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Editorial:

Clarity and Insights into Educational Debates

Dolana Mogadime

Editor

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The publications in this issue of Brock Education Journal provide us, the reader, with clarity and insight into educational debates of importance in our contemporary times. While the questions they raise are of a pressing nature, the concerns come out of issues that are enduring. For example, Ron S. Phillips in “*Let’s Not Call in the lawyers: Using the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal Decision in First Nations Education*,” assists readers in facing the role the Government of Canada has played (over decades) in underserving Indigenous children. At the onset of his article, Phillips features the 2016 findings from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal regarding “the Child and Family services available to First Nations children and families on reserve” (CHRT, 2016, p. 20). Phillips’ article provides a careful examination of factors that contributed to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision, specifying that the Government of Canada has discriminated against First Nations students due to their race. Phillips’ work illuminates our responsibilities as educators to better know and understand the systemic issues that undercut the quality of education that First Nations students receive. He writes, “It is time to provide First Nations students on reserves a comprehensive system of education.” Our attention toward redressing the issues Phillips raises are of paramount importance.

Shelley Stagg Peterson and Dianne Riehl contribution, “*Rhetorics of Play in Kindergarten Programs in an Era of Accountability*,” is informed by the coauthors personal professional experiences in the 1980s teaching in kindergarten settings. They argue that the contemporary interpretation of play as an integral part of learning in kindergarten classes, in some cases, falls short or doesn’t match prior understanding. They state, “it appears that the new play-based kindergarten program is being implemented within an environment of uncertainty about play-based learning among teachers.” Stagg Peterson and Riehl apply their knowledge of the field by undergoing an investigation of kindergarten program documents that use play as a reference point for three rhetorics of play. As they explain, “we found these three rhetorics of play have been more influential in the development of Ontario kindergartens than the others: (a) The rhetoric of play as progress; (b) The rhetoric of the self and; (c) the rhetoric of identity.” Stagg Peterson and Riehl’s text analysis of Ontario Ministry of Education documents on kindergarten programs spanning from 1944 - 2010/11 provides much-needed clarity and insight into the debates regarding “accountability-oriented perspectives on kindergarten pedagogies” versus “an understanding of play and its role in children’s learning and well-being.” Stagg Peterson and Riehl provide further suggestions for teacher education institutions for supporting the preparation of kindergarten teachers toward understanding the complexities of play pedagogies. Audiences for their work include educators, administrators and policy-makers who are seeking a historical analysis and understanding that informs these debates.

Monica McGlynn-Stewart’s research on “*How Early Childhood Learning Influences Beginning Literacy Teachers’ Professional Learning*,” adds to the debate about “best methods to prepare and support teachers.” McGlynn-Stewart reports on a study she conducted with six (out of a larger group of twenty-two) beginning teachers. The research questions guiding the study

were twofold: “a. How do beginning teachers draw on their early experiences at home and as pupils in their work as teachers?” and “b. How does the relative ease with which they learned literacy as children relate to the way in which they approach learning about teaching literacy as beginning teachers?” Nine key findings from the study are provided however the most illuminating point was “that all of the participants found their pre-service literacy program to have insufficiently prepared them for classroom teaching, and their in-service learning to be more practical and effective.” McGlynn-Stewart’s study augments the same finding advanced by the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network, namely that teacher education programs fall short on preparing beginning teachers to teach literacy effectively. McGlynn-Stewart’s study is an important read as it extends the discussion of these limitations while providing practical suggestions and possible solutions to the dilemma. One such useful suggestion is that teacher education institutions, “need to differentiate our teaching to meet the needs of pre-service teachers just as we strive to do for school children.” McGlynn-Stewart has several useful insights that contribute to the debate regarding best methods for effective literacy teacher preparation within teacher education programs. Tara-Lynn Scheffel’s research article, *“Individual Paths to literacy Engagement: Three Narratives Revisited”* sets out to do what many academics would likely enjoy: she revisits her doctoral research to achieve a greater understanding of the questions which she raised and deeper insights from participants who in 2007 were in Grade 2. Six years later, upon her return, they were in Grade 8.

Scheffel shares the 2 phase (quantitative and qualitative) experimental research methods approach utilized in 2007 that integrated ethnographic classroom observations, individual interviews and parent surveys. Scheffel’s revisited research successfully offers an expanded understanding of student engagement within classroom life. She reconnects with three students Spike, Jasper and Avery to draw from student-centered insights that allow her to revise her framework from a focus on literacy and engagement to consideration of a broader “Framework for Engagement” across learning contexts. Documenting her more nuanced focus on students’ individual path to engagement she advances the notion that a greater focus on relationships between students and teachers is needed. She explains, “In light of Spike, Jasper and Avery’s journeys, teachers were reminded to get to know their students and what contributes to their success in learning.” The findings from Tara-Lynn Scheffel’s follow-up study advance this important student-centered understanding in relation to the popular topic about student engagement.

Lee Anne Block and Paul Betts in, “Cultivating Agentic Teacher Identities in the Field of a Teacher Education Program” report on their ongoing research on an innovative after degree teacher education program. At the center of the program are principles of collaborative learning and student agency within the process of nurturing teacher identity. Their research on the program is informed by the notion that teacher identity is constructed, complex and negotiated within links between theory and practice. As they explain, “we are interested in the experiences of our teacher candidates, as they participate in layered contexts of the program.” They argue that as students reflect and collaborate across these nestled contexts (university course work, school practicum experience) and school-based professional learning meetings (PLM) they “construct a practice that shapes a teacher identity.” The article is part of Block and Betts’ research program focused on data from the two-year program. Together, the five articles in this issue are useful in providing research, thinking and direction on issues that are challenging educators in both K-12 schools and university settings.

Let's Not Call in the Lawyers: Using the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal Decision in First Nations Education

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Abstract

In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal released its decision regarding the provision of Child and Family Services to First Nations living on reserves and the Yukon. The Tribunal found that the government of Canada had discriminated against First Nations children on the basis of their race. Many of the arguments made by the government of Canada to describe their actions in the provision of First Nations child and family services can be easily transferred to the provision of First Nations education programs and services to First Nations children throughout Canada. This article has replaced child and family services terms and phrases with education terms and phrases in the decision. Hopefully, the federal government of Canada will see the futility of fighting First Nations in education as they did in child and family services. It is time to provide First Nations students on reserves a comprehensive system of education.

Keywords: First Nations education, education in Canada, human rights and education

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Note: The government of Canada has changed the name of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) to Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development (INAC). The department has also been known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). Titles used in this paper reflect the ones used in the original texts.

Introduction

On January 26, 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal [CHRT] (2016) released its decision regarding the Child and Family services available to First Nations children and families on reserve. The First Nations Child and Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) general position was that First Nations children and families on reserves were being discriminated against because they were just that – First Nations children and families on reserves.

The position of the Government of Canada through its department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) was that the case had no merit because it did not provide the child and family services to First Nations children and families. The federal government argued that it funded the service; it did not provide it. Despite many federal government statements requiring First Nations Child and Family agencies to provide services to First Nations children and families on reserves at provincial/territorial levels, the federal government remained steadfast in their belief that they should not be held accountable for any shortcomings or problems with the services.

The federal government of Canada's main arguments in the case may be summarized as they assert that AANDC:

1. [1] Provided the funding to First Nations child and family service agencies to provide the service. It did not provide the child and family services. AANDC saw its role as “strictly limited to funding and being accountable for the spending of those funds” (CHRT, 2016, p. 14). Their position was that “funding does not constitute a “service” (CHRT, 2016, p. 14). AANDC's described their roles and responsibilities as to “ensure”, “arrange”, “support” and “make available” (CHRT, 2016, p. 14) the provision of child and family services with First Nations child and family agencies, as well as provincial/territorial agreements;
2. [2] Utilized provincial/territorial levels of child and family services programs as templates for First Nations child and family agencies to follow. In 2006, AANDC's website described the objective of The First Nations Child and Family Services Program as “to ensure that the services provided to them are comparable to those available to provincial residents in similar circumstances” (CHRT, 2016, p. 25);
3. [3] Acknowledged that their role was to assist First Nations in “providing access to culturally sensitive child and family services” (CHRT, 2016, p. 25).

However, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that what was important was that AANDC “does more than just ensure the provision of child and family services to First Nations, it controls the provision of those services through its funding mechanisms to the point where it negatively impacts children and families on reserves” (CHRT, 2016, p. 171). AANDC's funding mechanisms “have resulted in denials of services and created various adverse impacts for many First Nations children and families on reserves (CHRT, 2016, p. 172). The Tribunal also found that AANDC's funding formulas for child and family services on reserves were “based on flawed assumptions about children, that do not accurately reflect the service needs of many on-reserve communities” (CHRT, 2016, p. 172).

The CHRT noted that AANDC's child and family services funding formula “has not been significantly updated since the mid-1990's resulting in underfunding and inequities for First Nations children and families on reserves” (CHRT, 2016, p. 149). While espousing provincial

comparable in child and family services, AANDC did not utilize provincial/territorial financial strategies or expertise and was “unable to obtain all the relevant variables given the provinces often do not calculate things in the same fashion or use a funding formula” (CHRT 2016, p. 174).

The issue of provincial/territorial comparability of services was central to the federal government’s position. The Tribunal found that while espousing provincial/territorial comparability, AANDC had “difficulty defining what it means and putting it into practice, mainly because its funding authority and interpretation thereof are not in line with provincial/territorial legislation and standards” (CHRT, 2016, p. 173). AANDC’s difficulties in child and family services may also be linked to the lack of child welfare expertise on the part of federal officials. The Tribunal noted that AANDC officials were not “expert in the area of child welfare” (CHRT, 2016, p. 173) and were not “experts in child welfare” (CHRT, 2016, p. 174).

The lack of professional expertise in child and family services had several consequences for First Nations children and families. One consequence would be AANDC’s inability to comprehend what types and range of child and family services were required, namely, what constituted a comprehensive and effective child and family services system. The simple solution for the unqualified AANDC officials was to turn to the provincial/territorial child and family systems as the model to follow. A funding formula was then developed which would initially provide the basics of the provincial/territorial models. However, in a short time, it would be apparent that AANDC’s funding model had problems.

AANDC appeared to be more focused on the funding aspects of child and family services rather than the provision of these services. Such actions compared unfavourably with the provincial/territorial governments as the Tribunal noted that “provincial/territorial child and family services legislation and standards are ensured with ensuring service levels that are in line with sound social work practice and that meet the best interest of children” (CHRT, 2016, p. 174). In other words, the provinces/territories were using their child and family expertise and knowledge to develop and update legislation, programs, services, as well as funding levels to provide appropriate child and family programs and services. The federal government was unable to match the provinces/territories actions as it lacked the provincial/territorial child and family knowledge, expertise, legislation, programs, and services.

The Tribunal found that First Nations child and family service agencies were to “deliver the FNCFS [First Nations Child and Family Services] program in accordance to provincial legislation and standards while adhering to the terms and conditions of federal funding agreements” (CHRT, 2016, p.24). However, the federal government’s use of provincial/territorial comparability of First Nations child and family services without provincial/territorial funding levels, professional knowledge and expertise resulted in the Tribunal finding that “AANDC’s reasonable comparability standard does not ensure substantive equality in the provision of child and family services for First Nations people on reserve” (CHRT 2016, p. 174). The Tribunal also found that AANDC’s strategy was “premised on comparable funding levels, based on the application of standard funding formulas, is not sufficient to ensure substantive equality in the provision of child and family services to First Nations children and families living on reserves” (CHRT 2016, p. 175).

The Tribunal noted that AANDC’s regional offices had a role in the provision of child and family services on First Nations. Their role was to “to interact with Recipients, Chiefs, and Councils, Headquarters, the reference province of territory”; “to manage the program and funding on behalf of Canada and to ensure that authorities are followed”, and “to ensure

Headquarters that the program is operating according to authorities and Canada's financial management requirements" (CHRT 2016, p. 24).

The government had been informed that there were problems with AANDC's provision and funding of child and family services and program for First Nations people on First Nations. The Tribunal referred to the 2008 Report Auditor General of Canada Report (2008) on this topic. The Auditor General was concerned that the "current funding practices do not lead to equitable funding among Aboriginal Nations communities" (Auditor General of Canada, 2008, p. 2).

The Tribunal reported that the Auditor General of Canada Report (2008) found that AANDC's "funding formula is outdated and does not take into any costs associated with modification to provincial legislation or with any changes in the way services are provided" (CHRT, 2016, p. 20). Despite requiring the provision of provincial child and family services, AANDC had little knowledge if the "services delivered on reserve comply with provincial legislation and standards. Funding levels are pre-determined without regard to the services the agency is bound to provide under provincial legislation and standards" (p. 14-15). The Tribunal noted that the 2008 Report had found "no standards" (p. 13). It also found that "funding formula is not responsive to factors that can cause wide variations in operating costs" (p. 20) and that these problems were known to AANDC officials.

In summary, the Tribunal had found three areas of concern in the federal government's provision of child and family services to First Nations children and families on First Nations throughout Canada. These areas were: (1) provincial/territorial comparability; (2) lack of expertise on departmental officials; and (3) insufficient funding.

Provincial Comparability for First Nations Education

The use of provincial/territorial levels of child and family services as templates for First Nations child and family agencies to adhere to are quite similar to federal government statements on First Nations education. A former Minister's of Indian Affairs stated that "It is my department's objective to provide for a level of education which is comparable to that provided by neighbouring school jurisdictions (INAC, 1986, p. 2).

In 2003, INAC's Elementary/Secondary Education National Program Guidelines (INAC, 2003) was clear in describing the objective of the education program. The objective was of INAC's Education Program was "to provide eligible students living on reserves with elementary and secondary education programs comparable to those that are required in provincial schools by the statutes, regulations or policies of the province in which the reserve is located" (p. 3). The guidelines also required First Nations schools to "ensure that programs comparable to provincially recognized programs of study are provided, and that only provincially certified teachers are employed" (p. 4).

Provincial comparability was the goal of the federal government with regards to programs and services for First Nations with disabilities. The federal department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada [HRSKC] (2008) in a report on the federal government's inclusive policies and action that in the area of First Nations the goal was to ensure "access to services comparable to other Canadian residents" (p. 91). Later, the report described the objective INAC's Special Education Plan (SEP) as "to improve the educational achievement levels of First Nations students on reserve by providing access to special education programs and services that are culturally sensitive and meet the provincial standards in the locality of the First Nation" (HRSKC, 2008, p. 94).

In the area of special education, the government of Canada required First Nations schools to look to the provinces for standards. For example, statements requiring First Nations schools to provide provincial levels of special education services to First Nations students may be found in federal documents. These include the requirement that First Nations schools must: “provide eligible students with education programs and services of a standard comparable to that of other Canadians within the locality of the First Nation” (INAC 2002, p. 5); and “providing for access to special education programs and services that are culturally sensitive and meet the provincial standards in the locality of the First Nation” (AANDC, 2013, p. 2). In 2016, INAC’s Special Education Program - High-Cost Special Education Program (INAC, 2016a) emphasized provincial standards for First Nations schools to follow as the program was described as helping “eligible First Nations students with high-cost special needs to access quality programs and services that are culturally sensitive and reflective of generally accepted provincial or territorial standards” (p. 1).

In 2004, the Auditor General of Canada (2004) reported that “Under the current departmental policy, First Nations schools are required, at a minimum, to follow provincially recognized programs of study, hire provincially certified teachers, and follow education standards that allow students to transfer to an equivalent grade in another school within the province in which the reserve is located” (p. 3). An evaluation by AANDC on their provision of elementary and secondary education on First Nations also stressed provincial education comparability as “[T]he primary objective of elementary/secondary education programming is to provide eligible students living on reserve with education programs comparable to those required in provincial schools by statutes, regulations or policies of the province in which the reserve is located” (AANDC, 2012, p. 1).

In summary, the federal government of Canada and its department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAC) require First Nations schools offer provincial education and special education programs and services. Provincial education programs and services were the templates that First Nations schools were required to follow.

AANDC/INAC - Lack of Educational Expertise

The 2004 Auditor General of Canada’s report (2004) also expressed concerns over the ability of the federal department to effectively manage First Nations education as there was a “lack of reliable and consistent information on education costs limits the Department’s ability to manage the education programs effectively” (p. 9). The questions regarding education information has led to confusion as the department as it “does not know whether funding levels provided to First Nations are sufficient to meet the education standards it has set and whether the results achieved are in line with the resources provided” (p. 15).

In 2010, the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples began a ‘Study of First Nations Primary and Secondary Education’ (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010a). The Committee was studying: a) Governance and Delivery Systems; b) Tripartite Education Agreements; and, c) Possible Legislative and/or Policy Frameworks. The Committee held proceedings in Ottawa and across Canada. They heard witnesses from the federal government, provincial governments, provincial school divisions, First Nations, and Innu education representatives.

On April 13, 2010, the Committee heard from Ms. Christine Cram, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships, Indian and Northern

Affairs Canada (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010b). Ms. Cram acknowledged the low level of educational expertise within her department. She compared provincial education ministries with her department. Provincial ministries “have expertise” (p. 9), while Indian Affairs “could not possibly have the level of expertise provided by the province” (p. 9). Finally, Ms. Cram admitted that her department does “not claim to have huge expertise in post-secondary or kindergarten-to-Grade-12 education” (p. 9).

The Committee also heard from government officials, as well as First Nations representatives, about the level of education expertise and knowledge on the part of AANDC officials. Ms. Bastien, expressed her frustration at the education qualifications and expertise of Indian Affairs officials as she believed that “... those who work at the department’s education sector should be experts in the field. It is very frustrating when we meet people who work in First Nations education at the department and who have no educational know-how” (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010c, p. 6).

In summary, education bureaucrats from the federal government of Canada and its department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAC) were not well qualified in education. They lacked the necessary education expertise required to establish, develop, and maintain the education system for First Nations students living on First Nations throughout Canada.

AANDC/INAC - Inadequate Funding for Education

On June 8, 2010, the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (2010b) heard representatives from First Nations organizations who spoke of funding issues and the resulting poor results. Ms. Lise Bastien, Director, First Nations Education Council, spoke of her concerns regarding “the inadequate funding” (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010b, p. 4). She was also concerned that the First Nations education funding formula went “... back 22 years. It has never been reviewed” (p. 8). The result of the poor funding was evident as there was “...no money for libraries, and nothing for professional training...nothing for technology... or for sports and leisure” (p. 8).

A week later, June 15, 2010, the federal government’s funding of First Nations schools was discussed at a Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples meeting. Ms. Roberta Jamieson, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, spoke of the “obvious disparity” (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010c, p. 10) between the federal funding differences between First Nations schools (\$8000.00 per student) and the amount received by nearby provincial schools that received First Nations students (\$15,000 per student). She also described First Nations schools as being “chronically underfunded” (p.10).

The Chair of the Committee acknowledged the funding disparities in First Nations education by stating “I do not think there is any dispute about inadequate funding” and “There is no dispute that funding is currently inadequate” (Standing Senate Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010d, p. 10). The issue of inadequate federal funding of First Nations schools was acknowledged in an evaluation of the elementary and secondary education programs on First Nations (AANDC ,2012). The report found that federal government’s funding to First Nations schools did not account for the “actual cost variability applicable to the needs and circumstances of each community or school, and particularly the cost realities associated with isolation and small population” (p. 44).

In summary, there can be no question regarding the adequacy of funding for First Nations

schools. First Nations schools lack funding for education programs and services that provincial and territorial schools take for granted. First Nations schools are not funded adequately.

Similarities – First Nations Child and Family Services and Education

Much of what has been written in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's recent decision (CHRT, 2016) regarding First Nations child and family services can be applied to the federal government's education program for First Nations children living on reserves (Table 1). The government is constitutionally responsible for both programs. Both programs strive to provide culturally appropriate services. Federal headquarters and regional offices manage both programs. Government bureaucrats are generally not qualified in either area (e.g., child and family services, education). Funding is also similar. The government provides the funding, while the First Nations provide the services or programs. Both programs use provincial programs as templates to follow, but without provincial funding levels. Funding formula for both programs are outdated.

The federal government also describes their role in both education and child and family services in funding or financial terms. For example, the federal government's statements on their responsibilities for First Nations education are quite similar to their statements on child and family services. Their responsibilities for First Nations education are limited to funding, e.g., "financial responsibility" (INAC, 2006, p 3, "funds" (Government of Canada, 2016, p. 1; Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2008, p. 91), "provides core funding" (INAC, 2016b, p. 1), and "provides funding" (INAC, 2016c, p. 1). In 2010, a deputy minister from AANDC described his department as being "basically a funder. We provide funding to First Nations and other organizations that deliver the programs and provide the services" (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2010d, p. 9).

The Decision

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal listened to the positions of both sides. The Tribunal reviewed previous court decisions and the *Constitution Act, 1867*. Finally, a decision was made. The Tribunal found "First Nations children and families living on reserve and in the Yukon are discriminated against in the provision of child and family services by AANDC" (CHRT, 2016, p. 176).

In the Summary of findings the Tribunal found that "The FNCFS Program, corresponding funding formulas and other related provincial/territorial agreements intend to provide funding to ensure the safety and well-being of First Nations children on reserve by supporting culturally appropriate child and family services that are meant to be in accordance with provincial/territorial legislation and standards and be provided in a reasonably comparable manner to those provided off-reserve in similar circumstances. However, the evidence above indicates that AANDC is far from meeting these intended goals and, in fact, that First Nations are adversely impacted and, in some cases, denied adequate child welfare services by the application of the FNCFS Program and other funding methods" (CHRT, 2016, p. 148-149).

The Tribunal ordered the federal government to "cease its discriminatory practices and reform the FNCFS Program and 1995 Agreement to reflect the findings of this decision" (CHRT 2016, p. 175). The federal government was also directed to "refocus the policy of the program to respect human rights principles and sound social work practice" (CHRT 2016, p. 175). The Assembly of First Nations requested "compensation for children, parents, and siblings impacted

by the child welfare practices on reserve” (CHRT, 2016, p. 180). The Tribunal suggested that any compensation consider Amnesty International’s “physical and psychological damages, including emotional harm.” (CHRT, 2016, P. 180). In other words, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the federal government of Canada had discriminated against First Nations families and children based on their race. They were not receiving adequate or sufficient child and family services because they were First Nations people who lived on reserves in Canada.

Table 1.

**SIMILARITIES BETWEEN AANDC'S CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
AND EDUCATION**

AANDC CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

1. Constitutional responsibility of the Government of Canada
2. AANDC headquarters and regional offices have roles to manage the program
3. First Nations provide direct service
4. Provides funding
5. Use terms such as ensure, arrange, support and or make available to describe their role in First Nations child and family services
6. Provincial/territorial programs and services as guides
7. Uses outdated funding formula
8. Inadequate funding (does not match provincial/territorial funding)
9. Provide culturally appropriate child and family services
10. Lack of expertise in child and family services

AANDC EDUCATION

1. Constitutional responsibility of the Government of Canada
2. AANDC headquarters and regional offices have roles to manage the program
3. First Nations provide direct service
4. Provides funding
5. Use terms such as financial responsibility, funds, or funder to describe their role in First Nations education
6. Provincial/territorial programs and services as guides
7. Uses outdated funding formula
8. Inadequate funding (does not match provincial/territorial funding)
9. Provide culturally appropriate education programs and services
10. Lack of expertise in education

A Challenge

Change First Nations Child and Family Services to First Nations Education

If First Nations children and families are discriminated against on the basis of their race in the

provision of child and family services, then many of the statements and positions of the participants in the case can be transposed to First Nations education on reserves. The federal government of Canada should be very concerned about First Nations across Canada using this decision to argue that First Nation students on reserves are being discriminated against on the basis of their race in the provision of education programs and services by the federal government.

What I have done. I have reviewed the decision of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (2016). Paragraphs and statements that I believe are related to First Nations education have been selected. Child and family services terms and titles were replaced with education and First Nations Education Programs terms and titles. INAC replaced AANDC. First Nations Child and Caring Society was replaced by the Assembly of First Nations. Other phrases such as 'and in the Yukon' were deleted. Portions of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's (2016) decision follow. The changes or inclusion of education and education related terms have been bolded. The numbers within brackets are the numbers of the paragraphs within the original decision.

Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (2016). *Assembly of First Nations v. Attorney General of Canada (for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)*.

[6] Pursuant to section 5 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (the *CHRA*), the Complainants, the Assembly of First Nations (the AFN), allege **Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)** discriminates in providing **education** to First Nations on reserve, on the basis of race and/or national or ethnic origin, by providing inequitable and insufficient funding for those services (the Complaint)

[35] The Panel finds **INAC** is involved in the provision of **education** services to First Nations... Specifically, **INAC** offers the benefit or assistance of funding to “ensure”, “arrange”, “support”, and/or “make available” **education** services to First Nations on reserves ...With specific regard to the **First Nations Education** Program, the objective is to ensure the delivery of culturally appropriate education services, in the best interest of the child. In accordance with legislation and standards of the reference provincial/territory, and provided in a reasonably comparable manner to those provided to other provincial/territorial residents in similar circumstances and with **First Nations Education** Program authorities. This benefit or assistance is held out as a service by **INAC** and provided to First Nations in the context of a public relationship.

[78] The fact that **INAC** does not directly deliver First Nations education services on reserve, but funds the delivery of those services through **First Nations education authorities** or the provincial/territorial governments, does not exempt them from its public mandate and responsibilities to First Nations people. **INAC** argues that **education** services fall within provincial jurisdiction and that it only became involved as a matter of social policy to address concerns that the provinces were not providing the full range of services to First Nations children and families living on reserves. However, that position does not take into consideration Parliament's exclusive legislative authority over “Indians, and lands reserved for Indians” by virtue of section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

[83] Instead of legislating in the area of child welfare on First Nations reserves, pursuant to Parliament's exclusive legislative authority over "Indians, and lands reserved for Indians" by virtue of section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the federal government took a programming and funding approach to the issue. It provided for the application of provincial child welfare legislation and standards for First Nations on reserves through the enactment of section 88 of the *Indian Act*. However, this delegation and programming/funding approach does not diminish **INAC** constitutional responsibilities. In a comparable situation argued under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (the Charter), the Supreme Court stated in *Eldridge* at paragraph 42:

...the *Charter* applies to private citizens in so far as they act in furtherance of a specific government program or policy. In these circumstances, while it is a private actor that actually implements the program, it is the government that retains responsibility for it. The rationale for this principle is readily apparent. Just as governments are not permitted to escape *Charter* scrutiny by entering into commercial contracts or other "private" arrangements, they should not be allowed to evade their constitutional responsibilities by delegating the implementation of their policies and programs to private entities.

[84] Similarly, **INAC** should not be allowed to evade its responsibilities to First Nations children and families residing on reserve by delegating the implementation of **education** services to **First Nation Education Authorities** or the provinces/territory. **INAC** should not be allowed to escape the scrutiny of the CHRA because it does not directly deliver **education** services on reserve.

[85] As explained above, despite not actually delivering the service, **INAC** exerts a significant amount of influence over the provision of those services. Ultimately, it is **INAC** that has the power to remedy inadequacies with the provision of **education** services and improve outcomes for children and families residing on First Nations reserves. This is the assistance or benefit **INAC** holds out and intends to provide to First Nations children and families.

[104] In view of the above and the evidence presented on this issue, the relationship between the federal government and First Nations people for the provision of **education** services on reserve could give rise to a fiduciary obligation on the part of the Crown. Arguably the three criteria outlined in *Elder Advocates Society* have been met in this case.

[105] The **First Nations Education Program** and other related provincial/territorial agreements were undertaken and are controlled by the Crown. This undertaking is explicitly intended to be in the best interests of the First Nations beneficiaries, including that the "best interests of the child" and the safety and well-being of First Nations children are objectives of the program. The Crown has discretionary control over the **First Nations Education Program** through policy and other administrative directives....

[113] As a result, and for the reasons above, the Panel finds **INAC** provides a service through the **First Nations Education Program** and other related provincial/territorial agreements.

[388] In terms of ensuring reasonably comparable **education** services on reserves to the services

provided off reserve, the **First Nations Education Program** has a glaring flaw. While **First Nations Education authorities** are required to comply with provincial/territorial legislation and standards, the **First Nations Education Program** funding authorities are not based on provincial/territorial legislation or service standards. Instead, they are based on funding levels and formulas that can be inconsistent with the applicable legislation and standards. They also fail to consider the actual service needs of First Nations children and families, which are often higher than those off reserve. Moreover, the way in which the funding formulas and the program authorities function prevents an effective comparison with the provincial systems....

[457] Through the **First Nations Education Program** and other related provincial/territorial agreements, AANDC provides a service intended to “ensure”, “arrange”, “support” and/or “make available” child and family services to First Nations on reserve. With specific regard to the **First Nations Education Program**, the objective is to ensure culturally appropriate **education** services to First Nations children and families on reserve that are intended to be in accordance with provincial/territorial legislation and standards and provided in a reasonably comparable manner to those provided off reserve in similar circumstances. However, the evidence in this case, demonstrates that AANDC does more than just ensure the provision of **education** services to First Nations, it controls the provision of these services through its funding mechanisms to the point where it negatively impacts child and families on reserve.

[458] INAC's design, management, and control of the **First Nations Education Program**, along with its corresponding funding formulas and other related provincial/territorial agreements have had resulted in denials of services and created various adverse impacts for many First Nations children and families living on reserves. Non-exhaustively, the main adverse impacts found by the Panel are:

- * The design and application of the **Band-Operated Funding Formula (BOFF)**, which provides funding based on flawed assumptions about children in care and population thresholds that do not accurately reflect the service needs of many on-reserve communities. This results in inadequate fixed funding for operation (capital costs, multiple offices, cost of living adjustment, staff salaries and benefits, training, legal, remoteness and travel), hindering the ability of **First Nations Education** authorities to provide provincially/territorially mandated **education** services, let alone culturally appropriate services to First Nations children and families.
- * The failure to adjust funding levels, since 1995; along with funding levels under the EPFA, since its implementation, to account for inflation/cost of living.

[459] The **First Nations Education Program**, corresponding funding formulas, and other related provincial/territorial agreements only apply to First Nations people living on-reserve. It is only because of their race and/or national or ethnic origin that they suffer the adverse impacts outlined above in the provision of **education** services. Furthermore, these adverse impacts perpetuate the historical disadvantage and trauma suffered by Aboriginal people, in particular as a result of the Residential Schools system.

[460] INAC's evidence and arguments challenging the Complainants' allegations of discrimination have been addressed throughout this decision. Overall, the Panel finds

INAC's position unreasonable, unconvincing and not supported by the preponderance of evidence in this case. Otherwise, as mentioned earlier, **INAC** did not raise a statutory exception under sections 15 or 16 of the CHRA.

[461] Despite being aware of the adverse impacts resulting from the **First Nations Education Program** for many years, **INAC** has not significantly modified.

Notwithstanding numerous reports and recommendations to address the adverse impacts outlined above, including its own internal analysis and evaluations, **INAC** has sparingly implemented the findings of those reports. While efforts have been made to improve the **First Nations Education Program**, including additional funding, those improvements still fall short of addressing the service gaps, denials and adverse impacts outlined above and, ultimately, fail to meet the goal of providing culturally appropriate **education** services to First Nations children and families living on-reserve that are reasonably comparable to those provided off-reserve.

[462] This concept of reasonable comparability is one of the issues at the heart of the problem. **INAC** has difficulty defining what it means and putting it into practice, mainly because its funding authorities and interpretation thereof are not in line with provincial/territorial legislation and standards. Despite not being experts in the area of **education** and knowing that funding according to its authorities is often insufficient to meet provincial/territorial legislation and standards, **INAC** insists that **First Nations Education** authorities somehow abide by those standards and provide reasonably comparable **education** services. Instead of assessing the needs of First Nations children and families and using provincial legislation and standards as a reference to design an adequate program to address those needs, **INAC** adopts an ad hoc approach to addressing needed changes to its program.

[463] This is exemplified by the implementation of **BOFF**. **INAC** makes improvements to its program and funding methodology, however, in doing so, also incorporates a cost model it knows is flawed. **INAC** tries to obtain comparable variables from the provinces to fit them into this cost-model, however, they are unable to obtain all the relevant variables given the provinces often do not calculate things in the same fashion or use a funding formula. By analogy, it is like adding support pillars to a house that has a weak foundation in an attempt to straighten and support the house. At some point, the foundation needs to be fixed or, ultimately, the house will fall down. Similarly, a **REFORM** of the **First Nations Education** Program is needed in order to build a solid foundation for the program to address the real needs of First Nations children and families living on reserve.

[464] Not being experts in **education**, **INAC's** authorities are concerned with comparable funding levels; whereas provincial/territorial child and family services legislation and standards are concerned with ensuring service levels that are in line with sound **education** practice and that meet the best interest of children. It is difficult, if not impossible, to ensure reasonably comparable **education** services where there is this dichotomy between comparable funding and comparable services. Namely, this methodology does not account for the higher service needs of many First Nations children and families living on reserve, along with the higher costs to deliver those services in many situations, and it highlights the inherent problem with the assumptions and population levels built into the **First Nations Education Program**.

[465] **INAC's** reasonable comparability standard does not ensure substantive equality in the provision of **education** services for First Nations people living on reserve. In this regard, it is worth repeating the Supreme Court's statement in *Withler*, at paragraph 59, that "finding a mirror group may be impossible, as the essence of an individual's or group's equality claim may be that, in light of their distinct needs and circumstances, no one is like them for the purposes of comparison". This statement fits the context of this complaint quite appropriately. That is, human rights principles, both domestically and internationally, require **INAC** to consider the distinct needs and circumstances of First Nations children and families living on-reserve - including their cultural, historical and geographical needs and circumstances – in order to ensure equality in the provision of **education** services to them. A strategy premised on comparable funding levels, based on the application of standard funding formulas, is not sufficient to ensure substantive equality in the provision of **education** services to First Nations children and families living on-reserve.

[466] As a result, and having weighed all the evidence and argument in this case on a balance of probabilities, the Panel finds the Complaint substantiated.

[467] The Panel acknowledges the suffering of those First Nations children and families who are or have been denied an equitable opportunity to remain together or to be reunited in a timely manner promptly. We also recognize those First Nations children and families who are or have been adversely impacted by the Government of Canada's past and current **education** practices on reserves.

A. Findings of discrimination

[473] Indeed, throughout this decision, and generally at paragraph 458 above, the Panel has outlined the main adverse impacts it has found in relation to the **First Nations Education Program** and other related provincial/territorial agreements. As race and/or national or ethnic origin is a factor in those adverse impacts, the Panel concluded First Nations children and families living on reserve are discriminated against in the provision of **education** by **INAC**. The Panel believes these findings address the **Assembly of First Nations'** request for declaratory relief.

Summary and Recommendations

Some thoughts on the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's decisions. First, it is difficult to acknowledge that Canada has been found to be discriminating against its own people. Canada e.g., federal ministers and bureaucrats, must always act honourably in their interactions and negotiations with First Nations. However, the CHRT's decision demonstrates that they have failed miserably.

Second, the CHRT's decision demonstrates that the federal government cannot get out of its constitutional responsibilities in First Nations education by delegating these responsibilities to First Nations education authorities, provincial/territorial governments or school boards/divisions. They cannot use words like 'funds', and 'financial responsibility' to limit their responsibility. The decision is quite clear that despite the federal governments limiting statements of their

responsibilities, the education of First Nations children on reserves is the constitutional responsibility of the federal government.

The federal government and its department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) should carefully read the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's decision on First Nations child and family services to see the futility of fighting First Nations and/or their representatives in the area of education. Such actions would benefit all sides.

The First Nations students would have access to a First Nations controlled comprehensive system of education (e.g., personnel, procedures, programs and services). Finally, after nearly 150 years, the federal government of Canada would be acknowledging their constitutional role in education in Canada. First Nations children would begin to receive the education the signatories of the numbered treaties had hoped for their children and grandchildren.

I would like to suggest to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), as well as the federal government of Canada to resist the urge to 'lawyer up' in arguments and challenges of providing education programs and services to First Nations students living on reserve. Much of what was written about the government's position, e.g., funding only not providing a service, use of provincial/territorial templates, inadequate funding, poor results, and a lack of expertise, can be easily transferred to INAC's position in education.

Read the words again – 'AANDC is ordered to cease its discriminatory practices' and 'the Panel concluded First Nations children and families living on reserve are discriminated against ...' The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the government of Canada had discriminated against its own citizens. These words must not be quickly forgotten.

One must not forget that this discrimination was perpetuated on a minority that has a special relationship with the federal government. Treaties were signed with them. Our constitution has special provisions for them. Despite all these statements, guarantees, and promises, First Nations children were discriminated against because of their race – being First Nations children. How is this possible?

The decision casts a dark shadow over Canada. How can the federal government of Canada lecture other countries for on their treatment of their citizens when this decision becomes well known in the international community?

What should be done in First Nations education? It's time for the federal government to actually listen and work with First Nations people to develop a comprehensive education system. This system must be adequately funded. First Nations schools must be reimbursed for the actual costs of education. Second and third level education services (e.g., specialists, programs, and services) must be made available for First Nations schools, education authorities, and tribal councils.

Words of caution – be careful. Federal officials must be silent at these education meetings with First Nations peoples. They must not be able to control these meetings. They do not have the education expertise or knowledge needed to develop such a system. They have developed and supported the current education system for First Nations students. Even their own reports indicate it is not achieving desired results. In short, their current system has been a failure.

Let's not call in the lawyers and start the same process as was done for First Nations child and family services for First Nations education. We don't have time. We could lose a generation of First Nations students. Canada cannot afford to lose another generation of these students.

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Rhetorics of Play in Kindergarten Programs in an Era of Accountability

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Abstract

In this paper we conduct a deductive analysis, using Sutton-Smith's "rhetorics of play," of the published kindergarten programs that have guided Ontario kindergarten teaching since 1944. Our analysis is used to gain an understanding of how we in Ontario have arrived at a point where play-based learning has been taken up by developers of the provincial kindergarten program and approved as a pedagogical focus by politicians. The predominant discourses appear to have changed from a romantic view of play as a natural, child-centered activity, to a discourse of play as progress, with an emphasis on the developmental benefits of play and learning outcomes of play. We believe that the use of the rhetoric of play as progress has been key to the continued prominence of play in Ontario kindergarten programs. It represents ideologies of schooling to which policy-makers seem to be attuned in this era of accountability.

Keywords: play, kindergarten curriculum, rhetorics of play, discourses of play

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Introduction

In the Canadian province of Ontario where we live and work, the current full-day kindergarten program, as envisioned by policy developers, is emphatically play-based. It is based on the principle that “play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p.13). As former primary teachers, we are excited about this new pedagogical emphasis—it is a return to the approach that we had embraced in our teaching since the 1980’s when pedagogical discourses assumed play to be integral to children’s learning in kindergarten. We are finding that our enthusiasm is not matched in some cases by educators in contemporary kindergarten classrooms, or by some parents of kindergarten children across the province, however.

One author is an urban Ontario school district’s vice-principal in a K-8 school and former early childhood consultant, who was seconded by the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) to develop and support the implementation of the new full-day kindergarten program. She has met a number of kindergarten teachers across the province who says that they feel apprehensive about taking up a play-based pedagogical approach. In her consultative work, she has found that teachers who expressed uncertainty about implementing play-based approaches have defaulted to using didactic methods that do not recognize the complex, differentiated, open-ended, child-centered nature of play, including assembling pre-made standardized crafts or completing fill-in-the-blank literacy-related activities during periods of the day designated as play center times. Other teachers set out materials and then stand back and watch as children play with the materials. Still others use play as a classroom management technique (e.g., as a reward for the completion of work). It appears that, in their confusion over how to implement play-based learning, teachers are working from philosophies of play at both ends of the continuum, known as the *Model of Integrated Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches* (Wood, 2013). Some teachers’ practices reflect perspectives at the “work/non-play” end of the continuum, as they systematically structure activities. Other teachers’ practices reflect perspectives at the “free play” end of the continuum, as they remove themselves almost completely from children’s play. It appears that the new play-based kindergarten program is being implemented within an environment of uncertainty about play-based learning amongst teachers.

This uncertainty extends to broader society, as discovered by the other author, a university professor who is involved in a research study examining young children’s oral language and writing in play-based kindergarten and grade one program. Some parents of grade one children appear to associate play with recreational activity and not with learning and have been uncomfortable about consenting to their children’s participation in her research project. Parental reluctance to embrace play-based learning is in evidence even in the messages sent by a sign on the lawn of an elite private school that one author noticed the other day, as well. This sign advertised play-free kindergarten; a contrast to the play-based kindergartens in public schools that follow the mandated play-based provincial program.

It appears that our province’s move toward play-based kindergarten is going against the grain of broader societal views of kindergarten pedagogies in many parts of the world. Despite the extensive research showing how children’s learning is supported through play (e.g., Rogers & Evans, 2008; Shipley, 2013), in many jurisdictions, priority is being given to kindergarten programs that take up the academic goals and didactic methods associated with formal schooling from grades one through twelve. In the USA, Hemphill (2006), for example, reports that “playtime

in kindergarten [is] giving way to worksheets, math drills and fill-in-the-bubble standardized tests” (p. B8). Further evidence is found in Russell’s (2011) analysis of three sources of public discourse (newspapers, state policy and organized professional activities in the USA) showing a widespread view of kindergarten as a site for building the foundations of children’s academic achievement. A review of the *Early Years Foundation Stage* document guiding kindergarten curriculum in the United Kingdom (Department for Education and Skills, 2013), reveals few references to play as a recommended pedagogical approach (Moyles, 2015). Accountability for achieving measureable outcomes is uppermost in the minds of policymakers in many jurisdictions around the world, as outlined in a number of academic publications, for example Anning (2015) in the United Kingdom; Bassok and Rorem (2014) in the USA; and Freeman (2015) in Australia.

We hope that Ontario policy makers will position themselves as potential leaders in working with kindergarten teachers to develop more effective play-based pedagogies, rather than as outliers who are vulnerable to pressures to adopt dominant, accountability-oriented perspectives on kindergarten pedagogies. Toward that end, in this paper we propose a set of considerations that might be taken up by policy makers and curriculum/program developers in order to resist “reductionist policy discourses” (Wood, 2014, p. 155). These considerations arise from a deductive analysis of Ontario kindergarten documents using Sutton-Smith’s (1997) rhetorics of play. We offer these considerations to educators, administrators, and policy-makers who may encounter confusion about and resistance to the implementation of the Ontario play-based kindergarten program, and to those in other jurisdictions who may be seeking ways to bring play into kindergarten programs.

With the assumption that within any text, “each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293), we use an analysis of the published kindergarten programs that have guided Ontario kindergarten teaching since 1944 to gain an understanding of how we in Ontario have arrived at this point where play-based learning has been taken up by developers of the provincial kindergarten program and approved as a pedagogical focus by politicians. We believe that the ways in which the word, *play*, are used in the program documents across decades provide a sense of cultural values and understandings of early childhood, of the role of kindergarten and of relationships between young children and teachers in kindergarten contexts, that have underpinned kindergarten program development. In our view, Sutton Smith’s (1997) rhetorics of play encompass the range of theoretical perspectives that we have found to be influential to the development of kindergarten programs in Ontario. These include Romantic views stemming from the Renaissance period, child development theories from the 19th and early 20th century, and sociocultural theories from the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Bergen, 2014). Of course, words printed in kindergarten program documents can never tell the whole story about such values and cultural meanings and so we also provide contextual information about some of the political and economic initiatives and events related to kindergartens that were undertaken while the kindergarten programs were being developed.

Rhetorics of Play

In response to what he deems are “immense problems in conceptualizing” play (p. 8), Sutton-Smith (1997) proposes seven rhetorics of play that help to understand cultural constructions of play (e.g., what can be expected of play and how it manifests itself). He defines rhetorics as “persuasive discourse[s]” or “implicit narrative[s]” (p. 8), that underlie various play theories. Each rhetoric represents cultural perspectives that have been used to influence interpretations and understandings of experience. Sutton-Smith (1997) argues that the existence of such far-ranging

and often contradictory perspectives on play has led to enduring ambiguities in how play is defined and valued within various social contexts.

We found that these three rhetorics of play have been more influential in the development of Ontario kindergartens than the others: (a) The rhetoric of play as progress; (b) The rhetoric of the self and; (c) the rhetoric of identity.

The Rhetoric of Play as Progress

The rhetoric of play as progress presents a view of play as a major source of children's learning. We argue that the rhetoric of play as progress is a dominant perspective, as it is one of the three themes within 101 articles that were written on the topic of play in articles published in *Young Children* from 1973 to 2002 (Kuschner, 2007). It is also the perspective taken up in research studies deemed to be authoritative and rigorous on the topic of play (Roskos & Christie, 2001). In our kindergarten program analysis, we take the view that the *rhetoric of play* as progress stretches from the center of Wood's (2013, p. 71) continuum (*structured play*), which takes up more of a socio-cultural perspective, to the end that she labels as *work/non-play*, which takes up more of a psychological/developmental perspective. Proponents of the rhetoric of play as progress define play as a social practice "that is influenced by wider social, historical and cultural factors, so that understanding what play is and learning how to play are culturally and contextually situated processes" (Wood, 2013, p. 8). They are most likely to position themselves in the middle of the continuum, as they see a role for adults in children's play-based learning and expect that kindergarten teachers would engage in purposeful and intentional observation, interpretation and analysis to inform their creation of learning environments for children (Hedges & Cullen, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Proponents of the rhetoric of play as progress who situate themselves toward the work/non-play end of the continuum value the developmental contributions of play, seeing kindergarten as preparation for later years in school. They advise that teachers intervene early, often and effectively to capitalize on the learning and developmental potential of play (Mustard, 2006; National Research Council, 2001). This latter view has been characterized by Wood (2014) as a technicist view of play where "the forms of learning that are privileged reflect developmental levels and learning goals" (p. 152).

The Rhetoric of the Self

Proponents of the rhetoric of the self present a psychological view of play as a natural activity from which children derive personal satisfaction and enjoyment. Stemming from Rousseau's (1762) observations of children choosing play over other activities when allowed to pursue their interests, this rhetoric describes what Wood (2014) identifies as a Romantic view of play as child-initiated activity that is a natural and normal part of childhood. Emphasizing children's freedom to explore, create and discover, and to engage with the natural world, proponents of the rhetoric of the self (Elkind, 2007; Froebel, 1887) view the kindergarten teacher's role as that of an observer of children's thinking processes and understandings as children engage in play (Piaget, 1945). The notion of naturalness of play has been critiqued by critical and postmodernist theorists (e.g., Gaskins, 2014; Brown & Suto, 2014) who provide cross-cultural evidence that there are multiple roles of play in children's lives, influenced by economic and cultural practices. Taking up a cultural-historical perspective, Van Oers (2014) further argues that

the notion of free play is illusory, as there are only “degrees of freedom” within the parameters defined by cultural expectations of play (p. 62).

Rhetoric of Identity

Sociocultural theories underpin the *rhetoric of identity*, which focuses on children’s positioning within groups and their identities as members of these groups. Play is viewed as a form of “human engagement that provides participants with solidarity, identity, and pleasure (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 106). Children’s identities within play groups are shaped by some social factors, including how children are perceived or positioned by peers and adults in various play contexts, and children’s perceptions of self while engaged in play. These identities are bounded by the cultural expectations and power relationships within the children’s communities (Taylor, 2013).

Short Descriptions of the Other Four Rhetorics

We present short descriptions of the other four rhetorics of play that either were absent in our analysis of kindergarten program documents or minimally present. The language of the *rhetoric of play as imaginary* was evident to a very small degree in the documents but did not stand out as did the three previously-described rhetorics of play. The *rhetoric of play as fate*, in which it is assumed that humans have little control over their lives, was absent, as was the *rhetoric of play as power*, which highlights competitiveness and control over others in contests and competitive sports. The rhetoric of *play as frivolous*, arises from the roles of tricksters and fools in folklore and literature, as they show alternative ways of viewing the social order and indeed, sometimes turned the social order topsy-turvy, using humour and playful activities. This view of play is voiced by critical theorists who challenge tacit assumptions about play (e.g., Gaskins, 2014; Gerlach et al., 2014).

Analysis of Kindergarten Program Documents

Data sources are four kindergarten programs that were created by the Ontario Ministry of Education between 1944 and 2010/2011. We used text analysis methods (Goldman & Wiley, 2011), using each sentence within each document as the unit of analysis. We first identified all instances where the word, *play*, was used, although, we did not include the use of the word to describe the role that something plays in learning, nor the use of the word in compound words such as a *playground*. We then tallied frequencies of sentences using the word *play*, working with the assumption that greater numbers of references to play indicate the importance and valuing of play in kindergarten programs. Finally, we conducted a deductive analysis of each sentence, determining whether the underlying assumptions in the reference to play appeared to:

1. describe a learning outcome related to content area concepts or skills (rhetoric of play as progress)
2. refer to children’s enjoyment, personal satisfaction or motivation—including to create, discover or imagine (rhetoric of the self)
3. describe the construction of identities and relationships within particular social groups (rhetoric of identity)

We further analyzed the phrases and sentences containing the word, *play*, which had been coded as representing the rhetoric of play as progress in terms of Wood's (2013) continuum (e.g., structured play at one end and technicist view at the other end.) Phrases coded as structured play appeared to have the intent of "engag[ing] children in playful ways with curriculum content [where] there may be some elements of imagination and open-endedness" (p. 72). Phrases coded as having more of a technicist view of play appeared to have more of a developmental/learning-outcome focus (Wood, 2014, p. 152).

We recognize that counting frequencies of the use of the word, *play*, in documents presents only a starting point for further investigations of the ways in which program developers position play in kindergarten classrooms. Accordingly, in the following section, we contextualize the views of play within each of the kindergarten program documents by providing a brief description of kindergarten-related initiatives and activities. We then present our analysis of the rhetorics of play that seem to underpin objectives, goals, and statements that refer to play within the documents.

Kindergarten Programs in Ontario: 1944-Present Ontario Context

Ontario has a linguistically and culturally diverse population of 12 million. Its huge geographically diverse land mass, encompasses northern First Nations communities with populations of a few hundred people that are accessible only by plane or winter roads, agricultural- and mining-based communities of a few thousand people, as well as suburban and southern urban areas with millions of residents on or near the Great Lakes. The Ontario Ministry of Education creates its education policies and curricula, having full jurisdiction over education, from pre-school to postsecondary education, as do all of Canada's ten provinces and three territories. Junior kindergartens for 4-5 year-old children and senior kindergartens for 5-6 year-old children are found in public schools (including publicly-funded Catholic schools) and private schools. Full-day kindergarten program, fully implemented in the 2014-2015 school year, has mandated that a kindergarten teacher and an early childhood educator (ECE) work together in every kindergarten classroom. The ECE's expertise in child development and play-based approaches complements the pedagogical and assessment expertise of the kindergarten teacher (OME, 2012). Although there are no province-wide achievement assessments at the kindergarten level, assessments of literacy and mathematics for students in grades 3 and 6 influence policy- and curriculum/program development in terms of preparing children for large-scale assessments.

Play in Kindergarten Programs 1944-1998

The first private public kindergarten for five-year old children was opened in the southern Ontario city of Toronto in 1883 (Corbett, 1989). Public junior and senior kindergartens were established in 1943-44. By 1995, almost 100 percent of children in this age group were enrolled in kindergarten programs (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), 2001). Public kindergarten has never been mandatory for children of any age, as specified in the Ontario Education Act (OME, 1843). As an optional program, kindergarten activities planned by teachers from 1943 to this day are not regulated by curriculum documents, but rather by policy documents created by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

The first kindergarten programme (OME, 1944) was created for junior and senior kindergarten in 1944. This programme document included a daily schedule dividing the

kindergarten day into alternating routine and play periods, with each period “follow[ing] one another in a natural series so that the child can move easily from one to the next” (OME, 1944, p. 20). The play periods were intended “to arouse a spontaneous interest in the environment which finds expression in purposeful constructive effort and to develop interest in other children and enjoyment of their company” (p. 20). The rhetoric of the self-underpins almost all of the 44 references to *play*. Notions of children’s intrinsic enjoyment of play and the importance of children’s interests guiding the play are evident in the many references to self-directed play and in cautions that teacher-directed play, intended to help children “acquire new skills and learn new uses of materials,” should be minimized (p. 35). Given that this is the only reference to *play* that we categorized as espousing the rhetoric of play as progress, it appears that policy-makers took up a Romantic view of early childhood education as a child-directed, enjoyable, form of children’s free expression. Children’s play was not to be used as a forum for teaching and learning. The “typical full-day programme” included 45 minutes of self-directed play (including outdoor play, dramatic play, leisure reading, arts and crafts, and play with toys and games) in the morning and 35 minutes of self-directed play in the afternoon (OME, 1944, pp. 20-21).

The 1944 document was the only government-generated kindergarten policy document for 22 years. The second program document (OME, 1966) included only seven references to play. Elements of the rhetoric of play as the self were explicitly expressed in six of these references to play. Free play, also described as activity time, is expected to be “a highly individualized experience which allows for much self-initiated, self-selected, self-directed, and self-evaluated activity in kindergarten classrooms of 1966 (OME, 1966, p. 17). The seventh reference to play described children’s construction of identities within their peer social group as an outcome of their play; that children “learn to live with other children, to share, to give away, to take turns, to assert himself and to take responsibility” (p. 17).

The third province-wide kindergarten program approved for use in schools in 1998 by the Ontario Ministry of Education was the first provincial document to be organized by subject area outcomes. This new organizational framework, together with societal demands for accountability in schools that resulted in the introduction of province-wide achievement literacy and mathematics tests in grades 3 and 6 around the same time, appear to have contributed to a shift in views of the role of play in kindergarten. Play does not disappear from the kindergarten program document altogether, as it is mentioned ten times in a section entitled, *Program Content and Teaching/Learning Approaches* (p. 6). All except one of the references to play takes up the rhetoric of play as progress at a position edging toward the work/non-play end of Wood’s (2013) continuum. The program refers to a long-acknowledged “strong link between play and learning for young children, especially in the areas of problem solving, literacy, and social skills” and encourages teachers “to play productive play activities that have specific learning goals and to provide appropriate and stimulating resources” (OME, 1998, pp. 6-7). A reference to play contexts as being those “in which children are at their most receptive” (p. 6) hints at the rhetoric of the self that underpins references to play in the 1944 and 1966 programs. The philosophical underpinnings of kindergarten were clearly oriented toward learning and development in the second province-wide program document, however.

The Early Years Report (McCain & Mustard, 1999), commissioned by the province about the same time as the kindergarten program document was published, emphasized the role of play in young children’s brain development. It appears that the report writers drew on the rhetoric of play as progress (at the work/non-play end of Wood’s (2013) continuum) to make their case for a play-based kindergarten program. The authors synthesized research from science-based fields:

neuroscience, developmental psychology, human development, sociology, and paediatrics. Among their recommendations was: “Learning in the early years must be based on quality, developmentally attuned interactions with primary caregivers and opportunities for play-based problem solving with other children that stimulates brain development” (p. 7). Another kindergarten document published by the elementary teachers’ union around that time (ETFO, 2001) also used the rhetoric of play as progress from the work/non-play end of Wood’s (2013) continuum, drawing on longitudinal research showing that skills-based kindergarten programs “will not deliver the desired results” in terms of literacy and math achievement (p. 14). It appears that these two documents, designed to influence kindergarten programs across the province, were reflective of a change in views of the role of play in kindergarten. The dominant rhetoric of “play as self” of the mid-twentieth century was being replaced by the rhetoric of “play as progress,” one that focused more on the psychologically-based developmental and learning outcomes-focused views, by the end of the century.

Play in Contemporary Kindergarten Programs

As part of Ontario’s ongoing kindergarten program review cycle, *The Kindergarten Program 1998* was replaced and updated with *The Kindergarten Program (Draft) 2006*. There are 65 references to *play* in the 2006 document. The rhetoric of play as self (15% of all references to play) is reflected in statements such as: “Children also need opportunities to engage with their peers in play activities of their own devising, through which they can express themselves and explore things of special interest to them” (OME, 2006, p.14). The rhetoric of play as identity (7%) is evident in the learning expectation that children should “identify and use social skills in play and other contexts” found within the *Personal and Social Development* program area (OME, 2006, p. 31). References to the role of the teacher in supporting children’s learning through play reflect the socio-cultural perspective of play as progress. The rhetoric of play as progress at the work/non-play end of Wood’s (2013) continuum predominates, however, as 78% outline the benefits of play for children’s development of knowledge and skills and play is consistently referred to as “learning based play” (OME, 2006). Further evidence of the more psychological/developmental perspective within the rhetoric of play as progress is found in a synthesis of the science-based fields taken from the work of McCain and Mustard (1999): “Opportunities for children to learn through play impel the development of multiple sensing pathways in the brain. A kindergarten program that is designed with planned opportunities for learning-based play offers sensory stimulation that the child absorbs and assimilates into core brain development” (OME, 2006, p. 14). The Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program Draft Version (OME, 2010/2011) replaced the 2006 document, as the Ontario Ministry of Education moved to a full-day early learning model in September 2010. Highly influential to the design of the 2010/2011 program document was the document, *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* (Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning, 2007). Principle 5 in the 2010/2011 kindergarten program document is taken directly from the *ELECT* document: “Play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance” (OME, 2010/2011, p. 13 and Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning, 2007, p. 6). References cited in the play section of the *ELECT* document tend to come from the developmental end (work/non-play) of Wood’s (2013) continuum (e.g., Kagan & Lowenstein, 2004).

After further consultation, in September 2016 *The Kindergarten Program* was officially implemented. In our analysis of rhetorics of play within the draft version of 2010/2011 and the 2016 document that became the final version, we found 166 references to *play*. The language of the rhetoric of play as progress (78% of the play references) is used far more frequently than that of other rhetorics of play. Typical of the many examples of this rhetoric in the introductory section of the document is the following description: “When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with various materials, they are engaged in learning through play” (p. 13). The structured play perspective is reflected in statements in other parts of the introductory section, as examples of forms of play include lists of “skills and types of learning supported through play” (p. 14) and the kindergarten program is described as “the foundation for a continuum of learning from the early years to Grade 8” (p. 22). However, words, such as “noticing, wondering, . . . [and] exploring, observing, questioning”, that reflect more of a socio-cultural perspective of the rhetoric of play as progress, are also associated with play (p. 15). The rhetoric of the self is reflected in 14% of the references to play throughout the document. In a section for educators providing direction for planning for time and space, the rhetoric of play as the self can be found in the statement: “allowing children to be “in charge” of their play – engaging them in the planning of the learning activities and allowing time for unstructured play” (p. 15). The rhetoric of identity is found in 8% of the references to play.

In summary, play-based pedagogies have explicit and enthusiastic support in the current kindergarten program document. The rhetoric of play as progress predominates, often taking the more psychological/developmental perspective at the work/non-play end of Woods’s (2013) continuum. There are also many references to the socio-cultural view of play as progress, however, and there are many references to play that voice the rhetoric of play as self. Taken together, these features of the program document indicate that play has not been supplanted by didactic pedagogies, as has been the case in other jurisdictions (e.g., Bassok & Rorem, 2014; Russell, 2011).

Summary and Implications: Rhetorics of Play in Kindergarten Programs

In our tracing of discourses of play throughout the history of published kindergarten programs in the province of Ontario we find that kindergarten pedagogies, as conceived by program developers, have always included play, even though its role in kindergarten activity was greatly diminished and the rhetorics of play underpinning the use of the word, play, changed dramatically in the OME (1998) kindergarten program document. The OME (1998) document is an anomaly, however, as the OME (1944) document and the three contemporary documents explicitly and frequently identify play-based teaching and learning as essential to kindergarten activity. Even at a time when references to play were minimal in the kindergarten program document, there were high status play-supportive reports published by respected early childhood educators (e.g., ETFO, 2001; McCain & Mustard, 1999). Authors of these reports primarily used the language of the rhetoric of play as progress, with an emphasis on the developmental benefits of play and learning outcomes of play.

We believe that if play is to continue to have a role in kindergarten pedagogies, it is important for educators to take up the discourses that are valued in their social and cultural contexts, and at the same time, present alternative discourses that reflect their pedagogical knowledge and experience. We believe that the use of the rhetoric of play as progress has been key to the continued prominence of play in Ontario kindergarten programs. It represents ideologies

of schooling to which policy-makers seem to be attuned in this era of accountability. In Ontario, this approach has produced the result that Moyles (2015) wished for in her United Kingdom context, as play has a prominent place in the Ontario kindergarten program.

This rhetoric of play as progress is particularly important at a time when the Ontario government is accountable to the public for its dramatically increased infusion of public funding to kindergarten, moving from half-day to full-day kindergarten. When the program for the entire day is play-based, policy makers and program developers must be able to demonstrate that resources and attention to a play-based kindergarten result in desirable learning outcomes compatible with accountability era views of the role of schooling. However, we believe that educators should be alert to the possibility that policy makers and program developers yield to voices espousing didactic pedagogical approaches that are influencing kindergarten programs in the United Kingdom (Moyles, 2015) and in the USA (Bassok & Rorem, 2014). Given the influence of these voices in so many jurisdictions, it is important that teams of teachers and ECEs, with their strong backgrounds in play-based learning, continue in their collaborative teaching role in kindergarten classrooms. It is also important for teacher education programs to prepare kindergarten teachers who have strong professional knowledge about the complexities of peer and teacher-child interactions, as well as children's interactions with materials, in play contexts (Hedges, 2014). We propose a professional development approach that supports teachers in taking up a teacher-as-researcher stance. Our experience and the literature on action research (e.g., Galini & Efthymia, 2010; Keyes, 2000) show that teachers who adopt this stance are likely to become more certain and confident in their understanding of play and its role in children's learning and well-being. Their interactions with children and parents will be informed by their ongoing construction of knowledge about play and young children's learning, thus contributing to broader societal conversations about the importance of play, in its socio-cultural sense, in kindergarten.

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How Early Childhood Learning Influences Beginning Literacy Teachers' Professional Learning

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Abstract

Research has shown that teachers' beliefs and personal experiences play a significant role in their professional decision-making and practice, including their experiences as school children. This research study examined how the professional learning of Canadian beginning elementary teachers was influenced by their own early learning experiences in school. Six teachers were observed and interviewed in their classrooms 5 times over the first 3 years of their teaching career. Case studies were developed for each teacher and themes were explored across cases. The findings from this study suggest that pre-service and in-service teacher education programs need to provide teachers with opportunities to critically examine how their early learning experiences influence their professional learning experiences and priorities.

Keywords: teachers' lives; elementary teaching; professional development; professional learning

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Introduction

This paper reports on a research study that examined how the professional practice of six beginning elementary teachers in Ontario, Canada was influenced by their early childhood learning. The participants' childhood learning and elementary teaching were explored to examine the ways in which their early learning experiences as pupils influenced their pre-service and in-service education and their resultant practices. The participants' early learning experiences varied greatly as did the ways in which those experiences intersected with their professional learning and teaching practice. The purpose of the study was to explore how the early learning experiences of the beginning teachers influenced their teaching practice. Specifically, this paper looks at how participants' early learning experiences intersected with their formal and informal professional development in the area of literacy

Literature Review

Teachers around the world begin their careers with a lifetime of memories of their own schooling. However, there has been limited research published on the degree to which teachers' own experiences as school children influence their teaching careers, specifically in the area of professional development. Considerable research has shown that teachers' beliefs and personal experiences play a significant role in their professional decision-making and practice. Teachers' beliefs about pedagogical issues and themselves as teachers are ongoing subjects for research (Lamonte & Engels, 2010; Snider & Roehl, 2007, Uden, Ritzen & Pieters, 2014). This area of the literature includes research on teachers' beliefs about professional development (Beck & Kosnik, 2014; Flores, 2012). A particularly interesting line of research on teachers' beliefs involves the investigation of beliefs about learning and teaching that arise from teachers' personal habits, abilities, and experiences (Benevides & Stagg Peterson, 2010; Johnson, 2008; Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt, 2008).

Personal history studies suggest that student teachers use their experiences as students to generalize when interpreting and making decisions about their teaching (Carter & Doyle, 1996). Carter and Doyle (1996) recommend that teachers' personal history narratives be given a prominent place in teacher education, because if left unexamined, new teachers are likely to perpetuate conventional practice. Furthermore, Wolf, Fallentine and Hill (2000) argue that to respond to the needs of their students, pre-service teachers need to examine their beliefs and learning history. Feimen-Nemser (2001) considers teachers' schooling and early teaching experience to be far more influential than the typical pre-service program. She states, "The typical pre-service program is a weak intervention compared with the influence of teachers' own schooling and on-the-job experience" (p. 1014). This study elicited teachers' perspectives on how their learning histories were implicated in professional learning over their first three years of teaching.

Research illustrates that many teachers have had negative learning experiences in elementary school. With respect to literacy, many have poor attitudes towards reading and do not engage in much reading for pleasure (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Nathanson, et al., 2008; Sulentic-Dowell, Beal & Caprano, 2006). There are some studies (Asselin, 2000; Johnson, 2008; Sunstein & Potts, 1998) that point to pre-service program initiatives that may help address negative attitudes including having pre-service teachers write and analyze their literacy learning stories, create literacy portfolios or engage in reading response activities. Although there is a growing body of research on teacher stories and teacher life history (Carter & Doyle, 1996; Wolf et al., 2000), very little has been written about elementary teachers' early literacy stories, both inside and outside of school. There has also been little written about

how these early experiences influence their understanding and teaching of literacy. Of the few studies that do address teachers' early literacy learning (Johnson, 2008; Nathanson et al., 2008; Sunstein & Potts, 1998), the focus is on pre-service teachers.

One of the early learning experiences that may have an influential role in teachers' practices is their many years as witnesses of their classroom teachers. This is what Lortie (1975) calls the "apprenticeship of observation" (p. 61). He argues that pre-service teachers' many years as students provide them with a type of apprenticeship into the profession in that they have observed and interacted with teachers for many years before entering their teacher preparation programs. Their individual experiences with particular teachers inform their image of teaching. However, because of their perspective as students, they are not privy to teachers' goal setting, preparation, or analysis (Lortie, 1975). Moreover, they do not, "perceive the teacher as someone making choices among teaching strategies" (Lortie, 1975, p. 63). Lortie was concerned that teacher preparation does not do enough to dispel the individual, simplistic, and often traditional notions of teaching with which many new teachers enter the profession (Lortie, 1975). Loughran (2006) exhorts teacher educators to help preservice teachers overcome these limitations by allowing them to "see and hear the pedagogical reasoning that underpins the teaching that they are experiencing" (p. 5). He argues that making the tacit knowledge of teaching explicit (Loughran, 2006, p. 9) is essential if preservice education is to move from "teaching as telling" to "teaching for understanding" (Loughran, 2006, p. 10).

Darling-Hammond (2006) further argues that in addition to their "apprenticeship" experiences in teaching, preservice teachers bring other personal attributes and experiences that may get in the way of learning to teach effectively. Ironically, one of these may be their strong academic ability. It may be more difficult for teachers with a history of high academic achievement to support student learning because they have few personal experiences of academic struggle (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Bullough and Gitlin (2001) remind us that pre-service teachers, as well as practicing teachers, always filter what they learn through "a set of biographically embedded assumptions, beliefs, or pre-understandings" (p. 223). Bullough and Gitlin (2001) caution that "Ignoring the past does not make it go away. It lingers, ever present and quietly insistent" (p. 223).

Teachers' professional learning, both pre-service and in-service, has been a long-standing interest of educational researchers. Shulman (2005) claims that teacher education programs in the United States are in "chaos" (p. 7) due to a lack of in-depth and systematic preparation, supervised clinical practice, and rigorous assessment. Ball (2000) decries the "fragmentation of practice" (p. 241) due to the lack of integration of subject matter and pedagogy. Kosnik and Beck's (2008) study of beginning teachers revealed that they had learned "disconnected bits of information" (p. 124) rather than the knowledge and skills necessary to teach elementary literacy. They called for re-organizing pre-service education around priority areas (Kosnik & Beck, 2009). In their longitudinal study of teachers (Beck & Kosnik, 2014), they reflect on the ways that teachers to continue to grow through both formal and informal learning during their careers.

Several researchers (e.g., Day & Gu, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Flores, 2012; Munby, Russell & Martin, 2001) affirm that teacher professional learning continues long after pre-service. At both the pre-service and in-service stages, teachers' personal experiences with the education system play a role in what and how they learn professionally (Lortie, 1975; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Given the impact of teachers' experiences, assumptions, and beliefs, it is imperative that more attention is paid to teachers' learning lives in pre-service and in-service education.

Methodology

This study was designed to explore the perspectives of beginning elementary teachers with respect to the influence of their early personal learning history on their professional learning in literacy. A case study approach was used. The purpose of case studies in qualitative research, according to Patton (2002), is to “gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest” (p. 447). A qualitative research approach was chosen because it matched the goals of the inquiry. Since this research was seeking to understand this from the participants’ perspectives, a qualitative approach was most appropriate (Patton, 2002). Data was collected in the teachers’ classrooms, their ‘natural setting’, in an attempt to understand the meanings that the participants brought to their work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Bogden & Biklen, 1998). The research approach allowed for collection of information from the participants’ perspectives and gave them an opportunity to reflect on their learning and teaching.

Multiple case studies, with each of the participants constituting a case, were developed, and then themes were explored across cases. The data was then organized by specific cases in a way that was in-depth, holistic, and context sensitive (Patton, 2002). The stories of six beginning elementary teachers each formed a case, and the six cases were compared and contrasted. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. Each participant was observed while teaching in his or her classroom and interviewed five times over three years. The goal was to explore the “big picture” of the teachers’ early learning context and teaching context. In addition, the details of specific early learning experiences, beliefs about learning and teaching, and specific teaching strategies were explored. The research questions guiding this study were:

- a. How do beginning teachers draw on their early learning experiences at home and as pupils in their work as teachers?
- b. How does the relative ease with which they learned literacy as children relate to the way in which they approach learning about teaching literacy as beginning teachers?

Participants

The six participants in this study were self-chosen from a group of 22 beginning elementary teachers who were already participants in a larger longitudinal study of literacy teachers. An invitation was sent via email to all of the beginning teachers in the larger study. The participants were the first six to respond to an invitation to be part of this study. All teachers were graduates of the same large urban university post-baccalaureate pre-service program and were in their first year of elementary classroom teaching in the same large urban centre. The teachers all taught at urban schools which differed in terms of size and the socioeconomic and cultural makeup of their neighbourhood. They were all classroom teachers of grades ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 8. Four of the participants were female, and two were male. Their ages ranged from 23 to 40. For half of the participants, teaching was their first career (ages 23, 23, and 24). For the other half, teaching was a second career (ages 30, 32, and 40). In terms of ethnicity, two were Asian and four were Caucasian. Pseudonyms are used, but the gender is correct.

Data Collection

In this study, six elementary classroom teachers were interviewed individually in May 2009, in March and May of 2010, and March and May of 2011, during their first, second and third years of teaching. Interviews took place in their classrooms after the researcher had observed them teaching. The teachers were also asked to provide samples of documents related to teaching and learning such as school district curriculum guidelines, teacher resource books, program plans, and lesson plans. The use of these three data collection methods, interview, observation, and document review, allowed for triangulation of the findings (Merriam, 1998).

The semi-structured interviews in the first year asked general questions about their experiences as first-year teachers. The interviews in the second year focused on the participants' early childhood learning at home and transition to school. For the interviews in the third year, the participants were asked to reflect on similarities and differences between their early learning and their teaching. The participants reviewed their transcripts and case studies and provided feedback to the researcher. These main data sources were supplemented with field notes and emails between the participants and the researcher over the course of the 3-year study.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using data analysis methods drawn from Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Transcripts of interviews, observation notes, and field notes were read several times during and after the 3-year period of data collection. Each piece of data was identified by the participant, data type, and date. After the first round of interviews and observations, a process of "open coding" began (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). Events and ideas were labeled and then grouped together into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the study progressed, "axial coding" was used (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). Using the analytic principles of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), connections were made between categories to develop larger themes. A chart was created for each participant listing the emerging themes and the data that supported those themes. A common set of categories was created for the individual case studies which encompassed the main findings in the study. Following the creation of charts for the data on individual participants, another chart was created which compared and contrasted the themes from the six individual case studies. For the purpose of this report, interview data is the focus.

Limitations

This study is small in size, with only six participants. While this allowed for the collection of rich, in-depth data, it restricts the generalizability of the results. Moreover, the participants had many factors in common. They all attended the same teacher education program and taught in the same city. However, the participants' childhood learning experiences were quite diverse as were the types of schools and neighbourhoods in which they taught. The ratio of female to male participants (4 to 2) may over-represent the presence of male teachers, who are a significant minority in elementary teaching. The open-ended nature of the interview questions in the study resulted in significant variation in the participants' answers. This limited the ability to compare their responses directly, but did allow for a complex picture of the ways in which the participants' early learning intersected with their early teaching.

Findings

Nine key findings from the study will be described in this paper, four related to pre-service learning and five related to in-service learning. They were chosen because they were strong themes that arose from the analysis of the six participant case studies. The findings from this study revealed that the teachers who struggled with literacy learning as children found pre-service literacy instruction presented more of the same problems, while those who excelled at literacy learning as children found pre-services literacy courses to be enjoyable, if limited. All of the teachers considered the practical teaching component of their pre-service education to be more helpful, yet they still felt unprepared to teach literacy in their own classrooms. In-service learning, both formal and informal, was reported to meet more of the participants' professional learning needs due to the range of topics and contexts available to them. Interestingly, those who struggled with literacy as pupils and pre-service teachers engaged in the most in-service learning in literacy and reported the most satisfaction with teaching literacy. The participants who found literacy easy and enjoyable both as pupils and pre-service teachers engaged in relatively little literacy in-service learning and found teaching literacy challenging.

Early Literacy Learning Functions as a Filter for Pre-Service & In-Service Learning.

The following table summarizes the findings from the individual case studies. In Table 1 below, the six participants' experiences are organized according to their early home literacy experiences, early school literacy experiences, response to pre-service education, and approach to in-service education.

Table 1 *Early Learning and Teaching*

Name of Participant	Kelly
Early literacy experiences at home and in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents were classroom teachers • Lots of reading and writing by adults and children • Dramatic play with sisters • Included in dinner time conversation • Regular library visits
Literacy experiences during elementary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No challenges academically or socially • Confidently reading and writing by Grade 1 • Entered a Gifted program in Grade 4 • Won a creative writing award
Grades taught in first 3 years of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades 6, 7, and 8 Physical Education and Health • Grades 6 and 8 Math and Language
Response to pre-service professional learning in literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyed theory in course work • Found course work lacking in practical applications • Practice teaching helpful but did not relate to teaching assignments • Could confidently discuss literacy planning, teaching and assessment

Approach to in-service professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged in little literacy PD relative to other subject areas • Took a mathematics AQ course • Literacy PD through resource books and internet sites • Rarely referred to ministry or school board literacy guidelines • Used memories of own early teachers as role models • Did not feel as confident in literacy teaching as other subjects
Name of Participant	Mike
Early literacy experiences at home and in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother was a school librarian • Lots of reading and writing by adults and children • Grandfather wrote stories with grandchildren as characters • Included in dinner time conversation • Regular library visits • Involved in community theatre
Literacy experiences during elementary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No challenges academically or socially • Confidently reading and writing by Grade 1 • Switched to Arts focused school in Grade 4
Grades taught in first 3 years of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined Grade 2 and 3 class • Combined Junior and Senior Kindergarten
Response to pre-service professional learning in literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyed the theoretical aspect of coursework but felt it was overdone • Wished there was more of a theory/practice balance • Appreciated the focus on critical and multiliteracies • Practice teaching placements did not match his teaching approach • Felt confident about literacy teaching after pre-service
Approach to in-service professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very little PD in literacy • PD in the form of professional reading on learning theories • Referred to math resource books but not literacy resource books • Used memories of own early teachers as role models • Did not feel as confident in literacy as other subjects
Name of Participant	Darren
Early literacy experiences at home and in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both grandmothers were teachers • Lots of reading and writing by adults and children • “one room school-house” • Included in dinner time conversation • Included in mother’s weekly discussion group • Involved in church and community music

Literacy experiences during elementary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No challenges academically or socially • Confidently reading and writing by Grade 1
Grades taught in first 3 years of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All grades from Kindergarten to Grade 8 as long term occasional or daily supply teacher
Response to pre-service professional learning in literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyed teaching/learning theory • Valued the emphasis on supporting children’s interests • Wanted more explicit instruction on how to teach • Practicum placements gave him an understanding of what teaching was “really like.”
Approach to in-service professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very little PD in literacy • AQ in Special Education • Used other teachers in the school as mentors • Tried to recreate own early learning experiences • Less confident in literacy teaching than in other subjects
Name of Participant	Kendra
Early literacy experiences at home and in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little reading or writing by adults or children • No dinner time conversations • Did not attend community programs • Parents believed that school would take care of literacy learning • Spoke some English before school
Literacy experiences during elementary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty adjusting to school routines and co-operating with other students • English language learning a challenge • Higher level thinking skills more challenging than basic skills
Grades taught in first 3 years of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 4, all subjects other than French & music • Grades 7 & 8 English, Math & Science
Response to pre-service professional learning in literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustrated by ‘talking head’ approach to coursework • Wanted more tools and strategies • Wanted more hands-on learning experiences in coursework • Practicum placements most useful and satisfying
Approach to in-service professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most PD in the area of literacy teaching • Engaged in every literacy workshop that she could find • Used other new teachers and established teachers as resources • Amassed a variety of literacy teaching strategies from a range of sources • Used memories of own early learning as inspiration • Felt most confident and satisfied with literacy teaching

Name of Participant	Gail
Early literacy experiences at home and in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father read to himself, mother, not a reader, little reading to children • Parents rarely wrote, but grandmother was a regular letter writer • Little dinner time conversation • Active in sports and arts activities in the community • Parents expected her to do well in school
Literacy experiences during elementary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong lower level skills such as spelling and decoding • Disliked reading • Difficulties with reading comprehension • Difficulties with oral presentations
Grades taught in first 3 years of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior and Senior Kindergarten
Response to pre-service professional learning in literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy coursework interesting but insufficient • Wanted more strategies on teaching reading • Wanted to learn more about language development • Did not agree with the teaching approach in her practicum placements yet found them an ‘invaluable’ experience • Most worried about teaching literacy
Approach to in-service professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged in a great deal of literacy-related PD • Was an ‘intern’ to an experienced teacher for a year • Consulted professional and resource books and internet sources on literacy • Own early learning informed approach to PD and teaching • Felt most confident and satisfied with literacy teaching
Name of Participant	Rachel
Early literacy experiences at home and in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandfather and uncle were teachers in Hong Kong • Parents read to themselves and the children in English and Chinese • Parents attempted to teach her to read in English and Chinese • Little dinner time conversation • Regular library visits • Studied piano
Literacy experiences during elementary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty learning to read in French, English, and Chinese (at Chinese school)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustrated by learning to read and “gave up.” • Difficulties with spelling and organization in written work • Difficulties with reading comprehension
Grades taught in first 3 years of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 4 and Grade 5 Extended French program (half-day in English, half day in French)
Response to pre-service professional learning in literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustrated with transmission-style teaching in coursework • Wanted more opportunities to see strategies modeled and to practice them • Wanted more feedback on her lesson plans • Did not agree with the teaching approach in practicum placements and did not get enough support or feedback
Approach to in-service professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More PD in literacy than other subjects • Preferred informal PD through resource books and experimentation • Did not have a mentor and consultants were frustrating • Used own early experiences to inform PD and teaching • More satisfied with her literacy teaching than other subjects

The six participants in the study all attended a one-year post-baccalaureate pre-service program at the same large urban university. Although they were in different cohorts, with four qualified in the primary/junior division while the other two qualified in the junior/intermediate division, their formal preparation for teaching was comprised of similar elements: university-based instruction comprised of methods and foundation courses, and practice teaching placements in elementary school classrooms. The participants also shared another similarity. All six felt that their pre-service program left them unprepared to teach elementary literacy. However, the ways in which they experienced their literacy preparation in pre-service differed. Their experiences appeared to be influenced by their early literacy learning as children. In the first part of this section, the pre-service university-based and classroom-based experiences of the participants who struggled with early literacy learning, Kendra, Rachel, and Gail, will be discussed. This will be followed by an examination of the pre-service university-based and classroom-based experiences of Mike, Kelly, and Darren, who did not face any struggles with literacy learning as children. Finally, the in-service experiences of all of the participants will be analyzed. These experiences include the learning and support offered to them through induction programs offered to new teachers, and the in-service opportunities offered to all teachers. While all six participants’ experiences are represented in each theme, one longer participant case narrative has been included in each theme to give a fuller picture of the influence of early learning on beginning teaching.

More of the same for those who struggled with literacy. The three participants who struggled with aspects of literacy learning in elementary school, Kendra, Rachel, and Gail, faced similar challenges in their pre-service literacy course. They were frustrated by the large-group, transmission-style teaching approach used by their pre-service literacy instructors. Rachel's story illustrates this phenomenon. Rachel felt that the literacy learning challenges that she had as a child resurfaced in her pre-service program. She experienced her pre-service literacy course as a great deal of verbal instruction with few opportunities to see the recommended teaching practices modeled or to practice them herself. As she explains:

The idea of sitting and just discussing and watching things about teaching, but not just getting in there and getting your hands dirty, it's like the link wasn't there. How could you learn to do something when you are not doing it?

In addition to wishing that she had more modeling and practical experiences in her literacy course, she also wished she had more feedback on how she could improve her lesson plans. Her experiences in her pre-service literacy course reminded her of her challenges as a young student. In both situations she was unsure of her teachers' expectations, the relevance of the learning activities, and her ability to succeed at the assigned tasks. Her pre-service literacy experience reminded her of her childhood and led her to make a commitment not to teach her students in that way. She says, "It was frustrating, all that sitting and listening. It made me remember what it was like as a kid and how I don't want to teach my students that way."

Practice teaching more helpful. It is not surprising that Kendra, Gail, and Rachel found the practice teaching components of their pre-service program more satisfying, given their preference for active, contextualized learning. Gail, for example, valued her practicum placements over her university-based instruction during pre-service. She said, "The placements were invaluable in terms of the pre-service program. I mean, that's where I feel like you do all your learning if you have a good partnership with the teacher in the classroom." One of her placements, in a Junior and Senior Kindergarten, corresponded to the grades that she taught in her first three years of teaching. Gail appreciated being able to observe and participate in the day-to-day planning and delivery of the kindergarten program. Although she did not seek to emulate every aspect of the teaching practices that she witnessed in her classroom placements, Gail found all of the experiences useful in helping her to decide how she wanted to conduct her classroom. As she said, "It was all useful. I can still remember the good things that I saw there and the bad things that I saw there."

Pre-service literacy course interesting but limited for strong literacy learners. For, Mike, Kelly, and Darren, who learned school literacy with ease as students, pre-service literacy courses posed no academic problems. They were interested in, and enjoyed, the theoretical aspects of their courses. The traditional and de-contextualized teaching approach that distressed the first three participants was not viewed as an impediment to their learning. However, they did consider their university-based courses to be lacking in the practical application of literacy teaching concepts. Mike's response was typical of this group of participants. Mike appreciated the theoretical perspective that his literacy instructor taught in his pre-service literacy course. He explains:

My pre-service literacy instruction was conceptually really interesting, like the whole critical, multicultural literacies and the idea that kids come to literacy instruction with all different backgrounds and those backgrounds need to be addressed. All of those things, I agree with.

As a student in school, Mike enjoyed learning about new ideas and was comfortable with abstract concepts. As a pre-service teacher, he was equally at home with a theoretical approach to

learning in general, but in his literacy course, he found this approach to be insufficient. Mike believed that theory and practice needed to be more balanced in the literacy course. His experience was that theory was more heavily weighted. As he said, “I’m someone who likes theory, but the balance was tipped, over tipped in favour of theory.” Mike found his pre-service literacy course “practically irrelevant” in terms of learning how to teach reading and writing to young students.

Practicum is helpful but insufficient. Like the first three participants, Kelly, Mike, and Darren found some of the “how” that was missing from their pre-service university-based literacy instruction in their practice teaching placements. However, for a number of reasons, they did not learn enough about teaching literacy to enable them to confidently implement their own literacy programs in the first three years of their teaching.

For Kelly, the classroom placements were highlights of her pre-service year. Kelly appreciated how well organized the teachers were, the positive relationships they had with their students, and the support they received from their administration. However, because there was little overlap between her practice teaching classrooms, and her teaching assignments in her first three years as a teacher, they were not as much of a practical resource in her teaching as she would have liked. Kelly had expected to teach mostly Physical Education and Health classes when she was hired to teach full-time, but in her first few years, she taught mostly Math and Language courses. Rather than using her placement experiences as models, she modeled her teaching of these subjects after her experiences in the Gifted program when she was a student. It is interesting to note that the participants were far less critical of their pre-service mathematics courses. They felt that there was more of a balance between theory and practice and that they felt more ready to implement a mathematics program in their classrooms.

In-service learning fills some of the gaps left by the pre-service program. As we have seen, the participants all felt unprepared to be literacy teachers when they began to teach full-time, whether they found the university-based portion of their pre-service frustrating or interesting, and whether they found their classroom-based practice teaching somewhat or very helpful. Their experiences with in-service professional learning, either as part of their school and board’s induction program or as part of the more general professional learning options, however, were more successful in helping them to develop and implement their classroom literacy programs. Four of the six participants in the study were involved in the Ontario province-wide induction program for publicly funded schools known as the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP). Gail and Darren were not involved in this program because they do not teach full-time in publicly funded schools. NTIP is comprised of three elements, orientation by the school and school board, mentoring by experienced teachers, and professional development and training. New teachers are also required to have two teacher performance appraisals within their first 12 months of teaching (Kane, 2010).

Because of the variety of in-service learning opportunities available to them, the participants were able to choose the type of learning that met their needs as learners and as teachers. Specific induction opportunities, Additional Qualification courses on a variety of subjects and topics, and workshops offered by their schools, the school board, or the Ministry offered many ways to continue their professional learning. Self-directed professional reading in print and online, professional learning communities, classroom experimentation, and mentorship relationships also allowed the participants continued their professional learning after beginning their teaching careers. This range and quantity of learning options were not available in their pre-service program.

In-service learning provides a wide range of learning options. The six participants took advantage of a wide range of in-service professional learning options. Those who struggled with

literacy learning as pupils engaged in mostly literacy related options. Perhaps this was because they reported being nervous about teaching literacy, a subject that they had not excelled at as pupils. The participants who did excel at literacy learning as pupils took relatively little literacy professional learning opportunities as teachers. This may have been due to the confidence they felt about their literacy abilities.

Of all of the participants, Kendra took advantage of the widest variety of in-service opportunities. In keeping with how she learned best as a student, she put together a range of practical activities that met her needs in the classroom. Through connecting with former pre-service classmates, teachers at her current school, and her formal mentor, she amassed practical strategies and resources that she could put to immediate use in her classroom. In addition, she attended all of the induction workshops that were offered to her over her first three years, as well as many other workshops, almost exclusively in literacy. Furthermore, she regularly consulted a wide range of print and electronic teacher resources when planning and implementing her literacy program.

In-service learning offered in a variety of learning contexts. In-service learning was also offered in a variety of contexts, from large group formal courses to one-on-one mentoring, to individual reading. Gail, who thrived on small group “real life” contextualized learning, was most fortunate in being hired by an independent school that provided year-long internships for its new teachers. Gail was able to work alongside an experienced teacher for a full school year, participating in all aspects of planning, teaching, assessment, and communicating with parents. When she began to teach her own class the next year, she felt much more prepared than the other participants. In a similar way, Mike, who described himself as always having been a “book person,” continued his professional learning in a way that suited his learning style. Over his first three years of teaching, he read a great deal of professional books on his own and with a school-based teacher book club, but very little that related to literacy.

Personalized learning options available. The participants were also able to personalize their in-service learning. For example, Darren was able to meet his desire to know more about special needs learners by taking an Additional Qualification course right after graduating from pre-service. Because school learning had always been easy for him, he felt comfortable enrolling in an additional formal course right away. His satisfaction with this course led him to take another Additional Qualification course in Drama the following year. Rachel, on the other hand, was so dissatisfied with her pre-service program, as she had been with much of her elementary schooling that she did not want to enroll in any more formal professional education. She preferred to learn more informally through teacher resource books and experimentation.

Problems with in-service learning. Although there were many types of in-service opportunities available to the participants, whether within their induction program or outside of it, the system was not perfect. For example, the participants often found that their assigned mentors taught different subjects or grades than they did, and they often did not have common planning time. These factors meant that the mentoring relationships were not as fruitful as they could have been. Furthermore, because the participants felt tired and overwhelmed in their first few years, they often lacked the energy to attend off-site workshops, seminars, or courses. Moreover, the Additional Qualifications courses are very expensive, at approximately \$800 each.

Rachel, who perhaps felt the least prepared to teach literacy when she began her career, was least well served by in-service learning. As a student, she was most successful when her teachers used a structured approach with close guidance and frequent feedback. Unfortunately, as a new teacher she was hired to pioneer a new Extended French program without adequate structure

and guidance. Rachel had no role models or mentors in the program, as she was the only person teaching in the program in the first year. She attended one literacy workshop, but found it unrelated to her immediate needs, and so did not attend any others. In addition, she found the literacy consultant who was responsible for her school to be vague in her instructions and unhelpful in her feedback. If Rachel had been able to do an internship in an existing program, as Gail did in her first year, she may have had a much more satisfying in-service learning experience.

Discussion

Pre-service professional learning

All of the participants found their pre-service literacy program to have insufficiently prepared them for classroom teaching, and their in-service learning to be more practical and effective. However, the ways in which they responded to different aspects of their pre-service and in-service professional learning differed considerably. The early literacy learning struggles and strengths of the participants appear to be factors in how they responded to professional learning opportunities. Those who struggled with literacy learning as students continued to struggle with the university-based pre-service literacy courses. Those for whom literacy learning came easily as students found the university-based pre-service literacy courses interesting and enjoyable, if less practical than they would have liked. All of the participants found the classroom-based practicum placements in elementary classrooms to be at least a somewhat more helpful in preparing them to teach literacy, but only the participants who had had successful literacy experiences as students were able to use their childhood experiences to supplement what they learned in practicum.

Like the participants in Kosnik and Beck's study (2008), these participants felt that they had learned "disconnected bits of information" (p. 124) rather than a coherent approach to teaching literacy. All of the participants also seem to have suffered from what Ball (2000) calls the "fragmentation of practice" (p. 241) in their pre-service program. They were taught theory in their university-based courses, and had the opportunity to observe and participate in the practical aspects of pedagogy in practicum placements. However, the two experiences were not integrated in a way that enabled the participants to, "make use of content knowledge with a wide range of students across a wide range of environments" (p. 246). The participants' lack of preparedness to teach literacy effectively in their first few years reinforces the argument of the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (2009) that Canadian teacher education programs are not sufficiently exposing pre-service teachers to the large body of knowledge regarding how to teach children to read, how to identify children who are struggling readers, and how to effectively intervene.

In-service professional learning. The wide range of topics and contexts, and the opportunity to personalize their learning were seen to be strengths of their in-service professional learning by all of the participants. They appreciated the fact that they had a greater ability to choose the type of learning that met their individual needs than in their pre-service program. The in-service learning choices that the participants made in their first three years of teaching appear to match their learning preferences as young students. However, the participants did note several drawbacks to their in-service learning options such as a mismatch with mentors or consultants, distance, time, and cost.

These teachers' beliefs, opinions, and values do appear to have influenced their PD experiences and resultant teaching practices (Cheng-Kredle & Kingsley, 2014; Lamonte & Engels, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Moreover, their personal habits, abilities, and experiences played a key role

in their literacy teaching (Benevides & Stagg Peterson, 2010; Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008;). The personal and professional benefits that the participants received from their in-service professional learning underscore the assertion that teacher education continues over the first few years of practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Munby, Russell & Martin, 2001). The findings of this study support Kane's (2010) evaluation of NTIP. Kane (2010) found that new teachers across the province valued the professional learning opportunities offered by the program, but felt that the mentorship component was not fully realized. Like the participants in this study, Kane's participants wanted more time with mentors who were closely matched with their teaching assignment, and they wanted more specific feedback from their mentors.

Conclusion

There is much debate in the literature about the best methods to prepare and support teachers. This study helps us to understand the role of pre-service programs and in-service programs in the lives of six beginning teachers, and how these formal learning opportunities intersected with their early school learning and their early teaching experiences. The teachers in this study who struggled as students did not feel that their pre-service program met their learning needs, but they were very motivated to continue their in-service learning due to the variety of content and delivery available. They were particularly motivated to learn how to help students who struggled as they did as pupils. If we can make pre-service learning more flexible and adaptable, we can help pre-service teachers get more out of their initial teacher education programs. Furthermore, we need to differentiate our teaching to meet the needs of pre-service teachers just as we strive to do for school children.

The results of this study suggest that the value of attracting and retaining teachers who struggled as pupils may be that we have more teachers in the system who seek out professional learning opportunities because they have empathy for students who struggle, recognize when students are struggling and are motivated to help these students. Failure to do so may result in a self-perpetuating system whereby students who excel in traditional classrooms become teachers who have little experience with academic struggle and therefore are not motivated to engage in professional development that would enable them to help their students who struggle.

All of the participants in the study were surprised that the reality of their literacy teaching in the first three years was so different from their expectations. Those who had been strong literacy learners expected that literacy would be the easiest subject to teach and would give them the most satisfaction. Therefore, it was not a focus of their in-service learning. The participants who struggled as pupils expected the opposite, and therefore focused on literacy in their in-service learning. As a result, the former group was frustrated by literacy teaching and the later group found it to be the teaching area that brought them the most satisfaction. At both the pre-service and in-service levels, teacher educators need to alert beginning teachers that their strengths as learners may be the areas that they need to focus on the most in their PD.

As Feiman-Nemser (2001) states, "if we want schools to produce more powerful learning on the part of students, we have to offer more powerful learning opportunities to teachers" (p. 1013). Academic strengths as a student may create challenges as a teacher whereas academic struggles as a student may provide motivation and insight in teaching, particularly when teaching students who are struggling. Further research in this area will help us to understand how teachers' learning history and profile may affect how they are able to benefit from formal and informal learning opportunities.

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Individual Paths to Literacy Engagement: Three Narratives Revisited

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Abstract

What does it mean to be engaged, especially when it comes to literacy learning? It is this question that drove my doctoral research in 2007 when I became a participant observer in a grade two classroom with the goal of making the everyday visible while sharing a greater understanding of classroom life in relation to engagement. Six years later, I returned to the original school where the grade two students were in grade eight to revisit and expand student understandings of successful engagement in learning. In this paper, I revisit the narratives of Spike, Jasper and Avery (Scheffel, 2012) to consider themes of change and continuity, including ways in which initial success and struggle appeared to influence their journey over time. I also propose a revised Framework for Engagement that draws upon grade eight students' insights.

Keywords: engagement, literacy, student perspectives

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Introduction

Student engagement has continued to be a popular topic in Canadian schools just as it has worldwide, especially with reference to research surveys such as The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Butler-Kisber and Portelli (2003) described engagement as a “popular catch phrase in education circles, both in schools and in the academy” (p. 207). More recently, Fredricks and McColskey (2012), in a comparative analysis of student engagement measures, identified a “growing interest in student engagement” (p.763), and recommended researchers continue to explore this multidimensional construct using multiple methods.

Using a mixed-methods approach in response to this recommendation, the present paper expands discussions about the complexity of engagement that first began with my doctoral work in 2007. During this time, I became a participant observer in a grade two classroom with the goal of sharing a greater understanding of classroom life in relation to engagement, specifically during literacy learning. Six years later, I returned to the original school when the grade two students were in grade eight. I wanted to revisit and expand student understandings of successful engagement in learning by continuing to put students’ understandings at the forefront of educational discussions about engagement (Scheffel, 2009).

In particular, I revisit an earlier paper published in *Brock Education Journal* [Volume 21(2), Spring 2012] where I presented a *Framework for Literacy Engagement*, along with three narratives to represent individual paths to literacy engagement. As I revisit the narratives of Spike, Jasper, and Avery from this earlier paper, I consider themes of change and continuity, including ways in which initial success and struggle appeared to influence their journey over time. I also rework the framework based on grade eight students’ considerations of engagement, which often moved beyond literacy-specific moments towards broader conceptions of engagement in learning.

Engagement Literature

Previously, I outlined three areas of engagement literature that moved from a broader focus on school engagement (McMahon & Portelli, 2004; McMahon, 2003), to reading engagement (Baker, Dreher & Guthrie, 2000; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie, 2004) and then more specifically, literacy engagement (Cambourne, 1988). Specifically, I situated myself within a sociocultural approach to the study of engagement with the goal of considering practices that encouraged engagement in literacy learning (Scheffel, 2012). This approach placed learners at the forefront, recognizing the multifaceted nature of literacy and the social nature of learning (Cambourne, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978). While this theoretical underpinning remains, I focus here on prominent categories of school engagement to set the stage for considering what engagement looks like and feels like in the classroom from the perspective of students.

Within the literature, two central understandings of school engagement include: (1) behavioral, referring to participation, and (2) emotional, or psychological, referring to sense of belonging (Strambler & McKown, 2013; van Uden, Ritzen, & Pieters, 2013; Willms, 2003; Zyngier, 2008). Fredericks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) add a third

category, that of cognitive development, which focuses on efforts in comprehension. Parsons, Malloy, Parsons and Burrowbridge (2015) highlight the recent conceptualization of engagement as “a multidimensional construct consisting of affective, behavioural, and cognitive components” (p. 224). Their understanding is drawn from the work of Fredricks et al. (2004), their own research (Malloy, Parsons, & Parsons, 2013; Parsons, Muland, & Parsons, 2014) and that of Shernoff (2013). Expanding upon each category, Parsons et al. (2015) explain that affective refers to “interest, enjoyment, and enthusiasm,” while behavioural involves “effortful participation” and cognitive encompasses “strategic behavior, persistence, and metacognition” (Parsons et al., 2014, p. 224).

The notion of “effortful participation” is important as it suggests more than simply being present, a concern that arises with measures of engagement that focus on participation and time-on-task. As Newmann, Wehlage and Lamborn’s (1992) definition of engagement reminds us, engagement is “active involvement, commitment, and concentrated attention, in contrast to superficial participation, apathy, or lack of interest” (p. 11). Shernoff (2013) explains: “Engagement is a complex construct, encompassing both observable (e.g., attending class) and unobservable psychological events (i.e., “investment”), a persistent *quality of interaction*, and positive emotions (e.g. enjoyment)” (p. 47). It is the distinction between the visual and internal that was portrayed through my initial study, specifically in the narratives of Spike, Jasper, and Avery.

Understanding the distinction between the visual and internal reinforces the need to consider what engagement looks like beyond the observable. Working with grade six students, Parsons et al. (2015) highlighted 10 tasks for both high and low student engagement. Findings suggested that the most engaging tasks offered “opportunities for collaboration and appropriate support for completing tasks” (p. 227) while the least engaging tasks were “difficult or confusing,” often requiring little involvement (p. 227). Their analysis was framed around 5 features of engagement tasks found in the literature: authenticity, collaboration, choice, appropriate challenge, and sustained learning. Similar features were found by Gambrell (2011) in relation to the motivations of engaged readers. Offering seven rules of engagement, Gambrell (2011) highlighted the importance of relevancy, access, sustained reading opportunities, choice, and interaction with others, success through challenging texts, and incentives that value reading itself. With similar understandings arising in the original study, I turn next to an overview of my initial findings, which set the stage for returning to talk with grade eight students.

The Original Study

The original study, through an elaborated ethnographic approach that included 53 observations days, found that visual manifestations of engagement, similar to those shared by teachers within the literature, reinforced the use of visual filters to determine the “look” of engagement (e.g. raised hands, proximity to teacher, and smiling) (Scheffel, 2012). Additional research methods included informal conversational interviews with students, picture-talks and student/parent journaling. The elaboration of three individual portraits (Spike, Jasper, and Avery) pondered the ways in which engagement moved beyond the visual towards recognition of internal senses, resulting in a proposed *Framework for Literacy Engagement* (Scheffel, 2012).

The *Framework for Literacy Engagement* elaborated four filters through which engagement is perceived: personal, term, observable visual, and internal senses (Scheffel, 2012). The *personal* filter asks educators to consider their life experiences as they seek to determine their students' engagement, with the reminder to continually get to know their students. The *term* filter considers other descriptors such as interest, enjoyment, attention, and work ethic used by researchers and educators to make sense of the term engagement. The *observable visual* filter refers to visible behaviours that suggest a student is engaged: positive facial cues, proximity, upright body language and raised hands, focus or concentration and the physical demonstration of action. Finally, the *internal senses* filter moves beyond the visual to consider perceptions of student's feelings about a learning activity. The *internal senses* filter encompasses eight senses: novelty, purpose, challenge, achievement, active participation, responsibility, ownership, and belonging.

Methodology/Research Methods

Both the original study and this subsequent one considered the ways in which students conceptualize engagement. In addition, the present study asked, "In what ways have students' understandings of engagement in literacy changed or evolved over time?" The *Framework for Literacy Engagement*, developed in the original study, served as inspiration for a mixed methods research design, offering both a theoretical and methodological underpinning to the study's direction.

As noted previously, my selection of a mixed methods approach reflected Fredricks and McColsky's (2012) recommendation for multiple methods to explore the complexity of engagement. Calfee and Sperling (2010) highlight similar goals for complexity in their consideration of mixed methods approaches to language and literacy research. Like Calfee and Sperling (2010), I recognized how "...mixed methods within one research project can allow one method to 'talk to' the other, each helping to shape how we understand and interpret the other" (p. 9). For example, a qualitative approach allowed for an interactive workshop design that served to re-introduce me to the original participants and to involve all grade eight students regardless of their original participation. It was also fitting of my goal to speak with original participants following the workshop. A quantitative approach, on the other hand, offered individual feedback on the *Framework for Literacy Engagement* through a rating scale, ensuring all voices were heard during a limited time frame. For original participants, the rating scale also served as a discussion point for changes over time during the interviews.

Fitting of these goals, I used an embedded, exploratory 2-phase design where the quantitative data provided a "supportive, secondary role" to the qualitative data (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benetka, 2008, p. 282; also see Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). In both cases, the purpose was descriptive, not causal (Ercikan & Roth, 2006) as I sought to address both the broad question of students' understandings of engagement, as well as trends and departures in relation to the original study (Calfee & Sperling, 2010). The interviews were further informed by the goals of narrative inquiry, specifically, the use of story to share the lived experiences of individuals (Prus, 1996), and to invite professional development (Latta & Kim, 2010).

Workshop. The term "engagement" was not initially defined for students. Instead, I began the workshop with individual and group brainstorming, asking "What does

engagement mean to you?” and “What are some examples of times when you were engaged in learning?” The goal was to gather initial understandings of engagement while also setting an interactive tone to the workshop that valued the voices of participants. Next, I used PowerPoint to present 13 statements about engagement developed from the original study. For each statement, I shared examples from my observations of their peers when in grade two. I then asked students to indicate the relevance of each statement from their current perspective as grade eight students by ranking statements in order of importance from 1 to 13. An open-ended prompt was also included, asking students to consider anything that was missing: “Another statement I would add is...” In the final portion of the workshop, I invited to students to use digital cameras to capture moments that signified their engagement.

Individual Interviews. Following the workshop, I invited the original participants, including Spike, Jasper, and Avery, to participate in a follow-up individual interview to consider their engagement journeys. I included interview questions such as: What is a moment in your schooling that stands out for the way it engaged you as a learner? What makes you really want to learn something? During what type of language arts activities do you feel you are learning the most? In addition, I asked the original participants to elaborate upon their responses to the rating scale completed during the workshop. In this conversation, I shared the areas of the framework that had stood out for me as an observer of their literacy engagement when they were in grade two (e.g. sense of challenge or raised hands). I asked if there was anything they would change or that no longer applied.

Parent Survey. I also invited parent input through an online survey. The survey was offered to all parents but received a low rate of return (seven in total) unlike the parent journals collected in the original study. For the purposes of this article, I consider only the parent surveys for original participants, specifically Spike, to offer a point of comparison to his original portrait.

Participants

Participants were situated within a K-8 school of over 650 students in Southwestern Ontario. Unlike the original study, the follow-up study reflected the ethnically diverse population of the school (Scheffel, 2012). A total of 72 grade eight students participated in the workshop with 61 providing consent to share their ideas for the purposes of this study. An equal number of male and female students contributed to the workshop data. Of the original 17 participants, 11 remained at the school. Consent was received from 10 of these students to participate in the individual interview. An attempt was made to contact the remaining students still living in the area, resulting in 1 additional interview. In total, 62 rating scales were completed and 11 individual interviews were conducted.

Data Sources and Analysis

The present paper draws upon the following data sources: workshop artifacts (e.g. brainstorming charts, field notes), interview transcripts, rating scales, and parent surveys as relevant. I applied Calfee and Sperling's (2010) 3-step process for analyzing mixed methods research: (1) data cleaning, (2) data exploration and organization, and (3) data examination to look for meaningful patterns. Data examination procedures began with

simple descriptive statistics using SPSS to gain an overall picture of the ranked value between 1 to 13 given to each statement on the rating scale and to inform discussion of the *Framework for Literacy Engagement*. Responses to the open-ended prompt were categorized by topic for informational purposes. Next, I read/reread interview transcripts for overall understanding, and compared to previous findings. For this paper specifically, I looked for points of agreement and contradiction with previously published narratives of Spike, Jasper and Avery (Scheffel, 2012) to consider evolving understandings of engagement as well as questions arising. Finally, I re-examined all data sources to consider what I learned from speaking with the grade eight students about engagement.

A Framework for Literacy Engagement: Revisited

The Rating Scale

My goal in developing the rating scale was to create an age-appropriate, readable statement for each term within the framework in order to uncover patterns and raise questions for further exploration. Table 1 lists each statement from lowest to highest mean, with lower means indicating greater importance. The green rows denote statements within the framework that reflected the *observable visual* filter. Blue rows denote statements that reflect the *internal senses* filter. No gender difference was found in any of the statements.

Sense of Active Participation was rated the highest in terms of importance, while *Positive Facial Cues* and *Proximity* were rated as least important. The chart reveals that the majority of the *observable visual* statements are near the bottom of the list with the exception of *Focus or Concentration*, which was rated second in importance. Interestingly, all statements revealed a range of 12 or 13 with almost every statement selected as most important by some and least important by others. Such a range reinforces the individuality of each student's learning journey, suggesting there was importance in all of the statements to at least one student.

Students were presented with two statements for *Sense of Ownership* to reflect differing aspects of ownership displayed in the original study. As shown in Table 1, both aspects of ownership received equal calculations. A similar mean of 6.86 was also found when computing a new variable for ownership that averaged these two statements. However, it is important to note that many students offered greater importance to one or the other, reflecting a distinction that requires further study.

Another limitation of the rating scale was the absence of a statement for *Sense of Belonging*. In the original study, *Sense of Belonging* referred to "the process of working with another that creates a space for learning to be fostered" (Scheffel, 2012, p. 17). This aspect of the model arose in large part due to Avery's story, and for this reason, it was not included in the workshop to avoid her recognition by previous classmates. However, two of the eight open-ended responses indicated that a statement related to belonging was missing. These statements highlighted the role of "interact(ing) with other classmates," but not always with friends: "I am more engaged when I am not with my friends and are with people I don't usually talk to."

Despite the limitations discussed above, analysis of the rating scales offered a key distinction between the importance of what is observable and that which is internal. At the same time, the rating scale supported the previous findings that each of these factors contributed to perceptions of engagement. With this in mind, I turn to the narratives of

Spike, Jasper and Avery to look more closely at their understandings of engagement as grade eight students. As grade two students, their stories had stood out in relation to a painting by Brenda Joysmith that positioned three children around a doorway (see Allen, Michalove & Shockley, 1993). At the time, I pondered how “the open doorway became a path to learning that was clearly defined for some while unreachable for others. I wanted to learn what drew some through the door but turned others away” (Scheffel, 2012, p. 4). In this follow-up study, I now wondered, how have their journeys changed over time, or have they changed at all?

Table 1

Rating Scale Frequencies

Framework Term	Statement	Mean	Mode	Min	Max
Sense of Active Participation	I am interested and involved in what we are learning about.	4.43	4	1	12
Focus or Concentration	I am concentrating on what I am doing.	5.22	5	1	13
Sense of Achievement	I feel successful in what I am doing.	5.22	5	1	13
Sense of Challenge	I am challenged to learn something new.	5.85	5	1	13
Sense of Purpose	I can see the purpose or larger goal in what I am doing.	6.41	6	1	13
Sense of Novelty	The activity is out of the norm or something we don't usually do.	6.46	6	1	13
Sense of Ownership ^a	I am offered choice in what I am doing.	6.81	7	1	13
Sense of Ownership ^a	I can make decisions about what I am learning.	6.81	7	1	13
Action	I am able to move around and be active while I am learning.	6.88	7	1	13
Sense of Responsibility	I am able to take on responsibility for what I am doing.	6.91	7	1	13
Upright Body Language & Raised Hands	I raise my hand to share a response.	8.12	9	1	13
Positive Facial Cues	I smile while I am working.	10.43	12	2	13
Proximity	I sit near the front of the class.	10.55	12	1	13

Note: n=60. Frequencies are based on the ranked number between 1-13 that participants gave to each statement. Statements are ordered from lowest to highest mean with lowest means indicating greatest importance. The Framework Term refers to the original *Framework for Literacy Engagement* (Scheffel, 2012) to which the statements correspond.

^aThis category was divided into two statements.

Three Portraits: Revisited

A glance at Spike, Jasper and Avery's individual ratings for each statement revealed that they differed in terms of the statements they valued most (Table 2). While Spike and Avery were in agreement with the majority of their classmates that *Sense of Active Participation* was the most important, Jasper was one of few who selected *Positive Facial Cues* and *Proximity* as key signs of his engagement. In all three cases, there was little overlap in terms of the top five statements selected. The interviews offered greater insight into their understandings and set the foundation for revisiting their narratives.

Table 2

Rating scale statements selected as most important by Spike, Jasper, and Avery

Statement	Spike	Jasper	Avery
I am interested and involved in what we are learning about.	1		1
I am concentrating on what I am doing.			2
I feel successful in what I am doing.		5	
I am challenged to learn something new.			5
I can see the purpose or larger goal in what I am doing.	4		3
The activity is out of the norm or something we don't usually do.			
I am offered choice in what I am doing.	3		
I can make decisions about what I am learning.	2		
I am able to move around and be active while I am learning.	5	4	
I am able to take on responsibility for what I am doing.			4
I raise my hand to share a response.		2	
I sit near the front of the class.		3	
I smile while I am working.		1	

Spike. In grade two, Spike was the student who "...found spaces within the school day and at home to follow self-initiated literacy activities and to build his literate lifestyle" (Scheffel, 2012, p.8). This included creating a trading card series and writing a chapter book about Pokémon. While his teacher often excluded popular culture interests from the classroom, Spike used recess and other free times to work on his interests. Within classroom activities, "it was evident that when given ownership over tasks, Spike was most likely to feel engaged" (Scheffel, 2012, p. 10). Though he was not always attentive in class, Spike easily achieved Grade 2 standards. As a result, Spike was able to find his own path to engagement. Overall, his grade two journey towards engagement focused on sense of purpose, sense of challenge, sense of achievement, sense of ownership and the behavioural aspect of action.

Six years later, Spike's selection of statements differed little from when he was in grade two, though his understanding of active learning moved from the behavioural focus physical activity to one of active participation. Ownership also remained central to Spike. He selected both aspects of ownership in his top five statements (#2 and #3), revealing the

ways in which choice and decision-making were keys to his engagement, and perhaps empowerment as a grade eight student.

When asked to define engagement, Spike responded, “Participation. Doing work. Listening, but active listening, not just like ‘Uh huh. Okay.’” In fact, the role of active participation was a recurring theme in my conversation with Spike. When discussing what made him want to learn something, Spike shared, “If I’m interested in it, if it’s something I like, sometimes if it’s something new and I want to learn more. Just stuff like that.” When asked what still fit, had changed or stood out most, Spike again highlighted the importance of interest: “Interest would be the most important. Cause, like, if I’m not interested in something, I just don’t seem to push myself enough. If it’s actually something I’m interested in, I’ll really want to do it and work on it.”

However, when asked if there was a key moment that stood out in terms of being engaged as a learner, Spike laughed and said, “Not really, to be honest. No.” Prompting him to expand, Spike added, “Nothing just really specifically made me really want to push myself to do something.” He thought of himself as “engaged overall, kind of...” but a challenge, as in grade two, appeared crucial to the degree in which he felt engaged as a learner. One key moment that Spike did recall was a recent Science Fair as “some of the projects we did were kind of fun.” Reminiscent of his love for discovering ideas in grade two, this example offers a brief glimpse into why active participation stood out, for it speaks to Spike’s desire to build on interests and be actively involved in his learning.

Within Language Arts, what stood out most to Spike was the work they had done with children’s picture books: “We look at the art, and the bigger messages inside the kids’ picture books.” Though he could not remember any titles, it was clear this learning moment had been significant, perhaps because it challenged him to look beyond the surface and uncover layers of meanings. Reminiscent of the text analyst role within the 4 Roles of the Reader (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1999), it appeared Spike was engaged by this opportunity to evaluate purpose and point of view.

His interest in books as a whole, however, had changed. Responding to the optional parent survey, Spike’s parents felt he was “very hard-pressed to find books he likes. Or friends who like books.” Interestingly, they felt many of his literacy practices had stopped around 3 years ago. It may be that Spike’s reading interests had moved beyond print to digital forms, an area for further research. At the same time, perceptions of being a reader, and finding engaging books, raise questions about potential limitations to engagement with reading.

Questions Arising. Though Spike’s “thirst for knowledge” stood out in grade two, this passion for learning was strikingly missing when I returned to speak with him. While I did not have the opportunity to observe his learning in this follow-up study, his answers support this difference. As a student who often found his own ways towards engagement in grade two, the ability to negotiate spaces of interest no longer stood out. In terms of what was important to Spike as a learner, his engagement journey had not changed significantly, raising questions about why he no longer appeared to be as engaged. Reflecting upon Spike’s narrative, then and now, I am left with the following question, “If Spike did not change, what did?”

Jasper. In grade two, Jasper was the student who was “compliant, just not involved” (Scheffel, 2012, p. 13). He often tried to “look the part” of engagement as he worked at his desk with a pencil in hand, but in reality, his page was often blank. He was

hesitant to speak with adults, with his friends offering the safest space for conversation. There was a distinct difference in his literacy practices at home in comparison to school but “he provided enough correct answers to demonstrate that he could do the work” (Scheffel, 2012, p. 13). Occasionally, however, there were moments where he overcame this disconnect, such as through the creation of his own game board. In this moment, he shared ideas with classmates and became fully absorbed in this open-ended learning opportunity. Overall, his grade two journey towards engagement, though a bumpy one, focused predominantly on action (e.g. physical movement) but also upright body language and raised hands, and sense of challenge.

Six years later, sense of action and raised hands remained important to Jasper. In fact, of the five statements related to *observable visual* aspects of engagement, Jasper included 4 of these in his top 4 statements. His fifth choice was that of success in relation to sense of responsibility, a new element to his individual journey that did not appear in grade two.

This idea of success played a predominant role in my interview of Jasper. When asked what made him want to learn, Jasper spoke of future purpose as a reason to engage: “When I know it’s gonna, like, if I don’t learn it, I know it’s going to affect my future.” Thinking back to a key moment that engaged him in learning, a similar sense of wanting to do well arose: “There’s been a lot of lessons and tests and stuff that I really wanted to do good, to...know it.” Underlying this goal for future is a desire to well, or achieve success towards this future goal.

Jasper was unsure when initially asked to define engagement. Prompting him to reflect on the workshop and to think about himself as a learner, he responded: “To want to learn – to want to do something.” This desire reflected the game board example in grade two where he wanted to do the task, and therefore engaged in the task and even had fun in the process. A similar understanding is conveyed in the Language Arts moments that stood out to Jasper where he spoke of writing a speech on basketball and writing biographies. Choice of topic is central to both of these tasks, reflecting the desire to want to do or learn something.

For the most part, Jasper was hesitant with his responses, suggesting an uncertainty in his personal understandings about engagement. When asked what still fit, had changed or stood out most, Jasper paused before pointing to *Sense of Action*, “Well... Yeah, I guess. Like, this one.” When asked to expand, however, he could not recall any specific moments. Instead, his focus turned to attention: “I guess when we are doing lessons, you always gotta be paying attention because you gotta know what to say.” It is here that we can see the “look” of engagement that still underlies Jasper’s narrative. For him, the visual observable statements are the way to show you are paying attention.

Questions Arising. While Jasper appeared to have found a stronger desire to participate in his learning in grade eight, there remained a strong visual perception of what it means to show engagement. He equated this, in part, to attention, a similar understanding that he displayed in grade two: “He knew what the expected image of working looked like...” (Scheffel, 2012, p. 13). While much of his engagement journey remained the same, the role of achievement, or success, represented a key change. It may be that this is a result of being in grade eight, a time of looking ahead to preparing for high school. It also strikes me that the two concepts, attention and achievement, are linked for Jasper. In grade two, he sought to show achievement, though perhaps did not understand its importance beyond

grade two. Now, he is seeking to not only show achievement but work towards it in order to do well in future. For me, the question that remains is: Is he engaged in the learning itself, or the process of doing well to achieve grades?

Avery. In grade two, Avery sought to be at the same level academically as her classmates but often felt limited by her participation because she did not know the answer. For Avery, “the learning process was a struggle, not through lack of desire, but because her position along the learning process continuum placed her at the bottom of grade 2” (Scheffel, 2012, p. 14). Visual indicators mattered little to Avery as a result. Instead, her path to engagement focused on internal indicators related to achievement, challenge, and ownership. Despite this, engagement seemed elusive. Moments that helped her to achieve these internal indicators were often related to a sense of belonging, such as being able to work with a supportive peer where her ideas were valued.

Six years later, Avery’s selection of indicators has changed significantly, though her top choices remain focused on internal indicators, with the addition of one visual indicator, that of concentration. While achievement played a key role in grade two, Avery did not select this indicator within her top 5. Instead, active participation, purpose and responsibility appeared to take on greater importance.

When asked to define engagement, Avery focused on effort: “...being in the classroom and listening. You always give the answers, or try to, and if you don’t understand something you always ask questions saying, ‘What does this mean?’” Notably, when in grade two, Avery did not always feel she had an answer to share. Her contributions were also devalued at times, though often unintentionally. Sharing the importance of her ideas and questions, there is a distinct difference in Avery’s understanding and valuing of her thoughts now that she is in grade eight.

Sharing what made her want to learn, collaboration was at the forefront of Avery’s answer: “...having partners...it doesn’t all depend on you. So if you have a bad idea, your friends could tell you and then you would actually know it was a bad idea...” Here we see that Avery does not feel alone in her learning journey. Just as she did in grade two, she recognizes the importance of collaborating with supportive peers.

When it came to key moments of engagement in Language Arts, Avery focused on strategies and tools, such as the use of computer programs and the importance of proofreading as contributing to her learning. Discussing her literacy goals, Avery shared, “I think I’m getting better.” Her specific goals for improvement focused on “writing, better faster proofreading, getting more right. Reading better.” A similar goal of learning “to read and write better” was shared by her mom when in grade two, speaking to Avery’s ongoing desire to learn. Like in grade two, Avery was aware of her academic struggles, but as a grade eight student, she felt supported by her peers and teachers. Moreover, in comparison to Spike and Jasper, Avery had a clear future goal to become a chef.

Questions Arising. While I was concerned for Avery in grade two, I found myself excited to hear her greater confidence for learning. Having switched schools, she was in a smaller classroom setting, something she attributed as an easier place to learn. Without greater details, it is difficult to say if this switch in schools contributed to Avery’s greater confidence. What matters most is how she feels about her learning. Despite her initial struggles in grade two, and regardless of the type of classroom she had moved to, it was evident that Avery’s path to learning was no longer the closed door I had feared. While Jasper had equated attention with achievement, Avery’s story suggests achievement, or

perhaps success, is more than academics. So, what made the difference? How was Avery able to find her way through the open door of learning? How do we define success? These are the questions that remain.

What Have I Learned?

Without knowing more about the years between grades two and eight, I am not able to answer these questions specifically. Instead, I focus on what I have learned in returning to speak with these grade eight students. In doing so, I remain cognizant that the findings discussed are situated within one school through a one-time workshop, followed by individual interviews with original participants. My goal is not to generalize but to highlight the voices of the participants involved and the insights shared in relation to what engagement means to them.

First, the grade eight's responses, both on the rating scale and through the interviews, confirm that there are individual paths towards engagement that include both visual and internal factors, but with the added understanding that individual paths may vary across time and context. For educators looking to engage their students, it is important that they recognize engagement is more than what we see at first glance. Moreover, as the grade eight students in this study, emphasized, teaching should encourage and support all learners through offering choice and opportunities for success.

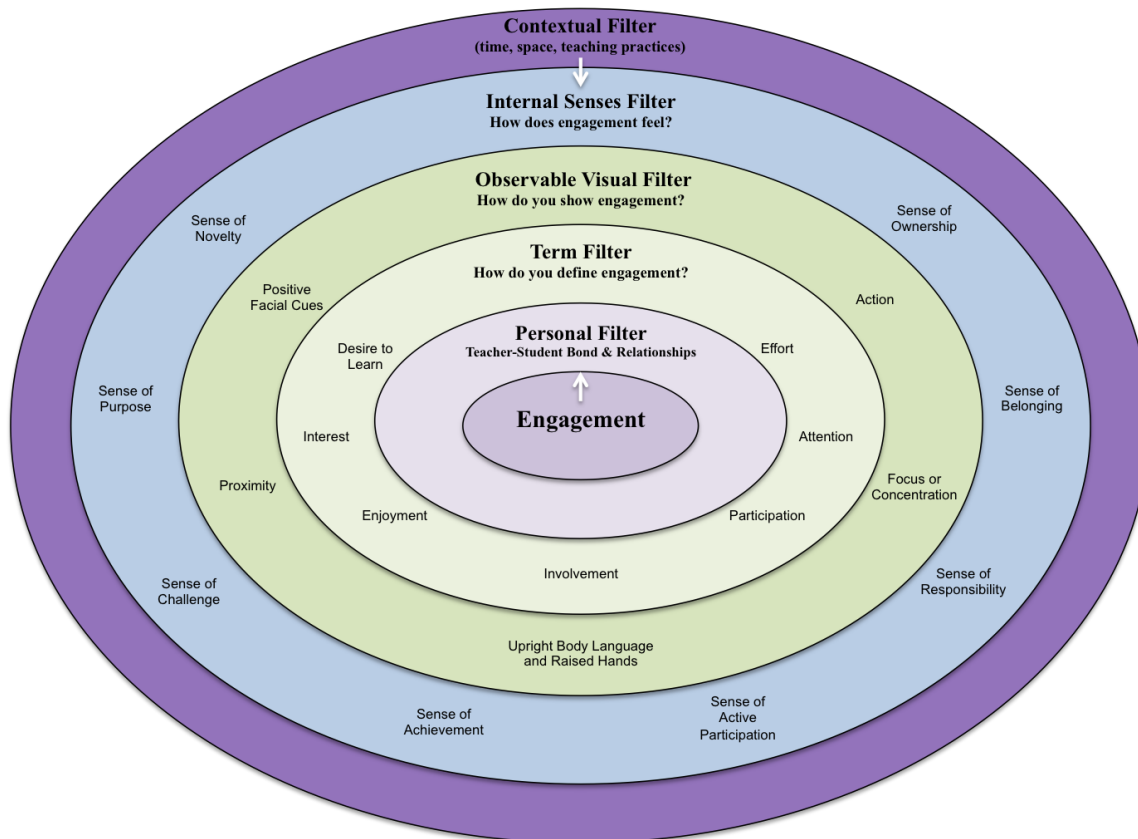
Second, interest is a key factor towards engagement. Playing to student interests involves greater responsibility and involvement of students in their learning. In fact, the key words used by the grade eights to define engagement at the beginning of the workshop were "participation," "involved," and "interested." While many of the indicators within the original *Framework for Literacy Engagement* were reinforced, the insights of these grade eight students suggest the need for some changes. First, the term filter has been expanded to include additional keywords used by the grade eight students to define engagement. The term "work ethic" was removed in place of their use of the terms "effort," and "desire to learn." Second, the personal filter now encompasses a greater focus on relationships. Originally, this filter considered the lens through which educators perceive engagement (e.g. Who am I? What are my life experiences?).

In light of Spike, Jasper, and Avery's journeys, teachers were reminded to get to know their students and what contributes to their success in learning. However, in this follow-up study, students' perceptions suggested the personal was also important to them, in particular through the teacher-student bond (Cambourne, 1988). For example, four out of eight open-ended responses indicated engagement was more likely to occur with a teacher who was "understanding", "reasonable", "kind", and "nice". Initially, I considered teacher-student bond as influencing the *internal senses* filter and students' willingness to engage. Upon reflection, I see that teacher-student bond, and relationships as a whole, are at the heart of this personal filter. In fact, Washor and Mojkowski (2014) include relationships as one of 10 expectations young people have when it comes to engagement. The revised model now clarifies this goal through the keywords: teacher-student bond and relationships. In doing so, students and teachers are encouraged to reflect on the ways in which the remaining filters are supported through the relationships created within the classroom, school, and larger community.

Third, a new *Contextual Filter* has been added to the outer edge, intended to reflect back upon the other filters. This filter encompasses the question of change posed earlier. Perceptions of engagement may change from year to year depending on the classroom, school, teaching practices, etc. As a result, each new context is likely to support or limit student's individual journeys in different ways. Though focused on intervention, Fredricks and McColskey (2012) remind us that student's engagement "...in something (i.e., task, activity, and relationship)...cannot be separated from their environment. This means that engagement is malleable and is responsive to variations in the context..." (p. 765). Choice, initially placed within ownership, finds its home here in the contextual filter as a teaching practice used by teachers to influence engagement. Parsons et al. (2015) suggested, "Engaging tasks were also those that encouraged student choice of either the topic or the manner of presentation in activities..." (p. 229). Vitale-Reilly (2015) presented choice as a key principle of engagement in the way it motivates students and leads to critical thinking. Washor and Mojkowski (2014) also highlighted choice as another of the 10 expectations young people have for school. Whether a principle, expectation or tool, choice becomes an action by teachers that contributes to other internal senses, such as feelings of ownership, collaboration, responsibility, etc.

Finally, though the topic of literacy was central to the context of my initial observations, this was not the case in the follow-up study. While students were prompted to consider literacy activities that fostered engagement, they often focused on engagement in learning as a whole. It may be that the integrated nature of literacy contributed to this focus for the students. It may also be a result of beginning the workshop with broader discussions of engagement to uncover initial understandings. Upon reflection of the ideas shared by students, I have come to recognize the broader applicability of the framework. As such, the revised framework in Figure 1 suggests a *Framework for Engagement in Learning* that can be applied to various learning contexts.

Figure 1. A framework for engagement in learning.



Looking Ahead

The framework presented offers a fluid understanding of the ways in which engagement is demonstrated and experienced by students. Rather than categorize engagement as behavioural, cognitive or emotional, the framework recognizes the ways in which “interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm,” “effortful participation,” and “strategic behavior, persistence, and metacognition” (Parsons et al., 2015, p. 224) cross both visual and internal indicators of engagement for students. Questions of how engagement both looks and feels as a learner are at the forefront. Yet, many questions remain to be explored as we consider the narratives of Spike, Jasper, and Avery and ponder the changes contributing to seemingly greater and lesser engagement over time.

Future research might revisit the statements with grade eight students to further distinguish why some statements stood out over others. Multiple statements for each indicator can then be created with the goal of asking students to rate them on a scale of 1-7 in terms of importance. This will allow for more in-depth quantitative analysis to compare to the ranked data in this study. The addition of a statement related to *Sense of Belonging* will also expand future discussions related to this concept. Important to note, Fredricks and McColskey (2012) caution that due to variations in the construct of engagement, a closer

look at measurements of engagement is needed, including self-report measures, such as the rating scale used here. The value of this study, however, lies not in an attempt to measure but to notice patterns and raise questions about individual paths to engagement. The voice of teachers in response to students' perceptions is also important. How do teachers view the usefulness of such a framework for supporting their learners? Is the framework applicable across learning contexts? The complexity of engagement requires that we continue to pursue greater understanding through the voices of students and educators.

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Cultivating Agentic Teacher Identities in the Field of a Teacher Education Program

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Abstract

Teacher candidates' individual and collaborative inquiry occurs within multiple and layered contexts of learning. The layered contexts support a strong connection between the practicum and the university and the emergent teaching identities. Our understanding of teacher identity is as situated and socially constructed, yet fluid and agentic. This paper explores how agentic teaching identities emerge within the layered contexts of our teacher education program as examined in five narratives of teacher candidates' experience. These narratives involve tension, inquiry, successes and risks, as teacher candidates negotiate what it means to learn how to teach, to teach and to critically reflect on knowledge needed to teach. We conclude that navigating teacher identity is a teacher candidate capacity that could be explicitly cultivated by teacher education programs.

Keywords: Teacher identities, teacher education, agency, collaboration, context

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Introduction

Teacher candidates' individual and collaborative inquiry occurs within multiple contexts of learning. Within our education program, we advocate for a co-construction of these learning contexts with teacher candidates. We value teacher candidates' agentic potential; that is, their personal and professional competency to make decisions, act on them and reflect. Thus they develop their teaching identities in response and in resistance to experiences in a teacher education program.

"How does context matter to the ways teacher candidates learn?" is a question driving the development of our program for after degree students within our Faculty of Education. These students enter the program after completing an undergraduate degree in other disciplines. Many have worked for some years before applying to Education. Their life experiences differ from education students in the Integrated Program, who commit to an education program directly from high school. The after-degree program enacts the following principles: contexts for collaborative learning among students and with educational professionals, contexts where students can engage agentially in the processes of teaching-as-inquiry, and contexts which allow for strong connections between theoretical and practical understandings of teaching. This connection between theory and practice is supported by a structured, ongoing and deliberate linking of the university and practicum school sites. This paper is focused on teacher candidates' learning embedded in the layered contexts of the program. That focus is mediated by our research question: How do agentic teaching identities emerge within the layered contexts of this program, and through the interactions of these contexts and the people within them?

Theoretical Framing of Agency and Teacher Identity

A teaching identity is complex and there are many positions on what is involved in its development, most evolving from a perspective on personal identity (Solomon, R. P., Singer, J., Campbell, A. & Allen, A. with the assistance of Portelli, J. P., 2011; Korthagen, 2004; Britzman, D. P., 1991; Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. 1986). Our understanding of teacher identity is situated and socially constructed, yet fluid and agentic (Block & Betts, 2014). Thus a teaching identity is constructed over time through the activity of teaching, as a teacher simultaneously reacts to and negotiates given contexts and human relationships at given moments (Olsen 2008, as cited in Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p.139).

Constructing a teaching identity is part of the process of teacher education, although it is often not a legislated aspect of teacher education programs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Our position is that teacher candidates who understand their personal identities as both socially constructed and agentic will be more capable of negotiating their professional identities. Agency is something people do, not have; it is performed, acted out in individual and collective experiences (Priestley, Robinson & Biesta, 2012) 1). A professional identity grows through practice, from doing. Teacher education programs that connect the experiences of practice with theoretical understandings can temper the tension between the two.

Williams (2014) discusses the difficulty and value to teacher educators of negotiating identity across the university and school settings. Teacher candidates also experience multiple positions/positionings in the contexts of our program. We believe that they develop a teaching identity partially through responding to the positions these contexts offer. This development, this re-negotiation of identity, is often uncomfortable due to conflicting perspectives (Block, 2013; Boler-Zembylas, 2003) and the tension between what is known and familiar and what is learned in a professional context.

Our interest in contexts for learning emerges from our understanding of knowledge. Knowledge is considered as situated, that is, partial and emergent (Haraway, 1988); as embodied, meaning that minds and bodies interact to know (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008); and as embedded in socio-environmental contexts (Robbins and Aydede, 2009). This understanding has shaped our teacher education program as inclusive of many ways of knowing, as opposed to positioning scientific knowledge as a master narrative encoded in the exercise of declarative knowledge. The master narrative defines curriculum as a list of declarative statements. This knowledge is to be acquired by students and can be taken-up by various social processes, such as standardized testing, as something assessable and convertible into statements of accountable learning. Defining knowledge as strictly linear and declarative can result in marginalization rather than inclusion as it excludes many ways of knowing that students bring to learning, such as narrative, discovery, and inquiry.

Davis, et al. (2008) have distinguished between complicated or mechanical systems, such as a subway, and complex or organic systems, such as a society. Teacher education is identified as a complex system and, as such, it is adaptive and non-linear. A complex system encompasses more than linear understandings of declarative knowledge structures. This complex understanding of knowledge as situated, embodied and embedded produces, in part, the structures of the program. It is our intention to demonstrate how these structures result in a context where teacher candidates can notice and negotiate the tensions within their developing teaching identities. The narratives of teacher candidate experiences that follow are the source for our interpretation of how teaching identities evolve in our program.

Methods

We are interested in the experiences of our teacher candidates, as they participate in the layered contexts of the program. As such we are interested in documenting and interpreting teacher candidate's experiences of agency, as they work to develop a teaching identity. We view these experiences as complex, interconnected, inter-subjective, and embedded in a socio-cultural milieu (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through documenting these experiences, we can construct narratives of experience, which may illuminate the experiences of agency by the teacher candidates (Bruner, 1986). As researchers, we are well positioned to document these experiences because we are directly involved with the teacher candidates, as their university instructors and as their practicum supervisors (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

We collected data from a cohort of thirty-five teacher candidates in the first year of their program. During that year, data included course work assignments and field notes of interactions with and among the teacher candidates. Coursework assignments included

typical writing assignments as well as reflections on their teaching experiences. Field notes included synopses of debriefing meetings with teacher candidates after they taught a lesson, as well as other interactions during university course work and practicum school meetings. Also included were field notes from the other three faculty supervisors working in the after-degree program.

All data served two purposes. First, data informed our teacher-educator decision-making and assessment process as we taught within the program. Second, the collected data and our teaching-based analyses of data served as research data from which emerged narratives of teacher identity. These narratives deal with the beliefs, desires and commitments of teacher candidates, which are tentative and changing. We are focused on agents, and hence their agency, as people who act on their beliefs, desires and commitments (Bruner, 1990). Each narrative is embedded in the social-culture milieu of the teacher candidates' experiences, including the layered contexts of the program, which are built to occasion opportunities for collaborative professional reflection and growth. The narratives are produced through our interpretation of the field notes and sometimes include our voices as instructors/field supervisors.

In addition to the data collected in the first year of the two-year program, our ethics protocol allowed us to contact the teacher candidates for a follow-up interview after they graduated from the program. Five agreed to participate, and their interviews contribute to the data interpretations described in this paper. This one-on-one interview was conducted before they began their first teaching jobs. The interview focused on encouraging these beginning teachers to reflect on their experiences of learning to teach, as-well-as on their beliefs about effective teaching.

After interpretation of interview data and data collected in their first year of the program, we purposefully selected five narratives which represented a diversity of experiences across the cohort and illuminated our focus on agency (Creswell, 2007). This diversity reflects the variety of ways that teacher candidates can agentially develop their teaching identities in response to negotiating the layered contexts of the program. We did not seek to uncover themes across data sources. The sample of five narratives is not a representation of the different kinds of agency observed among all participants in the program. Our focus was on diverse experiences, rather than a complete or generalizable categorization of the kinds of agentic teacher identity development that could emerge from the layered contexts of the program.

Enacting the Layered Contexts of the Program

The layered contexts of the program were designed to deliberately and explicitly connect university course work and school practicum experience, commonly seen as the sites for theory and practice. Two structures are central. First is a required course in general theories of teaching and learning that legitimizes school-based professional learning meetings (PLMs) as part of that course. Second is the organization of the practicum. These structures are augmented by our orientation to collaborative learning and situated knowledge.

The hub of the program is the general course, a full-credit, two-term course, whose content is theories of teaching and learning and philosophies of schooling. The course was designed to articulate its content with practicum experiences, including a

group school-based project and individual assignments based on the practicum experience (these practicum related assignments also occur in Math and Social Studies curriculum courses in the program taught by the authors). The articulation is facilitated by the course being held in two sites, the weekly lecture at the University and the weekly seminar, termed a PLM, at the practicum school with the faculty supervisor. The valuing of situated knowledge is reflected in the physical situation of the seminars.

The weekly PLMs are constructed as spaces for learners to safely and critically examine their teaching and the teaching of others under the direction of faculty supervisors who either instruct in the program or are retired teachers. The two main qualities of professional learning communities are that they are places where participants engage in safe and critical dialogue (Darling, 2001). They must be safe so that dialogue can begin and be supported. Professional learning meetings must be critical to ensure a meaningful dialogue that moves beyond the familiar and challenges participants to reflect on theirs' and others' practices. In these PLMs, teacher candidates can examine their emerging teaching identities and professional knowledge in the contexts of the action spaces created by these communities.

The organization of the practicum is different from a traditional practicum in two significant ways. First, teacher candidates work in dyads (Bullough, et. al., 2002) during the practicum; two teacher candidates work with one cooperating teacher and her or his class over the year. Second, due to the pairing and the partnership with the school, there is a larger cohort of teacher candidates at each host school. This larger cohort forms the participants for the school-based PLMs. These structures were designed to encourage collaborative learning and to construct a context where emerging teaching identities could be negotiated with peers, in addition to professionals. In a teacher education program, the relationships or social interactions which teacher candidates experience are central. Structuring these interactions supports the development of a teaching identity grounded in collaboration and community. This collaborative process amplifies individual inquiry into teaching and opportunities for agentic experiences.

Collaborative processes within the program are supported by, and embedded in, three nested layers of learning communities. The first layer is formed by the dyads of teacher candidates and their co-operating teachers. The second layer is formed by the group of teacher candidates hosted by a given school together with their faculty supervisor, and which meet for the weekly PLMs. The third layer is formed by the full cohort of teacher candidates participating in the program and working together to complete all university course work, with opportunities to share learning experiences across the host schools. These nested layers of collaborative learning communities, dyads within school groups within the whole cohort, occasion multiple opportunities for interactions. Dyads worked together at their practicum schools on university work such as focused observations, subject-based small group teaching opportunities, and journal writing. These activities became data for reflection within the school-based PLMs and university courses. As they accumulate and interpret their teaching experiences across the university and practicum school contexts, teacher candidates construct a practice that shapes a teacher identity.

The school-based project is an example of collaboration among teacher candidates as well as the collaboration between the practicum schools and the university. At each practicum school, teacher candidates develop a school-based project, in addition to their

practicum responsibilities in classrooms. This project is an assignment in the general teaching and learning course. For this assignment, teacher candidates are required to design and implement a grassroots extra-curricular initiative intended to address an educational need within their host school. Assessment of the project is based on a proposal to the school administration and a reflective report and presentation after the project is completed. Each project is approved by the school administration and course instructor and supported by the faculty supervisor. The project was designed for teacher candidates to experience agency. Our observations of the planning, implementation, and reflections on the projects suggest that teacher candidates did experience agency in the process of identifying an educational need through collaborating with professionals and then constructing a plan to respond to that need. Carrying out their plan and assessing it positioned the teacher candidates as professionals and supported their teacher identity (for more detail see Block & Betts, 2013).

Narratives of Agentic Teaching Identity

Narrative 1: Engaging with the School Community. In the following narrative, the process of teacher candidates engaging with the school community and the impact on teacher identity are explored. The context of this narrative is one of the weekly professional learning meetings, where teacher candidates are working on their group project for the school, an evening event for the community they named “Family Fun Night”.

In a meeting of teacher candidates and their faculty supervisor, the potential for parent participation in the Fun Night was discussed. The faculty supervisor made linkages to her experiences in that school over the previous year and to her experience in community organization. The supervisor’s ability to move from the past to the present and from practicum school to community organizing theory was useful. However, the supervisor had to be careful not to contribute too much or to overtake the discussion. The teacher candidates wanted and needed to own the planning process, both temporally and spatially. That is, teacher candidates were invested in their current perceptions of the community and in their plans for their school. The place they had been located in by the student teaching office was changing; it was becoming the place where they were locating themselves as capable; as agentic (Field Note {FN} 2/10/12).

Locating oneself, both physically and figuratively, is agentic. These teacher candidates experienced their ability to design, organize and perform a community event. In turn, they opened up the school site to the community and constructed a context within which their abilities and the abilities of community members could be demonstrated. Two months later, when presenting their project to their cohort, the teacher candidates were able to identify the tensions they had experienced in relation to trusting the community members. Their expectations had been that there would be little support or attendance from the parent community. They developed strategies for outreach and had results. After the family night, the principal told them this event had more attendance than most. Teacher candidates’ understanding of the community changed as they worked through the project and experienced agency. This changed understanding of the school community, reflected changes in the teacher candidates.

‘Understand that schools are embedded in community’ is an example of a declarative outcome for teacher education. As such, it can be stated in a lecture and assessed on a test. However, this process leads to an anemic understanding of this "declared" knowledge. Meaning is deepened within another context for understanding, five weeks of practicum and professional learning meeting discussions that enact and critique the connection between school and community. The statement ‘Schools are embedded in community’ becomes knowledge embedded in the socio-cultural experience of working with the community and this experiential learning is theorized within the university community.

Narrative 2: An Emerging Teacher Identity. The context of this narrative is presentations by teacher candidates of the school-based projects to their peers at the University near the end of the term. While presenting, one teacher candidate comes to an understanding of herself as a teacher.

One teacher candidate made a literal leap of joy concerning her accomplishments, despite difficulties experienced during the project. A teacher candidate, Yvonne (all names are pseudonyms) described the task of keeping her grade one choir students quiet for the ten minutes prior to their performance at the winter concert. She demonstrated how she had whispered in a tiny voice instructions such as “make a scary face”, “make a happy face” to keep her students still and busy. In enacting that strategy and in witnessing the choir’s performance, she discovered: “I am a teacher!” and she reported that to the cohort with an actual leap of recognition (FN 28/2/13). Yvonne had described how she used a "management technique" to respond to her waiting and getting-antsy choir children. Telling the story she also leaps forward (into the future) with a big smile, her understanding embodied in that moment of “I’m getting it, this thing called teaching." It was emotional, an expression of agency and also recognition of something learned, besides the declarative knowledge concerning behaviour management. Her learning included: "I can apply [*declarative*] knowledge acquired from elsewhere, such as the general teaching and learning course, to becoming a teacher" (Italics added by the authors). "I can learn how to be a teacher." “My identity includes being a teacher.” Yvonne’s learning that teaching is relational, with all its complexities, becomes embedded in the practicum experience and in the reflection on that experience created for her course. The learning is both internal and shaped with her peers.

In an earlier assigned reflection on a reading (January 22, 2013), Yvonne had written: “As I was helping my C. T. (cooperating teacher) plan her activities for her kindergarten classroom during my last practicum block, I was subconsciously using some of these ideas (Backwards Design), as we focused on the larger goals of literacy, numeracy, and social skills, before choosing specific activities to fill those needs... If I were to begin my planning by addressing the larger picture of desired knowledge, I imagine it would be at the intersection of student, teacher and curriculum.” In this reflection, Yvonne is aware of the recursive nature of her learning and thereby may interrogate her understanding of how her students learn. Additionally, Yvonne can imagine herself as a teacher who considers the big picture, a broader perspective, to plan curriculum that includes interacting relationships. Yvonne’s notion of knowledge includes the term “desired” and

contextually she appears to consider herself as agentic in addressing both desired and mandated knowledge.

Narrative 3: Negotiating Tension. In the following narrative, a teacher candidate's struggle to merge different parts of his teaching identity is encountered but not resolved. The contexts of this narrative are a teacher candidate's reflections on his teaching identity at mid-term of his first year in the program and in an interview a year and a half later after graduating from the program.

I believe that my personality leads me toward perfectionism in some areas and wild creativity in other areas. I know from my experience today that I have to struggle to resist doing things for students (because they are not doing it how I would do it!) We built bridges today (suspension bridges to be more accurate!) I was very conscious of the fact that many students could not grasp the concept of a suspension bridge (despite the AWESOME model I made for the demonstration). I had to really resist the temptation to jump in when students were struggling. A few students' actually created functional suspension bridges, in the end, many did not. The real value was that for those students who were able to create a structure...they did so on their own. They learned how to do it, not just how to watch an adult do it. (Assignment, practicum reflection 12/12/12).

Turner, the teacher candidate, is conflicted about how much to help his students. He wants them to do things "right" but also values independent learning and learning by doing. Turner started and ended the program with a conviction that "Practice is way more important than theory, in general." (Post program interview, 8/28/14). When Turner was asked to consider further the import of theory for teaching, he preferred psychological to educational theory. He affirmed that doing is more important than theorizing, explaining that you can't learn to ride a bike by reading a book about it. Turner described himself as "old school" having high expectations and an essentialist agenda. However, he is interested in inquiry-based learning (which is not considered old school) and added: "I am not 100% old school" (8/24/14). Turner recognized that his approach to teaching, his "old school" teaching identity, was not aligned with the approaches of his instructors and some of the teachers in his practicum school. He experienced the tension between what is learned in a professional context and what is known and familiar. Turner's resolving of that tension is not demonstrated within the context of an assigned reflection and the context of a voluntary interview. However, the process of examining his teaching identity was also occurring in other contexts, through informal discussions with others in the cohort and professional learning meetings. How Turner integrates those experience is a function of his agency.

Narrative 4: Inquiring into Inquiry Teaching Across Sites of Learning. The following narrative illustrates how the teacher candidates' practice reflects the interaction across both the university and practicum sites. The context for this narrative is teaching an integrated unit in a practicum school during the second practicum block in spring.

Like many early years classrooms in inner city schools, Ms. Dominic's was built around carefully structured routines. The paired teacher candidates from our program, Tom, and Rose, appreciated the structures, while also occasionally resenting them. In his second practicum in spring, Tom decided to take up inquiry-based teaching as a model for this block, with the support of the resource teacher and Ms. Dominic, the cooperating teacher. At the practicum school, the

inquiry process was a focus for professional development and was being integrated into curriculum planning in the school.

What did inquiry look like in this grade 1/2 class? The faculty supervisor, Professor Block, came for an observation of a lesson led by Tom and found the class had been relocated to the art room where the students were constructing their model of the Red River in the flood. The room was full of colour, noise and focused activity as students made creative and rational decisions about their part of the model. The actual Red River can be found a ten-minute walk from the school and this spring there was a strong possibility of flooding. Tom had attended to the students concerns about a flood.

Place-based learning was a theory Tom had not yet encountered, but he identified this work as “active learning about community”. As his faculty supervisor, I perceived place-based learning being enacted over the five-week practicum block. Tom had designed an inquiry-based unit integrating science and social studies and focused on the community and the potentially flooding Red River. Rose integrated math and some ELA into this design. Children cooperatively constructed a model of the river and its surrounding land and housing using modeling clay on paint roller trays (to create the river bank’s slope). The students discussed how different water levels would affect the land and the buildings. They conducted experiments with melting snow and observed effects on the model’s land and water. Additional science experiments on evaporation and math activities in measurement related to their topic were conducted.

An extension of this activity was a community walk to a park on the riverbank where further observations were made and connected to the model riverbank. Both Tom and Rose did an ongoing assessment to anticipate learner needs and to adapt their design in relation to those needs. Doing this inquiry with their students was a vehicle for the teacher candidates’ learning about the balance between structure and flexibility. Their design and their teaching were embedded in the school culture, the school community and the school as place. (Based on Block’s field notes and summative report on student teaching 29/4/13).

A reflection for his teaching portfolio, a general teaching and learning course assignment, demonstrates the connection between the practicum site and the university. Tom wrote about his math lesson, taught in his first practicum block, on odd and even numbers, which he had judged to be a failure:

Other errors I made [were] that my assignment was only curricular-centered, not child-centered. I did not consider the learning requirements of this student. Had I, I would have made a number of different sheets, rather than just one. In addition to this, I also made a poor judgment call during the lesson: I saw this student start to shut down and I did not make any quick adjustments. I failed to make any in-action decisions.

Tom is aware of the need to differentiate both in planning and while teaching. He is inquiring into his practice and how it measures up to his beliefs about teaching. We suggest he is also constructing his teaching identity as agentic; that is, he experiences himself as able to change and to make a change. Professor Block did not observe this lesson but she observed and wrote an assessment of Tom teaching another math lesson

soon after. Professor Betts noted that: “Tom also discussed how in the previous lesson he had introduced students to odd and even numbers through an activity which was engaging but challenging. Therefore he wanted today’s math class to affirm their abilities and planned accordingly. Tom has demonstrated the ability to link reflection and planning and to plan for curricular outcomes and the “living” or contextual curriculum of his classroom (formative assessment of student teaching, 13/12/12).

This cyclical inquiry into his teaching took place across the sites of university courses and the school practicum. Having a faculty supervisor who was also his professor supported Tom’s inquiry across sites, as did an orientation that included emergent knowledge. Tom’s conflicts about addressing the curriculum and also including the learner in his planning process did not need an immediate resolution. Tom worked at it through his teaching and his coursework. In the second practicum block, his planning and teaching evidenced a growing ability to plan differentiated learning activities and to develop curriculum in response to the teaching context. His teaching identity included the understanding that teachers (as agents) construct as well as respond to teaching contexts.

Narrative 5: Identity Shifts and the Risk of Safety. In the final narrative, teacher candidates, their cooperating teacher and the faculty supervisor are working together on how to construct safe learning communities for elementary students and, not incidentally, for teacher candidates as well.

John is a cooperating teacher in one of the practicum schools. He is adept at developing and sustaining a safe learning community (SLC). Entering this environment, teacher candidates Amanda and Nathan were able to learn to reproduce the teaching behaviours modeled by John, such as the 3 Rs – reinforce, remind, redirect – directly connected to constructing a SLC. In this context, practice teaching became “smoother” for Nathan and Amanda than for many teacher candidates. Amanda and Nathan enjoyed their successes, seeing children respond to them in the same way as to the cooperating teacher, and witnessing learning in response to their teaching. It was a promising positive experience, but also a source of disequilibrium for Betts, the faculty advisor. His concern was that when Amanda and Nathan entered their classrooms, it might be a difficult experience. Perhaps one of the main reasons that first-year teachers experience high levels of stress and difficulty teaching is because they have learned to reproduce SLC teaching behaviours, but not establish these themselves – they have experienced sustaining, but not developing a SLC.

John and Betts met to discuss the progress of Amanda and Nathan. They agreed on the distinction between sustaining and developing a SLC. How could they design an opportunity for Amanda and Nathan to experience developing a SLC? The students had come to Amanda and Nathan with an SLC already established by the CT. Betts suggested the teacher candidates generate, develop and sustain a new routine. John saw the merit of this idea but was concerned that it might disrupt the existing SLC. Betts agreed and left it with John to think about. A solution soon presented itself. A school support teacher made her classroom available. Amanda and Nathan were about to start an inquiry unit on Ancient Egypt. It was agreed that they would teach this unit entirely in the support teacher’s classroom. Thus, Amanda and Nathan had to do some work in re-establishing a SLC in a new physical location, including moving back and forth

between classrooms, having materials available and set-up of classroom space. Betts and John agreed that a new physical location would be a sufficient but not overwhelming challenge for Amanda and Nathan given their progress as teachers, and would also simulate to some degree the experience of developing a SLC, though it would largely be a matter of transferring an existing SLC to a new physical space.

The initial experiences of Amanda and Nathan in the new classroom space were not smooth. For example, they did not fully think through classroom set-up so that student sight lines of the digital overhead display were adequate from every desk seat and the learning carpet. One event, in particular, was a difficult experience for Amanda, which eroded her sense of herself of a successful teacher candidate. In this supervised lesson, Amanda was on the learning carpet leading a brainstorm to prepare for student research during the Ancient Egypt inquiry. One child, who had a tendency to be easily excited, leading to off-task behaviour, was disrupting the brainstorming. In the regular classroom, Professor Betts had seen Amanda respond appropriately and effectively to this child. “Remind” and “redirect” responses tended to help this child choose to reduce his disruptive behaviour. In this moment, Amanda had forgotten these responses and was instead declaring the behaviour inappropriate. Her responses were not working, and her frustration increased.

In the post-lesson debrief, it was clear that Amanda had not accomplished her academic learning goals for the students because of an inadequate learning environment. Professor Betts and Amanda’s debrief of the lesson started with her emotions: her confidence was at risk. Professor Betts had wanted her to translate her experiences from the old physical location to the new one. He saw this as an opportunity for Amanda to find her answers, rather than telling her what he thought could have been done differently. After ten minutes of Amanda focusing on what she thought had gone wrong, Betts thought of a scaffold: he reminded her of a previous event with the same child in the old classroom and asked her to recall how she responded. Amanda recalled her SLC teaching behaviour, as a reproduction of her cooperating teacher’s SLC. Next, Professor Betts asked Amanda: What did you do today with this child in the new room? It was hard for Amanda to see the difference in her approach in the two places. Amanda did not recognize the need to develop a SLC in the new site.

Professor Betts ended the debrief with Amanda with some encouraging clarifications: She could move forward in the new room by deliberately fostering a SLC, and this would prepare her to establish a SLC in her classroom in the future. The deliberation allowed her to remind herself before starting teaching as a way to prepare for in-the-moment teaching.

By co-teaching, and reminding and encouraging each other, Amanda and Nathan slowly re-developed their repertoire of SLC teaching behaviours in the new physical space, to the point where they started observing student academic learning in the inquiry unit and lessons started to become “smoother” (Based on Betts’ Field Notes, Spring 2014).

The declarative knowledge acquired by Amanda and Nathan during this process included: student sight lines must work when setting up classroom space, and the 3Rs

(Reinforce, Remind, Redirect) can work in any physical environment. The situated knowledge is embedded in the experiences of adjusting to changes in teaching environments and a changed perception of teacher identity – moving from being a successful teacher candidate to encountering failures. In this process, the teacher candidates' understanding of the connection between the physical and relational learning environments, between the formal and social curriculum, was deepened through the experiences structured by the program.

Discussion: Diverse Agentic Teaching Identities

We value teacher candidates' agentic potential to co-construct their teaching identities while negotiating the layered contexts of the program. The structures of our program function to link the university and the practicum school. Our pedagogy is based on knowledge as situated, partial, emergent, embodied and embedded in socio-environmental contexts. The five narratives interpreted within this paper demonstrate how teacher candidates' agentic teaching identities could emerge from the layered contexts of the program.

The first narrative illustrates that locating oneself, physically and figuratively, is agentic. The teacher candidates had assumptions about the community that were undone by the actual work with the community on the Family Fun Night. When teacher candidates experience their ability to plan and enact a school-community event, they understand their place (Gruenewald, 2003) in relation to the school community declarative knowledge is a limited part of their learning. Their learning is embedded in socio-cultural contexts, having experienced the tensions of working with each other and in the community, the teacher candidates understanding of the community changed.

In the second narrative, we encounter the teacher candidate Yvonne's literal and metaphorical leap into her teacher identity. Her learning is populated by experience using declarative knowledge, an agentic relationship with "desired" knowledge, and an emerging self-awareness of the recursive nature of her personal identity that shapes a teaching identity.

Turner's story, the third narrative, is characterized as one of tension between "old school" beliefs and his desire to enact innovative approaches as well. That tension can be experienced by teacher candidates as they navigate the complexities of learning to teach has been documented by others (e.g., Betts, 2008; Heaton & Lampert, 1993). Turner's tension emerges from his perception that his beliefs are in conflict with the approaches of his university instructors and some of the teachers in his practicum school. The tension derives from competing values, his desire to help children "do it right", and his valuing of independent learning. His teacher identity is grounded not in theoretical knowledge but practice and learning by doing. Turner's agency is characterized as navigating, although not resolving, this tension via his learning-by-doing.

The fourth narrative demonstrates how teacher candidates' practice can reflect the interaction across university and practicum sites. It begins with Tom's simultaneous appreciation and resentment of the highly structured classroom routines of his cooperating teacher. With support from school professionals and his social studies university instructor (who is also his Faculty Supervisor, Professor Block), Tom embarked on a journey to develop an inquiry in grade 1/2. For Tom, the problem is how,

not whether, to construct a child-centered curriculum. Tom lived a teaching identity that embraced the challenges of inquiry; he experienced himself as able to change and make change – to cultivate a transformative learning milieu.

The final narrative conveys some of the intricacies of the interactions within the field of teacher education. It identifies that the cooperating teacher and the faculty supervisor want to both challenge and protect the teacher candidates during the practicum. That process mirrors how teacher candidates might choose to construct a learning environment that is safe but also leaves room for students to inquire, to take risks (Salverson, 1996). The consultations within the narrative are professional learning meetings. The general course and the practicum are bridged through such professional learning meetings. These meetings include both the formal (with the faculty supervisor and cooperating teachers at the practicum school) and the informal (discussions arising in courses and among the cohort in a variety of settings). Professional learning meetings are not simply about individual teacher candidate experiences but include the shared experiences of the teaching partners and the school group, contextualized by the participating teacher educators.

Conclusion

Discovering, maintaining and refashioning one's teaching identity is ongoing in a teaching life. In this paper's narratives, we have explored the tensions experienced by teacher candidates as they develop their teaching identities. We have also outlined how our program facilitates that process. The program has permeable boundaries that enable layered contexts. We have structured those contexts so that all participants can co-construct their teaching identities. The co-construction of teaching identities is enhanced by the participation of some teacher educators as both professors and faculty supervisors. Their participation, like the teacher candidates', encompasses both field and university sites. The interactions between teacher candidates and teacher educators link the two contexts. As teacher candidates explore these layered contexts of the program, their ways of knowing can be stretched; their teaching identities may be experienced as agentic, as well as more flexible and responsive to the dynamic complexity of teaching.

Teaching identities, in our view, include a complex rendering of knowledge for teaching. That is, what is learned is situated, partial, emergent, and embodied. What is required is more than linking theoretical knowledge of teaching, which tends to be declarative, to practical experiences of learning to teach. Rather, facilitating agentic teaching identities allows teacher candidates to experience a deeper sense of what it means to teach. These teacher candidates' experiences of the situated and partial nature of knowledge about teaching enhance their understanding and open spaces for diverse experiences with teaching and with learning to teach.

These teaching identities emerge with some discomfort, over time, agentially, through practice and critical reflection and within nested layers of collaborative learning. Teacher candidates notice and negotiate potentials and tensions within their teaching identities. Navigating teacher identities is a teacher candidate capacity (cf. Grant, 2008) that could be explicitly cultivated by teacher education programs. As such, one of our recommendations for teacher education is a curriculum that values the capacity of teacher candidates to discover, uncover, and in some cases recover, their teaching identities. This

capacity is neither outcome based nor a product of declarative knowledge. Rather it is developed through a complex organic learning system that includes schools and the university. It is sustained by situating the structures of teacher education within a metaphor that links in complex ways the sites of learning, theory and practice.

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BOOK REVIEW

Title: **Reading the Visual:
An Introduction to Teaching Multimodal Literacy**

Author: **Frank Serafini**

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Reviewed by: **Christina Quintiliani, Ph.D. Student, Brock University**

Current shifts in literacy instruction from traditional methods to multimodal approaches have resulted in an increased need for educational resources that provide teachers with the tools and strategies required to address the diversity of millennial learners. In one of his most recent scholarly contributions to literacy education entitled *Reading the Visual: An Introduction to Teaching Multimodal Literacy*, Frank Serafini seamlessly merges theory and practice to create a valuable instructional guide for teaching multimodality. Over the past decade, Serafini has consistently stressed the importance of integrating multimodal literacies into the classroom. In particular, he has placed emphasis on the benefits of using visual materials to complement the unique learning styles of a generation that has been, perhaps now more than ever before, subjected to a vast array of images since birth via technological communications and visual media (Avgerinou, 2009). In *Reading the Visual*, Serafini draws upon his extensive experiences as a researcher, educator, and author of children's literature to construct a teacher-friendly resource. Inspired by a multitude of conversations with educators throughout the years, many of whom voiced an intense uncertainty about how to approach instruction using visual and other multimodal forms of literacy, Serafini compiled *Reading the Visual* to address the current gap in available resources and provide "a framework that incorporates visual images and multimodal ensembles in a way that does not pose an additional burden to teachers dealing with an already burgeoning curriculum" (p. 5).

As an educator and emerging scholar studying in the field of visual literacy, I have become well acquainted with Serafini's work which includes his well-received instructional resource *Interactive Comprehension Strategies: Fostering Meaningful Talk about Texts* (2009) and *The Reading Workshop* (2001, 2015) series. His scholarly journal contributions have consisted of numerous articles devoted to perceptual, structural, and ideological perspectives on picturebooks as well as children's comprehension of visual images in multimodal texts. *Reading the Visual* works to expand on the main theoretical and pedagogical perspectives introduced in the aforementioned publications, while also offering new instructional strategies that have not yet been presented in Serafini's past contributions.

Reading the Visual is structured into three main sections: Theoretical and Instructional Foundations, Curricular Frameworks and Pedagogical Approaches, and Units of Study. Each section is divided into chapters containing detailed discussions of relevant theoretical concepts, specific multimodal ensembles such as picturebooks and digital media, and strategies for developing lessons around the ensembles. All chapters conclude with an informative, concise review of the main ideas and concepts presented while simultaneously examining the educational significance of the points under discussion and their implications for practice. To remain consistent with the vocabulary used by Serafini in *Reading the Visual*, the term "picturebook" will be applied

throughout this review in place of the commonly recognized expression “picture book,” representing the interdependent relationship between text and image.

The book commences with a brief introduction which provides a synopsis of multimodal ensembles in a modern visual and digital era. In the preliminary chapters, Serafini effectively argues the relevance of the book and its potential to enhance and extend the practice of educators at the elementary level and beyond. Specifically, he stresses the need for additional resources which can help address existing gaps in literacy programming where instruction of visual and other types of multimodal approaches is underemployed. Serafini’s contentions buttress those of Burke, Butland, Roberts, and Snow (2013) who also acknowledge the need for additional information that aids teachers in widening their “definitions of literacy and pedagogical practices” (p. 42) while also enriching their understanding of “what it means to teach through a lens where classroom communication practices actually become representative of the contemporary literacies of the children we teach” (p. 42). These perspectives, which advocate for transformative practice, are rooted in the contributions of the New London Group (1996) who after assembly in 1994, worked in collaboration to construct *Pedagogy of the Multiliteracies*, an influential document proposing significant changes in existing curricular approaches towards the further integration of multiliteracies as an integral part of classroom instruction.

Part One, which incorporates five individual chapters devoted to discussion on theoretical and instructional foundations, opens by defining the main terminology that is frequently integrated throughout the book. Rather than opting for the use of the more commonly applied term of *multimodal text*, Serafini instead chooses the phrase *multimodal ensemble* to refer to the type of “complex multimodal entity that occurs in both print and digital environments utilizing a variety of cultural and semiotic resources to articulate, render, represent, and communicate an array of concepts and information” (p. 13). To assist readers in becoming further acquainted with the diversity of multimodal forms, Serafini offers a multimodal continuum in his opening chapter which clearly distinguishes between textually dominant and visually dominant mediums. This continuum serves as a bridge to the ensuing chapters which collectively offer detailed pedagogical explorations of visually dominant mediums such as wordless picturebooks, and blended structures such as graphic novels and digital media that incorporate both textual and visual content.

Serafini describes the process of “seeing” as “one’s ability to transact with an image to construct meaning” (p. 31) and he argues that continual exposure does not necessarily ensure conscious awareness or active interpretation of that which is initially perceived. In this sense, even though the current generation of students may be accustomed to the ongoing presence of visual stimuli within a predominantly visual culture, or what Avgerinou (2009) identifies as the *Bain d’Images Era* (Image Bath), they ultimately must be taught effective skills and strategies for deconstructing and making sense of what they see. In chapter three, Serafini expands on these notions of mindfulness and offers an overview of perception, representation, interpretation, and ideology as four main foundational and cognitive processes involved in one’s comprehension of multimodal ensembles. Discussion in this section provides educators with the necessary theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for helping students make the transition from passive viewers to active seers and critical interpreters. Panofsky’s (1955) model for deciphering visual content and Rose’s (2001) perspectives on compositional interpretation are among the frameworks introduced to enhance educators’ knowledge of the theoretical foundations behind the instructional strategies that are discussed in later portions of the book.

The concluding chapters in Part One present the basic elements of art and design to assist educators in advancing their understanding of the language of visual arts and how to apply certain terminology and grammar when engaging in discussion of visual compositions with students. Specifically, Serafini draws upon the works of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and their well

renowned book *Reading Images: A Grammar of Visual Design* to present an overview of the main elements of visual grammar, including representational, interpersonal, and compositional structures. The perspectives of Dondis (1973) successfully provide inspiration for Serafini's discussion of how educators can actively introduce students to the primary elements of visual compositions including colour, size and scale, positioning, as well as the presentation of narrative structures and point of view. The very fact that Serafini introduces numerous theoretical perspectives suggests that his mandate is not to encourage a single method of analysis and interpretation, but rather to offer educators an overview of some of the more relevant pedagogic strategies that can help inspire classroom discussions and encourage students to consider multiple and alternative perspectives when closely exploring visual information.

Part Two opens with a thorough exploration of picturebooks as a specific type of multimodal ensemble. Included within this section is a valuable, detailed glossary of picturebook terminology which teachers can model for students when making reference to specific picturebook elements, such as how borders can be used to frame portions of an image or how an illustrator's medium of choice can help portray desired tones or emotions. This segment is accompanied by discussion of the influences of postmodernism on picturebook style and content. Particularly helpful to educators is the chapter devoted to a detailed analysis of the multimodal elements of a single contemporary picturebook entitled *Piggybook* by Anthony Browne. Serafini effectively uses this book as a working example to illustrate how the key terms, theories, and concepts presented throughout *Reading the Visual* can be applied to investigate each minute detail of the illustrations and text. Although *Piggybook* is a well suited choice to serve as the example model due to its diverse application of picturebook elements, regrettably, it is the only sample picturebook selected for analysis in *Reading the Visual*. The inclusion of other types of picturebooks, such as those which are less contemporary or postmodern in nature, may provide teachers with alternative examples that could easily be adapted for instruction with a broader range of age and developmental levels.

The final portion, Part Three, is comprised of a series of ten individual units of study, with each unit devoted to the exploration of a specific multimodal ensemble. In this section, Serafini provides teachers with a springboard for new lesson ideas centered on multimodal ensembles such as postmodern and informational picturebooks, graphic novels, advertisements, film, and digital media. As an emergent scholar and researcher investigating the academic potentials of wordless picturebooks for early readers, I was delighted to discover an entire unit devoted exclusively to wordless literature, particularly when such detailed examples are considered to be rare instructional finds (Arizpe, 2013). Tapping into his experiences as an author and illustrator of children's literature which include the highly acclaimed *Looking Closely* series of non-fiction picturebooks, Serafini offers resourceful tips on how to help contemporary learners develop what Eisner (1998) refers to as the "enlightened eye", or that which is trained to observe beyond the surface by seeing in new and consciously informed ways. Much like the resourceful chapter devoted to wordless picturebooks, Serafini creatively constructs all units to maximize learning potential by including activities that increase students' exposure to, exploration of, and engagement with multimodalities. The unit devoted to digital media serves as an especially valuable resource for educators seeking to acquire new ideas on some of the most current technological resources, such as weblogs and podcasts, and how they can be used to help students engage in collaborative learning with peers. This unit, like all others in Part Three, concludes by offering a series of questions, such as "Who is the intended audience?" or "What is the proposed message?" (p. 166), which teachers can pose to encourage students to think critically about the multimodal ensemble under discussion. Specifically, in the digital media unit, Serafini invites teachers and students to consider not only the processes behind the actual production and

composition of digital media, but also how they serve as interactive sites for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge.

The easy-to-follow format of *Reading the Visual* equips teachers with the theoretical and pedagogical foundations required to integrate an assortment of multimodal ensembles into their existing literacy programming and provide students with the necessary interpretive skills for becoming critically competent analysts of multimodalities. While the book places slightly greater emphasis on the discussion of visually dominant multimodal ensembles, it unquestionably still offers a solid introduction to other multimodalities as well. Educators of a wide range of grade levels will most certainly appreciate the step-by-step instructional suggestions, model templates, and generous collection of sample questions for assessing student progress and engaging learners in meaningful multimodal inquiry. *Reading the Visual* is a must read for all educators seeking to broaden their pedagogical knowledge base and advance their current practices.

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