experiences interacting with both historical and current, modern-day texts. Participants in this study read, analyzed, and evaluated texts over the course of three units. Each unit held an overarching theme for the students to refer back to and on. Unit One's theme was "Slavery"; Unit Two- "Mental Health"; and Unit Three- "Poverty/ Goodwill". These units are all described in detail in Chapter

4. Both the teacher and students participated in surveys, journal reflections, and a variety of other classroom activities as a way to infuse the critical literacy model and to have a way to analyze interactions, reactions, and outcomes. Data collected around these units were documented and stored in an electronic data base system at the time of occurrence. The findings suggest that critical literacy can be a strong motivational factor for learning.

Students in this study reported a commonality in their emotions throughout each of the three units in this study. As was reported in Chapter 4, emotions such as shock, disbelief, anger, sadness, agitation, and sorrow were just a few of the words students offered in reaction to the texts. In a critical literacy model, learning and curriculum is centered on and connected to real life- past experiences and the meaningful present (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 1999; Peterson, 1992). Students in this study were exposed to historical texts on slavery, and the classics Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde and A Christmas Carol. The issues/ themes in these texts were then presented in current- day texts containing the same themes, noted in the titles of the three instructional units presented here and in Chapter 4. Researchers Dewey (1938) and Capra (1982) state that as students dive into these texts they can begin to consider questions of power, fairness, and equity. When students question texts and engage in dialogue as a result of text interrogation, they begin to reveal their own perspectives as well as that of others (Vasquez, 2000). Critical literacy seeks to create classroom environments where students make connections and respond in thoughtful ways through dialogue, personal writing, drama, visual arts and technology/ media (Creighton, 1997). In all three units, the response of the student participants overwhelmingly presented a desire for a call to action.

In Dimension 3 of the critical literacy strand, there is an appeal to focus on socio-political issues where teachers and their students go beyond the personal, redefine literacy, and use it to

reshape their lives (Lewison et al, 2002). By the end of each unit students had clearly voiced a need to take action. Requests to "make a plan", "do something", asking "how to help", and "what more could be done" were all outlined in Chapter 4. The teacher and researcher in this study left each unit 'open' at the end to allow for students to voice their thoughts and ideas and give direction to the outcomes. Along the way, teachers work to implement structures that maintain a focus on student learning, bring multiple perspectives into conversations, and balance safety and risk (Friedrich & McKinney, 2010). The teacher participant in this study agreed prior to commencement of the study to allow the students to take a direction and/ or any action in each unit as they saw fit. This supports the teacher stance of the critical literacy model as reported by Read Ontario (2009): Students need chances to stand up for things they believe in, too; to stand and clarify issues and relationships that are important to them and their future. One thing that became apparent during the course of this study was the teacher participant showed a clear sense of frustration for the lack of time in the confines of the school day and curriculum. Therefore, *time* became a significant factor in the outcomes of this study. By the end of the second unit, the teacher participant worked with the researcher to redefine the units and eliminate some of the activities in order to meet the semester deadline for grades. Further it was determined that the action the students wanted to take in Unit 2 would have to occur outside the classroom setting during students study halls and/ or before/ after school. Although the teacher participant was supportive of this plan, the findings note that the teacher participant did not offer her own time to help outside the classroom. Teachers utilizing a critical literacy model develop an activist perspective toward their role and responsibility as educators, redefining what 'basic skills' means, continuing to empower students, and understanding the importance of literacy and how it can help marginalized readers find authentic purpose in reading (Franzak, 2006). Sze (2007)

goes on to say, "Teachers must believe that their behaviors can affect the education of their students. They must recognize that they have the capacity and the power to make key decisions which will affect their role and their students' production". If you are going to take important steps to radically improve your students' experiences in reading, you will need to start by owning the problems in your classroom and school (Calkins, et al, 2012).

Therefore, one question that remains to be discussed is: how do teachers find/ make time within their classrooms to fully implement a critical literacy model?

Theme two: Semiotics plays a role in a critical literacy learning model

A second theme that emerged from the data analysis was semiotics plays a key role in how students find and make meaning in their learning. Semiotics is how people make meaning and is another critical avenue to literacy. Semiotics is the study of signs in language systems and has evolved from a study of how linguistic codes communicate meaning to include cultural elements as well (Chandler, 2013; Moore, 1998). As students investigate new ways of making meaning with language and connect that knowledge to the complex world of signs and symbols outside the school they gain access to literacies that might not otherwise be available to them (Chandler, 2013). The participants in this study were exposed to two classic novels and a very raw historical view of slavery from the perspective of the slaves. These texts were then connected to current day texts and issues that the teacher participant and researcher hoped would have relevance to the students. As Gainer (2007) reports, "When students are engaged and interested in what they are reading, the opportunity for learning increases dramatically". This is the point where semiotics and critical literacy collide, and where students begin to not only recognize but challenge those who hold the power and further begin to question that power as it marginalizes certain people in our culture, world and in the very texts we read (Luke, 2002).

Students in this study, collectively agreed, as reported in Chapter 4, that one of the key ways they found meaning in texts was through a process called "Talking to the Text" or "T4". The teacher participant concurred, stating that she felt that the use of the T4 in such complex texts as A Christmas Carol, was "a great technique for this age group." She went on to say that she found it "very effective". In Moore's research (1998) he affirms that teachers must allow students to see that classic literary works such as Shakespeare do not exist in some pure realm of thought but exist in a world that is the same world as theirs. The students were shocked when they became aware of how slaves said they were treated (historically), but they were even further dismayed when they learned that slavery still existed today, inclusive of and in their own surrounding community. This was the point where students' emotions took over and they wanted to take action. Consequently, one of the second ways students in this study unanimously found and made meaning from the texts was by connecting the texts to current and relevant issues occurring in their lives and the world today. Bu having the students exposed to multiple texts in multiple formats, students were able to garner a multitude of stories and perspectives. Moore (1998), tells us that teachers must open the way between literary text and the social text in which we live (Moore, 1998).

Understanding how semiotics connects to critical literacy pedagogy is vital if we want to support and empower students to be critical thinkers. For example, it is known that reading to children is a holistic strategy which significantly enhances literacy development; and that children with disabilities develop socially and academically when they have increased opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers (Peterson, et al, 1997; Vasquez, 2000). By merging semiotics with critical literacy into our classrooms we are acknowledging that literacy

exists in a world of institutional structures and political forces within which our students live (Chandler, 2013; Luke, 2002; Moore, 1998).

Theme three: Teacher beliefs and practices do impact learning in students with learning disabilities.

Educational research has long promoted the degree to which teachers provide an effective and equitable inclusive education may depend to a large extent on the attitudes and beliefs teachers hold regarding their abilities to teach students with disabilities and their willingness to assume responsibility for the achievement of all students assigned to their classrooms (Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2000). What was evident in this study was there was very little difference in the way general education and special education students are motivated to learn, how they find and make meaning, and what prompts them to take action. In this study as Chapter 4 revealed, both general and special education students overwhelmingly demonstrated three things that motivated and helped them learn: tapping their emotions, relevance, and connecting to their own lives. These findings (reported in Chapter 4) suggest that semiotics in critical literacy are a strong motivational factor for learning across all students. Additionally, these discoveries are broadly in line with the current research of Peterson (1992), Kohn (1999), Lewison et al (2002), and Sze (2007), and are consistent with the earlier works of researchers such as Dewey (1938), Freire (1970), and Vygotsky (1978).

Moreover, the results of this study run counter to the conventional and widely expressed view that special education students need to be separated from their peers. Current research affirms there is little evidence to support that children experiencing difficulties learning to read, even those with identifiable learning disabilities, need radically different sorts of supports than children at low risk (Snow, et al, 1998). Snow et al (1998), go on to say that childhood

environments that support early literacy development and excellent instruction are important for all children. The teacher in this study displayed a strong position on inclusion as was noted in Chapter 4. She stated:

"It takes time to accommodate, but it shouldn't be anything other than that. [Special Education students] should be in there (the general education classroom); they get things from their peers, they are able to pick up things they [otherwise] wouldn't. Like, what we did here- they were never on the outside; everybody was equal; they were never ostracized- they were brought right into it."

The researcher observed and worked with the teacher participant to implement and provide necessary accommodations for the students in this study who were diagnosed with a learning disability. The teacher participant never voiced any dissent in this matter nor denied the students appropriate accommodations. The student participants in this study also exhibited a strong inclination that they should learn together in the same environment and support one another through the process. Unanimously, the students in this study said everyone learns differently yet, despite this the majority (9 out of the 11 surveyed) felt that should not hinder students learning together. As one general education student noted, "Find a method we all can understand- to be able to work together and learn; all kids should have the same experience". Another special education student said, [Separating kids] is not fair. Kids need to learn the same things- we all should be working in a group, talking together and working together." Teens may reject being singled out in any way from their peers and strive to belong. Perceived social competence, which may be diminished in adolescents with LD, is a reliable indicator of school success and long-term life adjustment and satisfaction (Schumaker, et al, 2003: Snow, et al, 1998).

The two students who said special education students might need a separate education noted there might be "too much pressure on them in the regular classroom". The other student, a special education student, stated "if their reading level is not high enough it might be too hard". However, this student then added, "but reading aloud is helpful so then they can be part of the class".

In regard to teacher beliefs as related to a critical literacy model, it remains unclear if this teacher's belief system and practices were impacted by the study. Further research would be needed to determine if one's philosophy can, in fact, change, if the system would allow for it, or if beliefs are inherent, and/ or one is unwilling to change. Throughout the course of this study, the teacher participant remained open, engaged and supportive of the critical literacy model. However, one thing the researcher noted at the onset of the study, was the fact that the texts for the year had been pre-selected. The researcher was aware that often in public schools, grade-level texts are pre-determined by stakeholders. In this case, the teacher stated she had the flexibility to choose the texts she wanted for each of her classes, yet, when the idea was proposed for this study, she did not have any desire to change any of the 'primary' texts or give students a voice in selecting them. In the planning stages with the researcher, the teacher participant was open to allowing students to do "I-Search" projects in which they could find supporting texts for projects and/ or class discussions. Research claims, when it is the teacher who continually chooses texts, curriculum, etc., the resulting efforts are embedded in his/ her passions, the things he/she want to accomplish, and are important to his / her daily comings and goings- but if your students are not devouring these texts, it is probably because they have had no choice in them (Calkins, et al, 2012). It is hard to say in the limited time of this study if the views and position of the teacher participant on this issue impacted the students or not, as it was equally noted that

students felt 'uncomfortable' when left to their own voice and given choice. This could be in part due to traditional schooling methods in which students generally are not given choice and with time could in fact become a comfortable part of the learning environment. More research in this area would be needed. What was important to this study was the texts that were chosen and read, did have relevance to the students' lives, did engage them in the subject matter, and did give them cause to take action. Teachers need to build text sets that offer multiple perspectives and get at deeper issues within topics and address the various sides of those issues (Calkins, et al, 2012). If you empty reading of meaning and purpose, young people won't step up to the hard work it takes to become powerful readers (Calkins, et al, 2012).

At the end of the study, the researcher did go back to the 7th grade English classroom for a post-observation and exit interview with the teacher participant. The researcher observed the students back in their regular routine of working out of workbooks and completing worksheets. When interviewed about this, the teacher participant, as noted in Chapter 4, revealed: "The reason I teach out of the [workbooks] is my way of hitting all of the standards; this is my reassurance that I'm teaching what I'm supposed to be teaching." Educators will always need to examine the congruence between their beliefs and actions in creating curriculum and the classroom (Short & Burke, 1996). When educators become satisfied with surface changes in their practice and stop searching and asking questions, they are in danger of actually continuing the status quo which they think they are transforming (Short & Burke, 1996).

Limitations

There were some problems in the study that may have affected the quality of the findings. Although audio recorders were tested prior to the study, on two occasions they failed to work properly losing important data/ information from these particular settings. The importance of

including students' voices in a critical literacy model was impacted when in certain times what the students had to say was inaudible. This was a great disappointment because it eliminated the students' voices for this particular reading/ activity. A second limitation of this study was the absences of the students and in particular, the very frequent absences of one general education student who is considered "at-risk". This student obtained 26 absences during the course of this semester of the study. It was difficult to try to catch the students up upon their return and hope for thoughtful, reflective comments/ work from them. Overall, most students responded favorably. However, in regard to the one student aforementioned, I felt like he had limited value and contributions to this study because he was not exposed to the lessons, activities, and discussions in conjunction with all of the other students in his class. Therefore, he had little to no input from them, little interaction with them, and little opportunity to dialogue with them- all key factors in a critical literacy model. I should stress that my study was primarily concerned with special education students, but their interaction with their general education peers was a critical aspect of the study, too. Therefore, absences of any one student impacted the findings of the study adversely. The final and most significant limitation of this study was the issue of time. One of the fundamental pieces behind the critical literacy model is student involvement and input-giving them choice; giving them voice; and working at their pace. At the onset of this study, the timeline for the units seemed feasible and doable. However, as the study got under way, as already mentioned in this chapter, it became very clear that each unit was going to need significantly more time to complete if the goal was to follow to a tee, the critical literacy model. Allowing students the time they needed in Unit 1 to explore and develop all of the aspects of modern- day slavery began to run well over 6 weeks. By allowing the students more time in this unit to complete their fundraiser, it ultimately took time away from the upcoming units. The

snowball effect was that as each unit came along, and the students wished to take action, the unit needed to be cut-short, hurried through, or some activities eliminated altogether. However, the lack of time experienced here does not mean and should not be taken to mean that the students did not respond favorably to the features of a critical literacy model. In fact, my findings show that even with the time constraints the students reacted to the topics and issues with empathy and a desire for change.

Implications

Overall this study offers suggestive evidence for the use of a critical literacy model to enhance learning in schools. The study appears to support the argument for change in traditional schooling methods in favor of more progressive models, particularly those with a socio cultural framework. Additionally, this study suggests that semiotics may be an important factor in learning. Specifically when students can find and make meaning through relevant issues, the opportunity for learning is increased dramatically. If the tentative conclusions of my study are confirmed by further research, then there is a case for administrators and stake-holders to assess the ways in which teachers are teaching and look for models for change.

Recommendations for Research

Recognizing that schools face a variety of issues, including national mandates for testing and teaching, more diverse student populations inclusive of higher rates of at-risk and special education students, and an ever-increasing demand for highly qualified teachers, teachers additionally face the challenge of how to keep students motivated and engaged in learning so that experience success and stay in school. The following recommendations are offered as suggestions for related research in the field of critical literacy education as well as ways to institute change in current educational policy.

Recommendation 1: Reach a variety of school systems & settings

In the broader spectrum, future research should focus on a variety of settings and contexts. For example, implementing a critical literacy model across grade levels and/ or content areas within a same school or a variety of schools. The setting for this study was a small, rural town with limited populations represented. One avenue for further study would be to look at other at-risk schools- i.e., urban areas, tribal/ reservations, etc. Per current research these minority and at-risk populations tend to have lower/ underdeveloped literacy skills resulting in greater failure rates and higher drop-out rates (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2008; National Longitudinal Transition Study II, 2003). Therefore, finding new ways to reach and engage students is critical to increasing literacy skills and decreasing the drop-out rate. Other possible areas for further research/ investigation could include students with even more significant literacy issues and other disabilities. Although the students in this study were identified with a learning disability, there are cases that are worse. There are second language students and there is an ever-increasing number of students who are deemed simply "at-risk". These students face just as high a chance of dropping out of school as students with disabilities. Broadening the spectrum of this research to include and study some or all of these populations would only enhance the argument for the use of critical literacy models in classrooms.

Recommendation 2: Engage stakeholders in educational change

The second recommendation speaks to stakeholders, but largely to the practitioners. Since practitioners are the ones who are generally in the "trenches", it would make the most sense and be most useful and practical to begin with them. Willing teachers could implement critical literacy practice models into their classrooms and observe/ document how students respond. It is important to have other teachers in numerous settings implementing and trying to

integrate critical literacy into their various subjects so that there is an abundance of research and testimonial on its effects and outcomes. Having first-hand accounts of how students are learning and the ways they are motivated is what will ultimately catch the attention of administrators and other stakeholders, particularly if the outcome is increased learning for all.

Additionally, the educational community needs to look at and/ or expand holding conferences on Critical Literacy as a model for change in the classroom. There is a great deal of literature out there regarding critical literacy but very little in the way of professional conferences on this topic. Providing more workshops would bring in greater audiences of both administrators and teachers to learn and understand the dynamics and importance of infusing critical literacy into all curriculums. Moreover, administrators need to recognize the need for follow-up and support for teachers within the school setting. As noted in this study, "time" (or the lack thereof) was a huge factor in this study and is, for most teachers on any given day. Teachers have so much on their plates these days; asking them to take on yet another idea, strategy, or innovation will go nowhere and provide little to no relevant data if the teachers are not given sufficient enough time to learn, understand, collaborate, and implement the model to its fullest effect. Providing times/ areas for professional development- inclusive of collaboration, dialogue, and open and honest communication is critical for teachers to be empowered and to stay energized and engaged in the learning process, too.

Recommendation 3: Ways to improve this study/ Policy for change

The following recommendations are offered as possible ways to improve this study. As this study occurred in a very small, rural community, it would be useful to conduct further studies where there is a greater pool of teachers and students to choose from. In larger, more urban schools, there would be more variance in the student and teacher body as well as a broader

range and larger number of students with disabilities. Engaging in a critical literacy study in larger populations with a greater representation of minorities and cultures, would only enhance or negate the findings from this study. Another avenue of study would be research utilizing teachers/ staff already familiar with the critical literacy model in order to engage more respondents resulting in greater models for change.

In other contexts, I think as further research supports critical literacy in the classroom, it would be beneficial to engage and teach new teachers on this model to enhance belief systems and provide the foundation for teachers to bring more relevant, socio cultural frameworks into the classroom from the onset.

Furthermore, it will be important to work with veteran teachers and administrators to allow more flexibility in the curriculum. Giving students a voice and choice in texts is a huge part of the critical literacy model, but is one that fails to come to the forefront in research and in the classroom due to the constraints put on teachers in choosing their own curriculums.

Conclusion

The data collected from the interviews and activities in this case study have generated numerous topics for discussion, most importantly, using critical literacy in the classroom to create models for learning and change. The results of this study suggest that a key message from students to educators and administrators is that if they are provided relevant, engaging material and texts, they will rise to the occasion, learn more effectively, and want to take a proactive stance against injustices in our society and world. Generating students who care about their education and school community, creates citizens who care about their world.

APPENDIX A

Reading Survey

Please answer each question as honestly as you can. There is no right or wrong answer- only how you think or feel.

1. Do you like to read? Tell me why or why not.

2. I would rate myself as a _____ on a scale of 1-10 as a reader (1= worst; 10= best). Tell me why you rated yourself as you did.

3. I would describe myself as a _____ reader. Explain.

4. Where do you like to read? Quiet or noise/ lots of light or some light/ in a comfy chair or at a desk/ table.

5. What *nonfiction* topics do you like to read about?

6. What do you think is hard about reading?

7. What do you think is easy about reading?

8. Tell me one good experience you have had with reading.

9. What would you like to be able to do in reading?

10. What is your favorite book (or type of book) to read?

11. The best reader I know is _____. Explain.

12. Reading is either something you can or cannot do well. Agree or Disagree (Circle one)

13. Check any of the following that help you understand what you read better:

- ☐ Reading aloud to yourself
- ☐ Having someone else read aloud to you
- ☐ Talking about what you have read with others
- ☐ Taking notes
- ☐ Drawing or doing art in response to what you read
- ☐ Reading silently to yourself during class time
- ☐ Talking in groups about what you read
- ☐ Talking as a class about what you read

14. Check the following response that best describes you as a reader:

- ☐ I will do what I need to in order to read anything. With enough effort I can understand anything I am asked to read. I am confident in my abilities as a reader.
- ☐ I try but I eventually give up if it is too hard. I understand most of what I read but not as well as I would like to; I am somewhat confident in my abilities as a reader, but recognize there are certain texts I just don't know how to read yet.
- ☐ Reading is hard for me. I rarely feel like I understand what the writer is saying. This is why I give up easily. Even when I feel like I understand it, I don't trust myself and assume I am probably wrong.

15. I read when:

- ☐ I'm bored
- ☐ I need to escape
- ☐ I am sad
- ☐ I want to learn about something
- ☐ My friends are reading the same book
- ☐ I feel alone and need company
- ☐ I want to think about something
- ☐ I do not ever choose to read
- ☐ I read all the time, anything, for a million different reasons, I *have* to read
- ☐

16. Check the statement that matches your own belief:

☐ Reading is not important. By 6th grade you know everything you need to know
☐ Reading is crucial to your success in the adult world
☐ Reading is more important now than ever before
☐ Reading is less important to me than it used to be

17. Mark those with which you *most* agree:

☐ I like it when a book challenges my beliefs, ideas, or assumptions

☐ I prefer books that do not make me think about unfamiliar things

☐ I like to read in order to do things; this make reading seem useful and valuable to me

18. I expect reading in school to be:

☐ Boring

☐ Interesting

☐ Difficult

☐ Useful

19. If I could improve up to three things about myself as a reader, I would choose:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

20. When I am reading something and I get stuck, I try the following strategies (Check all that apply):

☐ I skip the difficult part

☐ I skip the difficult part and come back to it later

☐ I reread it

☐ I read it aloud

☐ I try to put it in my own words

☐ I look at other information on the pages (Pictures, captions, bold or italicized words)

☐ I explain it to someone else

☐ I ask others for help

☐ I try to draw it (or somehow try to see it- time line, cluster, t-chart, etc)

☐ I ask someone else to read it out loud so I can hear it.

APPENDIX B

Teacher Attitudes and Belief Systems Survey

Part A: Demographic Information

1. Gender (please circle):   Male   Female

2. Your age range (please circle):

   Below 25   25-35   36-45   46-55   55+

3. Your educational level (please circle):

   Bachelors Degree   Bachelors +15   Bachelors +30

   Masters   Masters +15   Masters +30

   Doctoral

4. Current grade level you are teaching (please circle):

   Elementary   Middle   High School

5. Number of years teaching at this level: _____

6. Number of years teaching in total: _____

7. Amount of courses taken in teaching children with learning disabilities/ special needs:

   _____

8. Amount of experience teaching children with learning disabilities/ special needs in your classroom: _____

Part B: Teacher Survey Instructions-

Please answer each question as honestly as you can. Circle the appropriate response that most closely matches your belief system- do not indicate or circle responses 'between' 2 choices.

KEY: SD= Strongly Disagree   D= Disagree   A= Agree   SA=   Strongly Agree

1. My educational background has prepared me to effectively teach students with learning disabilities (LD)	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
2. I need more training in order to appropriately teach students with an IEP for learning disabilities	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
3. I am encouraged by my administrators to attend conferences/ workshops on teaching students with learning disabilities	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
4. My colleagues have knowledge about and/ or are willing to help me with questions/ concerns I have about students with learning disabilities	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
5. I feel comfortable working collaboratively with special education teachers when students with an IEP/LD are in my classroom.	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
6. I welcome collaborative teaching when I have a student(s) with an IEP/LD in my classroom.	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
7. Students who are 2 or more years below grade level should be in special education classes	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
8. All efforts should be made to educate students who have a(n) IEP/LD in the regular education classroom	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
9. Collaborative teaching of children with special needs/ LD can be effective particularly when students with an IEP are place in a regular classroom	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
10. It is the job of special education teachers to teach students who have an IEP/ LD	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
11. I can approach my administrators when faced with questions/ challenges/ concerns presented by students with learning disabilities in my classroom	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
12. I feel supported by my administrators when faced with questions/ challenges/ concerns presented by students with learning disabilities in my classroom	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**

13. My district provides me with sufficient training opportunities (i.e., in-service, conferences, PD) in order for me to appropriately teach students with special needs/ LD	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
14. My district provides me enough time on a regular basis to meet with colleagues and special education teachers to discuss and collaborate on the needs of students with LD	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
15. Regular education teachers should not be responsible for teaching children with special needs/ LD	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
16. I like being the only teacher in my classroom	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
17. I like to run my classroom in a certain way	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
18. All students with an IEP for any reason should receive their education in a special education classroom	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
19. I should only be responsible for teaching students who do not have an IEP/ LD	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
20. Both regular and special education teachers should teach students with special needs/ LD	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
21. I am provided with sufficient materials in order to make appropriate accommodations for students with special needs/ LD	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
22. Students who are 1 year below grade level should be in special education classes	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
23. I find that most students with an IEP/ LD use it as a 'crutch' and are often lazy or unmotivated in my class	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
24. I think students with an IEP have it 'easy'- their work is easier than other students in their grade level.	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
25. My educational background has adequately prepared me to teach students who are 2 or more years below grade level	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**

Part C

What type of support would most benefit you in regard to receiving more information/ training on including students with learning disabilities in your classroom? (Rank from 1= most beneficial to 7= least beneficial)

_____ District level in-service training

_____ Out of district training

_____ Coursework at a college/ university

_____School building level training

_____ Book study

_____ Article(s) provided to you

_____ Time for consultation with the school psychologist and/ or Special Education Director

_____ Time for consultation with special education teachers

Please list any other methods/ ideas you have that you believe would be beneficial to understanding, educating, and supporting students with learning disabilities.

APPENDIX C

Pre/ Post-Survey: Answer T (true) or F (false) for the following statements

Slavery ended after the Civil War

T or F

Slavery still goes on today but only in undeveloped countries

T or F

Slavery does not exist in the United States

 T or F

Slavery does NOT exist in North Dakota

T or F

When I think of a slave, I think of someone who is not educated-they cannot read or write

T or F

There is nothing I can do about slavery

T or F

APPENDIX D

Unit 1- Slavery: Summary of Domain: Open-Ended Questions/ Group Discussions		
Purpose	Example	Actual Text, quote, exchange **I= Researcher A= SE; B= GE**

Facilitating positive social change
 	
• Activate prior knowledge/ pre-conceptions [1 & 2]
	Critical Literacy
	
	Pre survey [1]
	
	Dialogue [2]
		[2] (True/False):
		
		Slavery ended w/ Civil War
		  2 GE, 2SE (T); 5GE, 1SE (F)
		Slavery does not exist in the US
		  5 GE (T); 2 GE, 3SE (F)
		Slavery does not exist in ND
		  5 GE, 2 SE (T); 1 GE, 1 SE (F)
		There is nothing I can do about slavery
		  8 GE, 3 SE (F)
		_____
		[2] Dialogue- whole group
		I What are your thoughts about slavery today?
		 "I'm glad slavery is over" [B]
		
		"I'm just happy that slavery doesn't exist anymore" [A]
		
		_____

• Expose students to real life through multiple literacies [3]	Memoirs, quotes, photos [3]	[8] "Shocked how many slaves there are" [B] "That [slavery] still exists" [A] "More slaves [now] than any other time" [B] [3a] "His back was shredded like…what that poem said… [A] I "parchment paper" _____

• Empowering students
  ○ Semiotics [4]
    - Tap emotions
    - Create desire for action
	Questioning 'legitimacy of power' [4]	[9] "Wait, isn't the United states a free country?" [A]
		"Why do we have slaves?" [B]
		
		"Wait, I have a plan!" [A]
		
		I: "Do we have the power to change it?"
		
		Students unanimous: "Yes!"
		
		_____

• Empowering students ○ Semiotics [5]		

- Motivation
- Tap emotions
- Create desire for action
	• Take Action[5]
	
	    ○ [a-] Fundraiser
	
	    ○ [b-] Letters to Windie
	
	    ○ [c-] Response from Windie
	
	    ○ [d-] Student reactions
	
	    ○ [e-] Windie's visit (widening circles of awareness)
		[5-] Vignette describing interaction/ dialogue of students as they made bracelets for the fundraiser
		
		10- (insert visual attachments)
		
		[b-] No one deserves [to be] scared, in pain, hungry [B]
		
		I hope we can make a difference [A]
		
		Slavery is bad and it should quit [A]
		
		Slavery is a crude & brutal way of life [B]
		
		[thank you]…for putting thoughts in our mind so we can be the generation to end slavery [A]
		
		…Help them forget their horrible life and look into a new future [B]
		_____
		
		[c-] Windie calls after receiving our letters- "I am speechless. I have been praying for a miracle and you guys were it. I want to come and thank and hug the kids in person."
		
		[d-] "What? No way!!!"
		
		cheers, hugging, high-fives
		
		"We are rock stars!"
		
		More cheering
		
		[e-] (Insert pictures from visit/ article from newspaper)

• Empowering students
  ○ Semiotics [6]
    - Best Practices
	• Question the text [6a]
	
	• Prompting [6b]
		[6a-] I **"What did we learn?" "What was new to you that you didn't know before?" "Whose voice was being heard in this piece? Whose was being silenced?"**
		
		_____
		
		[6b-] I **"Discuss and/ or reflect on your thoughts/ feelings"**
		
		"What was shocking to you?"
		
		_____

	• Create a safe/ democratic environment [6c]	**11- I "Everyone has a right to speak their mind; we can respectfully disagree"** **"What we say here is safe"**
Role of teacher [researcher] Perceptions/ beliefs	• Expectations [1]	12- "I had a goal in my mind of what I wanted to accomplish with the kids; I didn't want them or me to be disappointed" Set my expectations too low Exceeded my expectations _____
	• Emotions [2]	13- Nervous & excited "Once these stories were revealed, the students were outraged; their comments poignant. I was warmed and touched by their reactions…it was a little more than I had expected"
Role of teacher [participant] Perceptions/ beliefs	• Expectations [1]	14- "[Expectations] were too high" "I was worried that they were set up for failure" "I was worried they would be disappointed" "I was wrong!" "They exceeded our [expectations]" _____
	• Emotions [2]	15- "Flabbergasted"

• Empowering students
  ○ Semiotics [7]
    - Motivation
    - Tap emotions
    - Make Connections
	Journal Reflection [7] from the reading, "To Be a Slave"
	
	  ○ To life [a]
	
	  ○ To the text [b]
		- "So, if you bought a slave in 1800s it would cost $40,000 today, but today you can buy a slave for less than $90" [B]
		 _____
		
		 b- "less than a table" [A]
		
		 "like animals, not human" [B]
		
		 "Piece of land", "a car, a house" [A]
		
		 "things, not people" [B]
		
		 _____
		
		 c- Slave owners are 'white', older males, married couples [A B]
		
		 "kids of slave owners will continue the tradition" [A]
		
		 _____
		
		 d- disappointed [B], disbelief [B], scared [A], anger [A],

		heartbreaking [B], devastating [B], wrong [A], crude [A], sorrowful [B], sickening [B] _____
	o Perceptions [c]	[e-] "Slave will not be free until someone do something" [A] "To know that despite the suffering & deprivation you were human" [B] "Why would America start something like this?" [B] "A slave would tell a different story" [B] They were not just slaves; they were people [A] _____ [8-] (insert excerpt from text or lesson)
	o One-word response [d]	
	o Tap Emotions [e]	

• Empowering students
  o Semiotics [8]
  o Learning strategies [8]
	o [8-] Talking Circles
	o Group discussions (whole/small)
	o Talking to the text
	o Pre-teach vocabulary
	o Pre- research	

APPENDIX E

Unit 2- Mental Health: Summary of Domain: Open-Ended Questions/ Group Discussions		
Purpose	Example	Actual Text, quote, exchange **(R) = Researcher; A= SE; B= GE**
Facilitating positive social change • Activate prior knowledge/ pre-conceptions[1]	Critical Literacy ° Activity: Pre-survey on mental illness: depression, suicide, school shootings[1]	[1-] Mental health problems rare in children- 6GE, 3SE Disagree; 2 GE Agree School shooters have a mental illness- 1GE, 1SE agree; 7GE, 2SE Disagree Teens who commit suicide have a mental illness- 1GE, 1SE Agree; 7 GE, 2SE Disagree Teen suicide is not a problem in ND- 8GE, 3SE Disagree Our school is prepared for an intruder- 6GE, 1SE Agree; 2GE, 2SE Disagree _____
• Expose students to real life through multiple literacies [2]	o Classic Literature- Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde[2] o Pop Culture- article on mental health[2] o "I-search" projects: depression, suicide, school shootings[2]	[2-] **(R) Tell me anything more you now know about mental illness & suicide, school shootings, depression** That any of the [three] are possible for anyone [A] 1 out of 12 teens suffers from depression [B] Most shootings involve drugs, alcohol, video games [B] More teens commit suicide than diseases (illegible) combined [A] We need to start a group to help w/ teen illnesses [B] 2.1 million people worldwide suffer from depression [B] 69% school shooters are age 10-19 [B] There a quite a few suicides shootings, and teen depression [A] _____
• Empowering students	o [3-] Unpacking Identity	[3a1-] "I am an artist"; "I love to read"; "I am a student and friend"; "I am a farmer"; "I

○ Giving students a voice [3]	a1- Who am I?	am a kid"; "I am a rancher"
	a2- Why am I here?	3a2- "to show my beauty"; "to make a change"; "because of God"; "help others in need"; "to help the world"; "to stop world hunger"; "to help kids"; "to change the world"; "to learn"
	a3- What am I doing for others?	3a3- "set an example"; "trying to be nice"; "feeding the world by farming"; "help them through rough times"; "encouraging"; "raising awareness about slavery in the US"; "respecting them"; "helping slaves"; give good, food, money"
○ Semiotics [4] - Motivation - Tap emotions - Create desire to take action	4- Find Value/ Connect	_____ 4- **(R) Do students at your school talk about mental health issues? Or is this topic taboo?** *"No, because we don't have a group for it/ for people to talk about it"* *"No- students don't talk about their issues"* *"Students do not talk about their problems; you would be bullied"* [A] *"People might make fun of them"* [B] *"No- we don't have open groups to talk about it"* [B] *"No- because we don't have a group"* [A] *"people can be cruel"* [B] **(R) Is your school a safe space for students to share their struggles?** *"It won't be safe but you should be able to tell people about the problem so people will help"* [A] *"Yes- we have people to help"* [B] *"I think you could tell the teachers"* [A] [A]

		"No- I believe that people at our school would judge you" [B]
		(R)Should students be allowed to publish in their school paper personal struggles w/ mental illness like the girls in the article did?
		"Yes. People should be able to express themselves" [B]
		"No- their stories might lead to bullying" [B]
		"We deserve to express our illnesses- freedom of speech" [B]
		"No- it might mark you" [A]
		"Yes- if it is their story they deserve a chance to tell it" [B]
		"yes- they will get help and it will raise awareness" [B]
		"It could help other students" [B]
		"people should hear their feelings and help people out with their illness" [A]
		_____
o Semiotics [5] - Motivation - Tap emotions	Journal Reflection [5]: "Why do good people sometimes do bad things?"	"they want/ need something" [A] "Peer pressure" [B] "drugs" [B] "human nature" [B] "to avoid being made fun of" [A]
	Emotions associated with	Angry, sad, depressed, mad, agitated
	Reaction to	All humans make mistakes [B] Everyone can be bad no matter how

		much good they have done [A]
		I would do good as long as I could for the rest of my life [A]
○ Semiotics [6] - Create desire to take action	• Take Action[6] ○ Brainstorming [a]	[6-] **(R) What do you think we should do? Anything? Nothing?** [a-] *"I think we should start a group"* [B] *"yes, let's start a group"* [A] *"It would be hard to do, but we could do it"* [B] *"What if people tell other people?"* [A] *"You might get bullied"* [A] *"Popular kids might think it's dumb"* [B] *"Could get on social media- bullying"-"or, maybe it might help them?"* [B] *If people were open, more people would be accepting"* [B] **(R) Well, if what you told me is 1 in 12 kids are depressed, then one of us here is, and 10 kids are in our high school. Should that be a concern for us?** *Collective- "yes"*
	○ Teacher support [b]	[b-] **(R) Ok, Then how can I help? What do you need?** *"we need to meet and make a plan"* [B] *"maybe we can show our movies to the high school first"* [B] *"get the message out; talk to everyone"* [B] *"tell them it's ok"* [A] *"How will we know if people want to do this?"* [B] *"we could do a survey first"* [B] **(R) I love your enthusiasm- I will help in any way I can- we will need to meet**

	- Democracy in the classroom/ everyone's voice matters	**outside of classroom time however. There isn't time to continue this in English class. Let's put it to a vote…**
	○ Roadblocks [c]	[c] Time, fear of backlash "Kids might get bullied" [A]

○ Semiotics [7]
  - best practices
  - acknowledge voices of power
	• Question the text [7a]
	
	• Prompting [7b]
		[7a] **(R) Where was the power in this story? Who held the power?**
		"The old guy- Danvers"; "He was rich" [B]
		(R) Who did he have power over?
		"Jekyll"; "that girl, Mabel- the maid" [A]
		(R)And the people he held power over were…
		"poor"; "I don't know if Jekyll was poor but he wasn't as rich as Danvers" [B]
		[7b] **(R) What conclusions can we draw?**
		"the wealthy people looked down on the poor people" [A]
		(R) Does that still happen today?
		"yes" [B]
		(R) Do we as a society today also look down on people with mental illness?
		"yes" [B]
		(R) Is it [mental illness] openly talked about?
		"no" [A]; "I don't think so" [A]; "not around here" [B]

Role of teacher-[researcher] perceptions/ beliefs	• Expectations [1]	[1] My hopes/ expectations were that students would gain more knowledge and understanding about mental illnesses and maybe want to make posters or brochures about it.

	• Emotions [2]	_____
		[2] *Stressed* about *time*- I did not feel like I had enough *time* to do all the things I wanted to do to allow students access to multiple literacies and perspectives surrounding 'mental illness'.
		Pressure; the 'need' to move on to the next unit
		Anger/ disappointment- The first time we were going to meet about the support group, I asked the GE teacher if we could use her room as she had no students during that time.
		She responded, *"The library should be open"*
		She did not come to that or any of the meetings outside of class
		Frustrated- that she was not more involved in this unit
Role of teacher- [participant] perceptions/ beliefs	• Expectations [1]	[1] "I took the role of observer"
		The goal was to have them make 1-minute 'infomercials'
		_____
	• Emotions [2]	[2] "The results [of the movies] were quite moving"

APPENDIX F

Themes for Perceptions about Self/ Teaching (Teacher Exit Survey)		
Question	**Response**	**Cover Term**
I. Teaching Beliefs/ Practices o **"Talking to the Text"** (Reading strategy) - So, is that something you had not done before? - Is that something you would do in the future?	Correct, we would **just read the chapter;** [the students] would **listen on tape** Yah, probably. I thought it was a **more effective** way	**Teaching Practices** *Reflective Practitioner*
o **"Buckle Down" workbooks vs. Critical Literacy** What is the choice to use the BD books versus continuing a lesson like…the way we did this semester? [1] And in order to do lessons like we did it would also take more time are you saying? [2] o **Making decisions**	The reason I teach BD…is to **get them used to the vocab**….it's also my way of **hitting all the standards**…I tend to do Scope, I know I'm hitting some…this is my reassurance that I'm **teaching what I'm supposed to be teaching** I think **we could go off** from this, **get deeper** into….like today we did author's craft- today was my introductory; they know it now, so I could go into Scope and talk about author's craft in that story. So this is **giving them the foundation**	**Teaching Practices** **Teaching Practices** **Knowing your students** *Opportunity for Choice*
What decision do you make as a teacher to stay with the kids if they want to take action (Critical Literacy model) or move on because you have curriculum to 'cover'? [1] So… how do you make that decision? [2]	Well, you get to **know the kids** and when they're sick of something…it's like "**We've had it"…"We're done**"…you get to that point and **I don't want to get to that point.** Then **they can go find things on their own**. I have the ability… because I am the only English teacher; **I know**	**Teaching Practices**

	what I've taught them…I have the luxury of knowing the kids. I **know** the group of kids I have and what **their interests** are, so that's what I try to tag on if I can. I can guess there are things in the **Common Core that tell me these are things you should probably teach**, but I hit on them, ok?	**Teaching Practices**
○ **Themes of Social Justice- necessary & important in learning or not**		
So…if you had to make a choice….say you're in a Critical Literacy 'thing' and the kids want to take action, but you know you've got the next thing coming on the horizon, what do you do and how do you make that decision?	I would see **how many of the kids**- if it's just one or two or **if it's going to affect** a whole lot more that that…if it's just a matter of two…I don't know…I think you're gonna have to…I would **refer them somewhere else**? For that **time sake**? If it's **more than that**…it's going to **affect the student body** then I'm thinking we should **invest some time**, but again it would have to be **outside of class**. We would have to **stop that unit** in class, **take it outside class**, so I can **go on and finish what I need to** for the year	**Demands**

Motivation

Democracy |
Your overall experience with the Social Justice theme & how it can be incorporated into all lessons?		
	[Students] really **got into the slavery unit** and **spent a lot of time** on this unit. It **didn't matter who the student was**, they were **all into the unit**.	
	Kids at all ages **want fairness** in all situations & when they see that does not happen, they **become involved** and are **more willing to voice their opinions** and **get personally involved**.	
II. Semiotics

Overall, throughout the whole unit, were there things that | Well, I think **everybody finds meaning when it relates to them**, ok? So if it…I like the fact that they **each had their vocab** | **Finding meaning- Semiotics** |

stood out to you about how kids found meaning and particularly how special education students- our kids with LD- how did they find meaning? We had originally talked about bringing Shakespeare into the classroom…and it ended up being Dickens at the 7th grade level, which is still just as much a historical author [these texts] are generally hard for kids to understand Multiple ways to represent? Any teaching practices you would now employ in your classroom?	**word** and as you came to it in the book, they had to **jump in and tell what it was**…it **found meaning, brought meaning** to those [words] very much so Because they are in that **old time language**…they're **not used to** how we spoke back then….it was a lot of 'these' and 'thous'…so [students] would **really struggle** with that…when I teach it, we have the **modern version** right next to it Right I have already put to use the **Dialogue Board** and "**tickets out**". I observed the **Talking Circles** and would like to see how older students would view that.	**Teaching Practices** **Struggles in learning** *Comprehension* *Exposure to varying texts* **Effective Learning Strategies**

III. Inclusion
 	
   • Strategies
   • Constraints
 	
Do you think our Special Education students had as good…I don't know the word I want to use….how their opportunity was…. [1]
 	
Your thoughts / beliefs on students with special needs in the regular classroom when sometimes it can be challenging
	I thought they were **equally**…like when we went into….the [talking] circles, they could **contribute** as much as anyone else…I don't think they **held back** at all. In fact, I saw them **participate a little more**….you know, they really **wanted to**. Whenever you asked a question they were, **always had their hands up ready to answer** something.
	
	It takes **time** to **accommodate**, but it shouldn't be anything other than that; they **should be in here**, cuz they **get from their peers** … you know they **pick**
		Democracy
		
		Environment
		
		Demands
		
		Inclusion
		
		Multiple Intelligences
		
		Demands
		
		Challenges

Do you think that what we did then helped bridge that gap- or no?	**things up they normally wouldn't** do if they were down in a room with just the [Resource Room teacher] Like I said the only thing…is **more time** to accommodate tests and things like that. They're **equal to anybody else**, it's just that they **learn differently**	**Inclusion/ Democracy** **Demands**
I guess I should ask you about the 'time factor' then; the one thing that stood out to me in our conversations/ reflections	Definitely, cuz they were **never on the 'outside'**…it was never like "you come into the circle now" No. **everybody was equal**…they had the same partners when we did projects…they **weren't ostracized**…they **didn't have a different topic;** they were **brought right into it**. There is **never enough time** to cover it the way we want it. In a **perfect world**… (laughs)…there **just isn't time**. There just **never enough time**.	
IV. Critical Literacy So, in closing, any other things, just an opportunity for your thoughts about anything, pros/ cons of our experience together	I thought it was **fun**, cuz I got **new ideas** of **how to do things**- you know what I mean? Like the '**Reading to the "text**; I've got other **ways to do vocab** …it **helped me**	**Emotions** **Teaching Practices** **Implications for future** *teaching/ learning*
So, future opportunities to collaboratively teach/ use a Critical Literacy model…your thoughts? Critical to implement a successful team-teaching model?	Oh, **definitely**. We are **already planning** a homeless unit for 10th grade. I thought it was **positive**. I think the **kids thought** it was **positive**. I think they thought **we were crazy** at the beginning (laughs)	**Motivation**

	You know, when you bring that [CL] to the classroom, they **look forward to coming** to **class**, they look forward to **doing their assignments** more…I think it **brings more meaning** to those [assignments] as well.	**Successful Team Teaching** **Benefits**
	Communication & being flexible in plans. It does not always follow the path you both wished for**.**	*Positive Outcomes of student engagement*
	Students have two people to be resources than just one	

APPENDIX G

Transcript interview Dec 23, 2014 (R= Researcher; S= student 1, 2, 3…)

R- So we're going to be talking about, I want to get your thoughts on a Christmas carol which we just finished reading. Q #1 for you to ponder would be …your interpretation, your thoughts about a theme that you would assign to this novel. Now we brainstormed some on our list over there….not sure we can see that far, can everybody see?

All: Yeah,

R- Brian** what does it say?

B- The first theme is greed and reflecting, memories, alone, change and transformation

R- Hmmm, ok…so if you have one of your own, maybe you have another idea…what was the message…you were supposed to get from Dickens about what happened in this story? Does anybody want to…well, Kendra you have the frog, if you want to start…or you can pass it off to somebody

Kendra**- good will always overpower evil

R- good will always overpower evil

S2 um….that…um.greed is umm. that everything can overpower greed, but greed is very powerful and hard to get over

S3 light always overpowers dark

S4 I think if you don't change yourself you won't be able to go back to the nice life you already had

R- so if you don't change…..

S4 if you don't change yourself…

R- ok…you can't go back to good?

S4 yeah

S5*- I think good is better than evil cuz people might like you if you're doing good things…if you're doing bad, people won't like you as well

R- ok

S6- um, like being poor and stuff you can still be happy…and it doesn't make you less than someone else, and you can still (inaudible)

R- and you can still what?

S6- you can still have a voice

R all right

S7- Like…How far…you've come so far… how bad you are, you can change while you still have time

S8- umm…light vs darkness…that light can overpower darkness

<Pause to check audio>

R- ok, what I want you talk about now is…your thoughts on how we approached learning about dickens' and A Christmas Carol…ok…basically, how you found meaning in the book. For example, did it help you that we did research before you read the book? Did it help you that I read the book out loud? Did journal questions, dialogue board questions, talking to each other…all those different things we did, focus in on maybe one, two, three things that you think helped you to understand this book better than you might have done on your own…because Dickens is a very challenging author to read, its old, its tough language, um its tough to interpret what he's talking about, so I'm trying to understand if any of the things we did in here helped you better understand or helped you enjoy the book better, and if not….you can say that, too…I'm just trying to get your read on how it went, this unit.

S1- I think that reading it out loud helped because…and you stopping to explain it sometimes because he writes with…like he writes for more adults, that's the way it seems…with different terminology that I don't understand…so it helped for me to read out loud

S2- umm…the reading out loud helped, cuz it kind of helped explain some of the stuff we didn't understand since it was like "English talk", kind of hard to understand…then the vocab, the stuff we did on the wall and stuff, that helped, too and um…the…questions we did..the…

R- the focus questions?

S2, yeah, those helped to understand the story better…yeah

S3*- I absolutely have nothing to say

R- ok, well, we're going to come back to you on this one, so I want you to think

S3- ok

R- because there must be something that happened (inaudible) with your learning over the past month or so

S4- what was….can you repeat the question again?

R- The question is…how did we help you to get meaning from this book? Were there things that we did that helped you to understand this novel, cuz it is a tough novel. Some of the strategies we used in class that helped you to understand what this story was really about.

S5* um…I think reading it out loud helped cuz, like, there were some really big words that we wouldn't be able to pronounce…and you pronounced 'em, and if you didn't know them you had Mrs. Engraf look 'em up which helped us figure out what the words meant.

S6 um…I liked the part when we'd be reading and there came upon something we didn't really understand…we would like stop reading and like…talk it over, and discuss and try to help the class figure out what the word or phrase actually meant.

S7- I think it helped looking up what some of the words were on the computer and like workhouses and all that…

R- the pre-research we did?

S7- yeah and because now then we probably wouldn't have known what they were

S8- I liked when you read it cuz you sounded more fluent the like the rest of us would be..so it sounded better…and it wasn't different voice, it was just one voice, so you kinda grew on it

S9- I think reading it out loud helped because we could umm.. know what it was and if we didn't know what a word was, you would look it up and , um, when we didn't understand it we would talk it over, and that really helped for the focus questions.

S10- I think doing the research ahead of time help cuz otherwise we wouldn't , I wouldn't have known what..like…a workhouse was or what they did

S11 - I think the journal entries helped cuz it helped you know what happened and reflect on it and uh… reading out loud and the focus questions

S12*- what helped me the most is the vocab because..I learned the definitions when I wrote them down and I knew what the words meant and what pictures that it would create in my…our…minds when I thought about it.

R- Excellent

<Pause to check audio>

R- Last question is…basically your thoughts about the novel…did you like the novel based on …kind of…I feel like we went very deep into it, to understand that its more than a book about an old guy whose crabby and he becomes nice..so I just want to know your thoughts about..did you like the book and why…what did you learn…or you didn't like it and why

S1- all right. I did like the book, but if woulda read it on my own time, I probably wouldn't have liked it, because I wouldn't have been able to understand any of it really??? But I liked how he gets a second chance because in real life that's not going to happen

R-ok, so, my question for you that he gets a second chance…to go back? Cuz you said in real life you said that wouldn't happen so I just want you to elaborate…do we not get second chances in life…or what are you saying?

S1- well, he gets a chance to go back and realize that he was mean, cuz before that he thinks that nothing's wrong with him, but for the second chance he gets…like I mean people can change but he's making a major change all at once

R- so, he got the opportunity to go back in time and see his mistakes

S1- yeah

R- which we don't…ok

S2- I probably wouldn't have read it by myself cuz it would've been too challenging, I would've gotten into it and thinking it was boring but since you read it in class it was made interesting and we got to do activities with it.

S3- I like the book because it was really good, and it had good meaning, moral behind the story

R- would you have read it on your own? Would you have picked up this book and read it on your own?
S3- I probably wouldn't have because I kind of already know the story but I liked the way we read it (inaudible)

S4- I didn't really like this book cuz there wasn't much action in it- and I wouldn't have read it on my own time, cuz its challenging, and I don't know…

S5- this book I probably wouldn't have read cuz its pretty challenging but you made it interesting and stuff like that, so yeah

S6- I Probably wouldn't have this book cuz there were some big words that I had not idea what they meant but it was a good book

S7- this wasn't my favorite book but it was pretty fun to read in class

S8* - I probably would not have picked this book on my own because it be a pretty challenging book for me, ... and I really suck at reading and it would be way over my head and I didn't really like this book because it's not what I really like to read.

R- What kind of books do you like to read?

S8*- pause

R- like mysteries, action

S8*- Mysteries, action

S9* I like this book, but it wasn't my favorite book cuz I like books that are gory and stuff and have dead people in it. If I'd read this on my own time, I probably wouldn't have read it cuz ..with all those words in it…and yeah

S9- I definitely wouldn't have picked this book out…like when we first started reading it, I got really annoyed with all the proper English, cuz I didn't understand any of it…and I already know like the whole story of A Christmas carol, but when we read it in class, it helped me understand it more but it was all right…it wasn't good, it wasn't terrible….so…

** Fictitious name

 *Special education student

APPENDIX H

Exit Interview Transcript- R= Researcher; M= English Teacher (1/16/2015)

R- Overall, your opinion/ assessment/ interpretation…I read all three of your unit reflections, but maybe just kind of in a summary …what are thoughts..the pros and/ or cons of the units that we did.

M- ok, I think the students got more in depth in their understanding…with the methods that you brought into them…they haven't been exposed to them before, and I think they really got some meaning…the Frederick Douglas story… I think they really know things about slavery now…and have opened their eyes to it, you know even how we brought it into ND, the human trafficking kind of thing, ummm, and even the Christmas Carol, I liked how you talked to the text with them and I thought that brought it out, cuz then you could stop whenever, and you didn't just read the chapter and then , "Oh, let's go back"-ok, you did it as you came to it, if they had any questions

R- So, is that something you had not done before?

M- correct, we would just read the chapter, you know they would listen to it

R- listen on tape.

M- right

R- ok

M- right, then we would discuss it

R- Is that something you would do in the future?

M- yah,probably. I thought it was more effective that way

R- so, and part of that…because that is one of our questions was….and one of my research questions is "How do students find meaning?"

M- right

R- and so overall..throughout the while unit, were there things that stood out to you about how kids found meaning and particularly, how special education students, our kids with learning disabilities- how did they find meaning?

M- well, I think everybody finds meaning when it relates to them..ok? so if it…I like the fact that they each had their vocab word and as you came to it in the book, they had to jump in and tell what it was

R- ummhmm

M- That I thought…it found meaning, brought meaning to those new vocab words

R- which helped…because one of my…in working with my English Adviser…hopefully she'll appreciate this. We had originally talked about bringing Shakespeare into the classroom…and it ended up being Dickens at the 7th grade level, which is still just as much as historical author

M- very much so

R- which are generally hard for kids to understand

M- because they are in that old time language, and you know, they're not used to how we spoke back then…you know it was a different…it wasn't subject/ verb necessarily…you know how people speak today…it was a lot of 'these' and 'thous' and Shakespeare it was like *old* English so they would really struggle with that, and that's why when I teach it, we have the modern version right next to it.

R- so…..finding multiple ways to represent it?

M- right

R- ok, so do you think our Special Education students had as good …I don't know … what the word is I want to use…how their opportunity was…

M- I thought…you know they were equally…like when we went into… you know… the circles; they could contribute as much as anyone else…so you know what I mean? I didn't think they held back at all. In fact, I saw them participate a little more…you know, they really wanted to. Whenever, you know, you asked questions they were, always had their hands up ready to answer something. You know they were always willing to participate

R- yes, and so having said that then, so…your thoughts, your beliefs, your philosophy on students with special needs being in the regular classroom when sometimes it can be challenging.

M- it can- only that it takes *time* to accommodate, but it shouldn't be any other than that, you know what I mean? They should be in here, cuz they get from their peers if they don't get from… you know they pick up things that they normally wouldn't do if they were down in a room with just you…you know what I mean

R- ummhmm. They don't have the interaction with other kids

M- right, exactly.

R- cuz they are only with me

M- and you know sometimes when we talk …they're not big numbers here; it's pretty informal …and when somebody does, you know, bring up, even for me, it's like, "oh yah, right" you know what I mean? So they get the advantage of hearing that as well

R- I agree.

M- Like, I said, the only thing it does for me, as a classroom teacher, its more time to accommodate tests and things like that. But not having them in class…it doesn't….I don't want to say, it doesn't matter, but you know what I mean? To me they're equal to anybody else; it's just that they learn differently

R- and so, do you think that what we did then helped to bridge that gap

M- definitely

R- so then, my question would be….

M- cuz they were never on the outside…it was never like, "ok, you come into the circle now" No. it was like everybody was equal…everybody…they had the same partners when we did projects. It wasn't like…they were ostracized …they didn't have a different topic; they were brought right into it

R- and obviously, we both saw it- it took a lot of time to do that. So that…that brings me to my question about where teachers are…so in this next semester, you are now in your "Buckle Down" books

M- uh huh, yep

R- I'm not quite sure how to frame/ phrase that…in just saying….what is the choice to use those Buckle Down books versus continuing in a lesson like that….a way to teach those concepts that are in that book without using that book? Do you know what I'm saying?

M- I do

R- I'm just trying to get your philosophy on that

M-the reason that I teach the "Buckle Down" at this level is to get them used to the vocab; the vocab cuz they're going to hear that now. Today we went over things like personification and hyperbole and onomatopoeia – ok, they knew some of that from 6th grade but it's also my way of hitting all the standards…that I know I'm hitting. You know I tend to do the Scope, I know I'm hitting some and probably the important ones but I know I'm not hitting all of them. This is my reassurance that I'm teaching what I'm supposed to be teaching

R- And in order to do that, like in order to do lessons like we did, or the ones

M- They need the foundation of this vocabulary to do that

R- But it would also take

M- Like we talk about author's craft today

R- More time? Are you saying?

M- Well, I think after this we could off from this, get deeper into…like today we did author's craft- today was my introductory, they know what it is now, so I could go like into a Scope magazine and talk about author's craft in that story. You know what I mean? So this is giving them the foundation. That's why I do it at the junior high, so I don't have to do it at the high school- and they'll know it

R- Do you use the Buckle Down in the high school?

M- Usually not, only jr high

R- Only 7th & 8th grade

M- Yeah, usually

R- So is that something…because I think….and I don't want to put words in your mouth, so confirm for me…because it seemed like in both of our reflections, the one thing that stood out as one of the themes, is the time factor

M- (Deep exhale) uh!

R- And I guess the things that you want to do… I guess I should just ask you to talk to me about the time factor before I would say anything

M- Well, there's never enough time to cover it the way we want it. In a perfect world (pauses; laughs)… there just isn't that time. Even as I'm going and planning and put down a day for Buckle Down, it took us three days to get through Lesson 7, and you know getting the terms down, and talking, and things like that… there's just never enough time. So, even we did one or two stories in the Scope or whatever and I told you that whole magazine could take six weeks if you wanted to, and if you *really* wanted to it could take half a year

R- And I didn't believe you

(Both laugh)

R- as the student teacher, that I was….not (more laughing)

M- Just because I've been through it, like so many times….and "oh my God we're never going to get out of this story", but by sticking with the story and putting more meaning into it, I think that helped too.

R- Well and here we become…here's the question for you that becomes the decision because that was one of my comments in my reflection was…"What decision do you make as the teacher…so, here I am implementing a critical literacy model and my kids want to dive in…after our Jekyll & Hyde unit where they want to start this support group. We could have made the decision to continue, run with that….

M- Right

R- Which we would still be doing right now. We would've never even done Dickens

M- Right

R- So how do you…the critical literacy model would say…you should stay with….if the students want to take action, you should stay with it. Now how do you as the teacher….

M- Ah haaaa (laughs)

R- I know…I'm killin' ya here

M- I know (more laughter)

R- But I think this is important because this was what was important in my research…you should stick with it- but what do you do?

M- Well, you get to know the kids and when they're sick of something…it's like "we've had it"…"we're done"….you know what I mean? You get to that point- and I don't want to get to that point. I want to leave 'em….

R- Hanging?

M- Not really 'hanging' …just thinking…."oh, that was good. I want more". So then they can go and find things on their own. You know like if they're really into that Jekyll and Hyde, then I would show them "The Invisible Man" or something else into that thing, so they can go out on their own and do it.

R- Right. I understand, because I've had this other thought…

M- Cuz seriously, they'll let you know when it's too much, "we're done"

R- Like when they didn't want to read the last part of "A Christmas Carol". They were ready to move one. But I still have …two or three kids will still bring up to me, "When are we going to talk about the support group thing?"

M- oh, ok

R- And so on our own time which people who are not in the education system don't understand

M- yah, yah

R- And that's what I wrote about, is if we want to carry this on, the "Action Plan"…it has to happen

M & R- (said at the same time) "outside the classroom"

R- Which is what I said to one of the girls the other day. I said, 'We can meet during homeroom time" but that's a decision the teacher has to make on their own

M- right

R- Because it's not part of your contract. (M- no)

R- I would have to do it on my own time… (M- exactly) because you also have your curriculum you have to follow

M- Right.

R- so I…just kind of in closing maybe just kind of… can you just talk about how you make that decision…because you could clearly just say "I'm going to do what I want and ….I don't know…do you have that kind of latitude here?

M- I don't have a list of books that I have to read, but I try to do it in a way that one year builds upon another…you know, we read "Of Mice & Men" in 9th grade because we read "The Grapes of Wrath" in 10th. Yes, same author but ummm, but that time period…you know so you're kind of building each year more….that's why I teach mythology young because after we get to other years they're starting to make references to mythology, so if they don't know the mythology , they're not going to get the references later on. That's why I teach Shakespeare….well we teach a little Shakespeare to the freshman, they get a little of "Romeo & Juliet' but the heavier tragedies like Hamlet and Macbeth are senior year so that when they go on to college, they're going to get references back to Shakespeare that they're going to know now; that they've had. So it's kind…I have the ability…because I'm the only English teacher, I know what I've taught them. You know what I mean? I know what they've had in 7th grade; I know what they've had in 8th grade…I know what they had in 6th grade cuz I know Kelly's* curriculum really well, so I know they come to me with a fantastic knowledge of grammar, and even when we get to writing…they carry a lot of what she teaches over – like they're used to peer editing in 7th grade, which they never were before. So, I'm seeing that showing up. Like I said, I have the luxury of knowing kids. I know the group of kids I have and what their interests are, so that's what I try to tag on if I can. But then yet, I know that like…I need to teach 11th grade American Lit. Okay, that's what I need to teach. It's up to me *what* American Lit. I can guess there are things in the Common Core that tell me these are things you should probably teach, but I hit on them, ok? And then there's also that theory of not teaching a whole book- and that would cut down on time, but you know, I don't know….I'm not a person who likes to start a book without finishing it

R- right

M- and that's kind of their concept. You take bits and pieces here and there and put it together…that's not the reader in me. That's not how I'm used to doing it.

R- so if you had to make a choice…which we kind of did this year, but just in general …say we're in a Critical Literacy thing and the kids want to take action, but you know you've got the next thing coming on the horizon, what do you do and how do you make that decision?

M-Well, first of all, I would see how many of the kids – if it's just one or two or if it's going to affect a whole lot more than that- you know what I'm saying? If it's just a matter of one or two…I don't know….I think you're gonna have to…I would refer them somewhere else? You know what I mean? For that time sake? I don't know…just for that time? If it's more than that, like it's going to affect the student body then I'm thinking we should invest some time, but again it would have to be outside of class. We would have to stop that unit in class, take it outside class, so I can go on and finish what I need to for the year.

R- gotchya. Yah…so I guess in closing, any other things, just giving you the opportunity to say anything , your thoughts about anything, pros/cons of our experience together… things that changed within you for the better or not or..

M-I thought it was fun, cuz I got new ideas of how to do things- you know what I mean? Like the 'reading to the text', I've got other ways of doing vocab, ok, it just...it helped me….

R- so future opportunities for us together, what are your…

M- oh, definitely,

R- your thoughts about that…

M- well, we are already planning the homeless unit for 10th grade. I think I would like you to come in when we're going to be writing…well that doesn't deal with literacy, but when we get to writing with the 7th grade…I thought it was a positive; I thought the kids thought it was a positive. I think they thought we were crazy at the beginning

(laughter)

R- they still do….(more laughter)

M- yah.yah. I thought it was really memorable. You know whe you bring that to the classroom, they look forward to coming to class, they look forward to doing their assignments more…I think it brings more meaning to those as well. I thought it was a positive thing

R- I did too. I appreciated our time together, and I will be interested to see what happens with this sophomore class as we move forward. I am excited to see what happens and I thank you for your time, the time you invested. Thank you

M- oh, I look forward to it.

APPENDIX I

Themes for Perceptions about Self/ Reading (Student Entry Survey)				
Question	Response GE	Cover Term	Response SE	Cover Term
Do you like to read?	It makes me **happy** It **bores** me A story always **excites** me; you just need to find the right book You can **learn** so much Depends on what **mood** I'm in I can be in my **own little world**	**Emotions** **Individuality**	Not really, because it's **hard** for me to read some things It's **cool** to read	**Emotions** *Comprehension*
I would rate myself as…	"10"- I read a lot and am **good** at it "8"- I'm a **good** reader "9" because of my **high lexile** "5" I do not read very bad "6" I **read more than most** people "8" sometimes I **stumble on big words**	**Confidence/ Self Esteem** *Self-evaluation*	"3", I'm really **behind** "8 ½" because I can read **big books** "5" because it is **hard**	**Confidence/ Self Esteem** *Self-evaluation*
I would describe myself as…	**Great**- if you like reading you're good at it **Strong** - I read tough books ; I can read complicated books **Great** - because of my lexile **Healthy**- I read a fair amount **Decent**- I don't like it, but it's good for me	**Confidence/ Self Esteem**	**Avid** - I like small or big books **Fun**- Because it's fun **Horrible**- I cannot really read well	**Confidence/ Self Esteem**

	Avid- it takes me less than a week to read a book I like **Fast**- I read quickly			
What is hard about reading?	Different **points of view** **Understanding the moral** Reading for a **long time** **Book reports/ long** books When the **book ends** **Big words** **Understanding**	**Difficulties in learning** *Challenges*	**New words** **Words you don't know** I'm **behind in words** and **following along**	**Difficulties in learning** *Obstacles* *Vocabulary*
What is easy about reading?	**Reading in general** **Nothing** is very easy Reading for a **short time** Going at your **own pace** When you actually **get the story** **Words**	**Confidence/ Self Esteem**	**Small books** When **a person helps you** **Not much at all**	**Confidence/ Self Esteem**
One good experience in reading is…	It **helps me relax** **Harry Potter**/ 6th grade **Three Little Pigs** **Reading with Kaya*; listening on tape** When I was **left in suspense** at the end of the book **Reading at nap time** in Kindergarten with Miss Patty*	**Constructive Learning Experiences**	**Expanding my knowledge** When I read a **mystery book** **Reading at nap time** in Kindergarten with Miss Patty*	**Constructive Learning Experiences**
What would you like to be able to do in reading?	**Expand vocab** Read more **fluently** **Live the story** **Take a break** **Read faster** to **get**	**Goals/ Aspirations** *Desired accomplishment*	**Read more** **Be in the book** **Read more fluently**	**Goals/ Aspirations** *Desired accomplishment*

	book reports done			
Reading is either something you can or cannot do well	Agree (7) Disagree (1)	**Confidence/ Self-esteem** *Self-efficacy*	Agree (1) Disagree (2)	**Confidence/ Self-esteem** *Self-efficacy*
Best description of you as a reader…	I am **confident** in my ability as a reader; With enough effort I **can understand anything** I **try but I eventually give up** if it is too hard. I **understand most** of what I read	**Confidence/ Self-esteem** *Self- reflection*	I am **confident** in my ability as a reader; With enough effort I **can understand anything** I **try but I eventually give up** if it is too hard. I **understand most** of what I read Reading is **hard for me**; I **rarely feel like I understand**	**Confidence/ Self-esteem** *Self- reflection*
Reading is…	**Crucial to success** **Not important**; you know all by 6th grade **More important than ever** before **Less important** than it used to be	**Importance of Reading** *Views on learning Relevance*	**Crucial to success** **Not important**; you know all by 6th grade **More important** than ever before	**Importance of Reading** *Views on learning Relevance*
I read when I'm…	**Bored** Need to **escape** **Sad** **Want to learn** something My **friends** are reading the same book **Feel alone/** need company I **want to think** about something I **do not ever choose** to read I read all the time for **many reasons**	**Emotion** *Motivational Triggers* **Social Acceptance** **Choices**	**Bored** Need to **escape** **Sad** **Want to learn** something My **friends** are reading the same book **Feel alone/** need company I **want to think** about something I **do not ever choose** to read I read all the time for **many reasons**	**Emotion** *Motivational Triggers* **Social Acceptance** **Choices**
I expect reading in school to be…	**Boring** **Interesting** **Difficult**	**Expectations** *Perceptions*	**Boring** **Interesting** **Difficult**	**Expectations** *Perceptions*

	Useful			
Most agree with…	I like books that **challenge** my **beliefs** I prefer books that do not make me think about **unfamiliar** things I like to read in order **to do things**	**Preferences**	I like books that **challenge** my **beliefs** I prefer books that do not make me think about **unfamiliar** things I like to read in order **to do things**	**Preferences**
Improve up to three things as a reader…	Interest in **other genres** Read aloud & **not stutter** **Remember** what I read Read **harder words** Be more **fluent** Read **faster** **Concentration** To **read well** **Understand** better Read **bigger books**	**Goals/ Aspirations**	Read **harder words** Be more **fluent** **Knowledge of words** To **read well**	**Goals/ Aspirations**
Help you understand the text better…	Have **someone else read aloud** to you **Talk** about what you've read **with others** **Take notes** **Read silently** to yourself during class **Talk in groups** about what you read **Talk as a class** about what you read	**Ways kids find meaning** *Semiotics*	Have **someone else read aloud** to you **Talk** about what you've read **with others** **Drawing/ doing art** in response to what you've read **Read silently** to yourself during class **Talk in groups** about what you read **Talk as a class** about what you read	**Ways kids find meaning** *Semiotics*
Strategies I use when I am "stuck" in reading…	**Skip** the **difficult part** **Skip** the **difficult part** & **come back** later **Reread** it Read it **aloud**	**Learning Strategies** *Semiotics*	**Skip** the **difficult part** & **come back** later **Reread** it Read it **aloud** Put into my **own**	**Learning Strategies** *Semiotics*

| | Put into my **own words**

Look at **other info on page** (pictures, graphics, headings, etc)

Explain to someone else

Ask others for help

Try to **draw it**

Ask **someone else to read aloud** to me | | **words**

Look at **other info on page** (pictures, graphics, headings, etc)

Explain to someone else

Ask others for help

Try to **draw it**

Ask **someone else to read aloud** to me | |

APPENDIX J

Themes for perceptions about self/teaching (Teacher Entry Survey)		
Question	**Response**	**Cover Term**
I. What are your perceptions about teachers/ teaching? ○ Reasons you became a teacher ○ Current role as a teacher ○ How has this role changed, if at all, over time? ○ Are there more demands on teachers today? ○ How does knowing this impact how you teach?	1- **Inspired** by teachers; wanted to **inspire others** 2- Not so much instructor as **adviser** 3- Early in my career it was more of a leader in the classroom; now it is more **mentor** 4- Much more **demanding**- more **technology**, more **rigorous content** 5- **To stay relevant I must** also **change** with the class	**Emotion** **Role** **Demands** *Reflection/ Self-evaluation*
II. Philosophy of teaching ○ What is your philosophy? ○ Views on students with special needs (learning disabilities) in the GE classroom? ○ Views on collaborative teaching? ○ Comfort level teaching students with LD? - Training you have had to teach students with LD - Training you need	The practice of gaining knowledge **empowers people**; **knowledge is power**; **words** are power **Time** is a big factor- it takes these students longer to complete certain tasks than their peers. This can be alleviated with **accommodations** I know the student(s) **want to be with their peers** and **treated equally**. That is a **"big deal"** for them. I absolutely think [teachers] should- they get a **better view of the issues** the other has to deal with. It could be an **"eye-opener"** for both teachers I am **open**; this **ensures the accommodations** are being followed according to the student's IEP Pretty **comfortable**; I have had my **fair share of experience** with students of all abilities. I have **been to [such trainings]**	**Teaching philosophies** *Empowerment* **Demands** **Democracy** *Inclusiveness* **Collaboration** *Open to Growth* *Experience* **Comfort level/ Confidence** -

	throughout my career **More and more students are diagnosed** with Autism; it would be **beneficial to take a refresher course**.	
III. Other thoughts/ concerns you have about the education of students with LD?	Sometimes people **make decisions for students without their say**. Sometimes just **asking the student** what they **want/ need** in their education for them to succeed would be most helpful. I feel **some are able to do a lot more than parents allow** them to do.	**Empowering students**

APPENDIX K

Themes for Perceptions about Self/ Learning				
Question	**Response GE**	**Cover Term**	**Response SE**	**Cover Term**
Describe this semester- what you learned, how you learned, etc	I learned **slavery is everywhere** I learned **a lot** of things like slavery, poverty. To me they taught very well because they **stopped and explained** things, and **gave us formats** to help us Slavery was very **challenging** to study; poverty was **interesting**; mental illness **wasn't the most fun**	**KINDS OF TEACHING** *Best practice* **VIEWS ON LEARNING**	What I learned and how I learned it **doing things** together **as a group** We learned about the **Christmas Carol**. We learned by **taking steps** We learned pretty well because [the R teacher] **knew how to teach us** and that **made it really nice for me**. We learned in **groups, partners, and ourselves**	**COLLABORATION** **KINDS OF TEACHING** *Best practice* **SOCIAL/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**
Discuss your learning experience & how it was different or the same as other/ past experiences	It was **harder**. I liked the **Talking Circles**; I did not like **vocab** It was **similar** to learning from the past, but I **liked** it more because we really **got into the story** and **broke it down**. It helped me **understand themes and words** I have not experienced the **Talking Circle** It was **different** because you didn't just give us a **worksheet**. You **explained** what we were supposed to do and gave us **examples**. Another is we **didn't do the**	**EMOTIONS** Exciting, Harder, Fun **WAYS TO LEARN** *Analyzing Text* **COMPREHENSION** **TEACHING METHODS** *Instructional Design*	It was **different** because we **did way more together** than any other teacher It was **different** because we did some **stuff in groups, and partners, and by ourselves** which made it a lot more **fun**	**SOCIAL/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING** *Learning Communities*

	same thing day after day. It was **always interesting**			
	Mostly **different** in a good way, [R teacher] made **more exciting** by having **projects**…we didn't have to do **workbooks**…we could learn…have **fun**…and still **help others**	**KINDS OF LEARNING** **-OR-** **NATURE OF LEARNING**		
	It was **different** because I don't think I've gone this **depth** with these subjects			
Good and/ or bad experiences this semester	Good- The "**Circle**"		I had **great** experiences; like the **"All About Me"** projects	
	Good- **Talking Circles**; Bad- vocab-hard			
	Good- Talking circle put me a little **out of my comfort zone**; one **not good were the 'focus questions'**- I **didn't get the whole idea** of them	**POSITIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES** *Classroom Environment*	We learned about **slavery in ND**- this will be an experience **I will remember my whole life**	**POSITIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES** *Positive transfer*
	A **good** thing that helped me was the **Talking Circle** because everyone told **what they thought** and that **gave me a new picture** in my head		[The R teacher} **took jokes really well**, and **we all laughed** with [R teacher] and **didn't get yelled at.**	
	The **bad** thing was the slavery unit because I thought it was **too in depth**…I **didn't want me name out there**…I **thought a pimp might come and get**	**"NEGATIVE" LEARNING EXPERIENCES** *Comfort Zone*	But [PT]didn't take jokes and yelled at us	**"NEGATIVE" LEARNING EXPERIENCES** *Comfort Zone*

	me The **worst** was a spelling test that was a **word search**…I **freaked out** because they are **hard** for me, but then you let me take a written one [Both teachers] were **very fun**			
Do all students learn the same/ different? Explain	No because everyone has a **different mind** **Differently**- vocab, talking circle, visuals, group discussions, movie **might help** people All students learn different which is why it's important to **find a method where everyone understands.** All students learn differently- look at me, to learn in math I need to **look at the same thing until I understand it**, then do a problem, and keep doing it **Different**- some people use flashcards, some don't. You can also use games to learn **Different**- saying we all learn the same is like saying everyone in this world is the same. We're not, **we all have our own personalities**	**LEARNING STYLES** *Differentiated Instruction* **LEARNING STYLES** **LEARNING STYLES**	All kids learn **differently** since they may have **slower reading comp** Kids learn different. Some kids **could have LD**, making it **harder** for them **to learn** All kids **do not learn the same**- some kids learn with **music** going, some kids it **distracts**	**LEARNING STYLES** *Differentiated Instruction*

	Different- everyone has different vocab and comp levels. Some kids have disabilities; some kids understand more easily. **Everybody is different and so are their abilities**			
Should ALL kids be part of (inclusion) the same learning environment & experiences?	Yes- you need people that are **good at different things** **Find a method(s) we all can understand**- to be able to **work together** and **take apart stories** and learn. [All kids] should have the same experience. **Learn to be you; stand up for yourself, make a difference** I think they should take a **separate class**- then they wouldn't feel so **pressured** to do something at a higher level Yes- **we are a class/ team** and **shouldn't break up**. Everyone should be included- **learning together** so you can **communicate better** with each other Yes- **a person does not feel good when they are left out**	**INCLUSION/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING** *Positive Learning Communities* **SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS** **INCLUSION/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING** **EMOTIONS/ ISOLATION**	[Separating kids] is **not fair**. Kids **need to learn the same**- if they miss out they don't know what to do and everyone is ahead of them. We all should be **happy, laughing- coloring, working in group, talk together, work together** **No one gets left out** **Some should not be**- they might **not be at as high a level of reading** but **reading aloud** is helpful so they can **be a part of class**	**INCLUSION/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING** *Positive Learning Communities* **EMOTIONS/ ISOLATION** **SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS**

	In some ways **no**- if they don't understand what is happening, they **need education on their level** I don't think they should because some kids **have disabilities and with help, they can overcome** them	**SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS**		
Themes of Social Justice- necessary & important in learning or not	yes- then we are **acknowledging the situation** Yes- to be **aware** Very **important** to know before you take action so you **know how to help** So if [someone] came into contact with something like this they **wouldn't be scared or surprised** Some things like **bullying**, but **not suicide** to little kids. It can be based on age Yes- because why shouldn't students learn about these things that are or were a part of daily life for people. Then they might **take action** and then one day **slavery might end all over the world** Yes- people need to realize that **people are in need & our world is not perfect** Yes- things are	**ROLE/ ~~IMPORTANCE~~ OF SOCIAL JUSTICE** *Social Awareness* *Sociocultural Perspectives*	Yes- to **take a stand**; to **help others** in need Yes- because **if you don't know** about these things, **how can you help**? It is **necessary** you might be able to **take action and you could save lives**	**ROLE/ ~~IMPORTANCE~~ OF SOCIAL JUSTICE** *Social Awareness* *Sociocultural Perspectives*

	happening all around us and [students] don't know it- if we don't learn it in class we don't know			
What strategies (if any) helped you find meaning-or learn better?	Talking To The Text (**T4**) "The T4 helped because then I **understood what Dickens** was talking about." "Definitely!" **Dialogue Board/ Journal** **Group Discussions** **Think-Pair-Share** **Visualizations** **I-Search** Projects [pre-reading] "The I-search **helped me to know** what workhouses and other things like that were" **Vocab** [pre-reading] Watching the **movie** before or after the text **Connecting** the novel/ text **with current issues** in the world	HOW KIDS FIND MEANING - SEMIOTICS	Talking To The Text (**T4**) **Dialogue Board/ Journal** **Group Discussions** **Think-Pair-Share** **Visualizations** **I-Search** Projects [pre-reading] **Vocab** [pre-reading] "sometimes **hard for me to find definitions**" Watching the **movie** before or after the text "It **helped me get a picture in my head**" **Connecting** the novel/ text **with current issues** in the world	HOW KIDS FIND MEANING- SEMIOTICS

APPENDIX L

Themes for Perceptions about Self/ Teaching (Teacher Exit Survey)		
Question	**Response**	**Cover Term**

I. Teaching Beliefs/ Practices
 	
o **"Talking to the Text"** (Reading strategy)
 	
    - So, is that something you had not done before?
 	
    - Is that something you would do in the future?
	Correct, we would **just read the chapter;** [the students] would **listen on tape**
	
	Yah, probably. I thought it was a **more effective** way
		Teaching Practices
		
		Reflective Practitioner

o **"Buckle Down"** workbooks vs. Critical Literacy What is the choice to use the BD books versus continuing a lesson like…the way we did this semester? [1]	The reason I teach BD…is to **get them used to the vocab**….it's also my way of **hitting all the standards**…I tend to do Scope, I know I'm hitting some…this is my reassurance that I'm **teaching what I'm supposed to be teaching**	**Teaching Practices**
And in order to do lessons like we did it would also take more time are you saying? [2]	I think **we could go off** from this, **get deeper** into….like today we did author's craft- today was my introductory; they know it now, so I could go into Scope and talk about author's craft in that story. So this is **giving them the foundation**	**Teaching Practices**
o **Making decisions** What decision do you make as a teacher to stay with the kids if they want to take action (Critical Literacy model) or move on because you have curriculum to 'cover'? [1]	Well, you get to **know the kids** and when they're sick of something…it's like "**We've had it"…"We're done**"…you get to that point and **I don't want to get to that point.** Then **they can go find things on their own**.	**Knowing your students** *Opportunity for Choice* **Teaching Practices**
So… how do you make that decision? [2]	I have the ability… because I am the only English teacher; **I know**	

	what I've taught them…I have the luxury of knowing the kids. I know the group of kids I have and what their interests are, so that's what I try to tag on if I can. I can guess there are things in the Common Core that tell me these are things you should probably teach, but I hit on them, ok?	Teaching Practices
o **Themes of Social Justice- necessary & important in learning or not** So…if you had to make a choice….say you're in a Critical Literacy 'thing' and the kids want to take action, but you know you've got the next thing coming on the horizon, what do you do and how do you make that decision? Your overall experience with the Social Justice theme & how it can be incorporated into all lessons?	I would see **how many of the kids**- if it's just one or two or **if it's going to affect** a whole lot more that that…if it's just a matter of two…I don't know…I think you're gonna have to…I would **refer them somewhere else**? For that **time sake**? If it's **more than that**…it's going to **affect the student body** then I'm thinking we should **invest some time**, but again it would have to be **outside of class**. We would have to **stop that unit** in class, **take it outside class**, so I can **go on and finish what I need to** for the year [Students] really **got into the slavery unit** and **spent a lot of time** on this unit. It **didn't matter who the student was**, they were **all into the unit**. Kids at all ages **want fairness** in all situations & when they see that does not happen, they **become involved** and are **more willing to voice their opinions** and **get personally involved**.	Demands Motivation Democracy
II. Semiotics Overall, throughout the whole unit, were there things that	Well, I think **everybody finds meaning when it relates to them**, ok? So if it…I like the fact that they **each had their vocab**	**Finding meaning- Semiotics**

stood out to you about how kids found meaning and particularly how special education students- our kids with LD- how did they find meaning? We had originally talked about bringing Shakespeare into the classroom…and it ended up being Dickens at the 7th grade level, which is still just as much a historical author [these texts] are generally hard for kids to understand Multiple ways to represent? Any teaching practices you would now employ in your classroom?	**word** and as you came to it in the book, they had to **jump in and tell what it was**…it **found meaning, brought meaning** to those [words] very much so Because they are in that **old time language**…they're **not used to** how we spoke back then….it was a lot of 'these' and 'thous'…so [students] would **really struggle** with that…when I teach it, we have the **modern version** right next to it Right I have already put to use the **Dialogue Board** and "**tickets out**". I observed the **Talking Circles** and would like to see how older students would view that.	**Teaching Practices** **Struggles in learning** *Comprehension* *Exposure to varying texts* **Effective Learning Strategies**

III. Inclusion
 	
    • Strategies
    • Constraints
 	
Do you think our Special Education students had as good…I don't know the word I want to use….how their opportunity was…. [1]
 	
Your thoughts / beliefs on students with special needs in the regular classroom when sometimes it can be challenging
	I thought they were **equally**…like when we went into….the [talking] circles, they could **contribute** as much as anyone else…I don't think they **held back** at all. In fact, I saw them **participate a little more**….you know, they really **wanted to**. Whenever you asked a question they were, **always had their hands up ready to answer** something.
	
	It takes **time** to **accommodate**, but it shouldn't be anything other than that; they **should be in here**, cuz they **get from their peers** … you know they **pick**
		Democracy
		
		Environment
		
		Demands
		
		Inclusion
		
		Multiple Intelligences
		
		Demands
		
		Challenges

	things up they normally wouldn't do if they were down in a room with just the [Resource Room teacher]	**Inclusion/ Democracy**
Do you think that what we did then helped bridge that gap- or no?	Like I said the only thing…is **more time** to accommodate tests and things like that. They're **equal to anybody else**, it's just that they **learn differently**	**Demands**
I guess I should ask you about the 'time factor' then; the one thing that stood out to me in our conversations/ reflections	Definitely, cuz they were **never on the 'outside'**…it was never like "you come into the circle now" No. **everybody was equal**…they had the same partners when we did projects…they **weren't ostracized**…they **didn't have a different topic;** they were **brought right into it**.	
	There is **never enough time** to cover it the way we want it. In a **perfect world**… (laughs)…there **just isn't time**. There just **never enough time**.	
IV. Critical Literacy So, in closing, any other things, just an opportunity for your thoughts about anything, pros/ cons of our experience together	I thought it was **fun**, cuz I got **new ideas** of **how to do things**- you know what I mean? Like the '**Reading to the "text**; I've got other **ways to do vocab** …it **helped me**	**Emotions** **Teaching Practices**
So, future opportunities to collaboratively teach/ use a Critical Literacy model…your thoughts? Critical to implement a successful team-teaching model?	Oh, **definitely**. We are **already planning** a homeless unit for 10th grade. I thought it was **positive**. I think the **kids thought** it was **positive**. I think they thought **we were crazy** at the beginning (laughs)	**Implications for future** *teaching/ learning* **Motivation**

	You know, when you bring that [CL] to the classroom, they **look forward to coming** to **class**, they look forward to **doing their assignments** more…I think it **brings more meaning** to those [assignments] as well. Communication & being flexible in plans. It does not always follow the path you both wished for**.** Students have two people to be resources than just one	**Successful Team Teaching** **Benefits** *Positive Outcomes of student engagement*

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ABSTRACT

CRITICAL LITERACY: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS WITH READING DISABILITIES

by

KARYN M. CHIAPELLA

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Co-Advisors: Dr. Marshall Zumberg; Dr. Gerald Oglan

Major: Special Education

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Many students, particularly those with learning disabilities do not read and/ or write at levels sufficient for meeting the demands of the 21st century. Successfully reading to learn requires the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from multiple texts. Critical literacy provides a framework for students to engage in dialogue with texts to become more aware of the relationships of power communicated within texts. This study offers a case study of a 7th grade English classroom and its teacher utilizing a critical literacy model. The development of this model advocates for all students to question texts for issues of power, especially disparities within social contexts, like poverty, class, race, sexual orientation, etc. Becoming 'critically literate' means students have developed the ability to know and understand whose voice/ position holds power and whose does not. Teachers help students to understand the role of language in the social construction of self. This study urges educators to examine their beliefs and role in the classroom. This study further concludes educators need to have a better understanding of critical literacy before it can take root in our classrooms. Findings highlight how students drew upon and used diverse texts, dialogue, and social critique to situate themselves in larger social discourses and enact change in the world. These findings were

collectively analyzed to find common themes and threads in the units under study. The research study, experiences, and findings invite further exploration of the importance and significance of critical literacy in today's classrooms.

Keywords: semiotics, critical literacy, pedagogy, sociocultural, pop culture, power, social disparity, equality, social discourse, discourse, language, semiotics.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

KARYN M. CHIAPELLA

EDUCATION

- 2015; PhD- Special Education/ Cognate: English; Wayne State University; Detroit, MI
- 2005; Masters- Special Education; Oakland University; Rochester, MI
- 2002; Bachelor of Science/ Special Education; Florida Gulf Coast University; Ft. Myers, FL

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

- 2015- Present; ELL Coordinator; Scranton Public Schools
- 2012- Present; Member Building Level Support Team

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- 2014- Present; Academia.edu
- 2013- Present; National Council Teachers of English

AWARDS & COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

- 2007; Teacher of the Year; American Legion MI

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

- March 2015- Present; Presenter: Dyslexia Screening & Strategies for Success; Scranton Public School; ND
- Sept 2014- Present; Presenter: Step- Up to Writing; Scranton Public School; ND
- Sept 2013; Presenter: IEPs, Accommodations and Differentiation in Instruction; Scranton Public School; ND
- Fall 2005- Fall 2010; Presenter: Inclusion and The Law; Wayne State University; MI
- March 2005, 2006, 2007 Presenter: Co-Teaching & Inclusion; MAMSE conference; MI