ABSTRACT

KEMP, KIMBERLY SHERYL. Designing for Younger Readers: Adolescents Expand Their Literacy Skills and Identities by Writing Tutoring Modules for Elementary Students. (Under the direction of Dr. Dennis Davis).

Many adolescents need additional support during the early years of high school to develop their reading skills, but secondary teachers often have few options available that meet the unique literacy needs of this population. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to design and investigate an innovative approach to help adolescent readers with a history of difficulties in reading. The study explored how ninth-grade students engaged in and benefited from a curriculum design project in which they were given an actual audience for their work and an engaging purpose for conducting detailed analyses of texts that they could read independently. Over the course of five weeks, they worked together to choose reading material and design modules to be used in tutoring sessions for elementary students. Eight students and four teachers were interviewed before, during, and after the implementation of this curriculum design project. Analyses focused on how the project supported students to develop new reading skills and also reshape their previously held negative identities as readers. This qualitative study revealed several findings that may be helpful to future curriculum developers, reading specialists, and teachers who wish to support adolescent readers. Findings included "engagement in the text through active reading skills," "opportunities to practice metacognitive skills," and "creating risk-free opportunities to build confidence." The findings suggest that teachers leverage student choice and self-pacing during reading activities.

Keywords: adolescent readers, reader identity

Designing for Younger Readers: Adolescents Expand Their Literacy Skills and Identities by Writing Tutoring Modules for Elementary Students

by
Kimberly Sheryl Kemp

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Curriculum and Instruction

Raleigh, North Carolina

2022

APPROVED BY:

_____	_____
Dr. Dennis Davis Committee Chair	Dr. Hiller Spires
_____	_____
Dr. Meghan Manfra	Dr. Jeffrey Reaser

DEDICATION

Be devoted to one another in love.
Honor one another above yourselves.
(Romans 12:10)

To my beautiful family, especially my husband, Ramey, and my children, Ray, Kevin, and Emily Grace, who have been my biggest supporters and have sacrificed much family time for me to pursue my dreams. I love you all.

BIOGRAPHY

Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.
(Proverbs 9:9)

From an early age, Kimberly Kemp knew she was called to work with teens and decided the best way to have a positive impact was to teach in the public school classroom. She combined her love for literature with her desire to help young people navigate their way through impressionable years and thus pursued a career in education. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Campbell University and a Master of Arts degree in English from East Carolina University. She has taught high school English in North Carolina for twenty-seven and a half years. After increasing concern and frustration that many students struggle and are below the proficient level in reading, she decided to pursue her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education at North Carolina State University. Her research interests include adolescent literacy, readers with literacy difficulties, and promoting positive reader identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is no way I could accomplish my goals without the continued love and support of my parents, Bernie and Phyllis Jones, and my in-laws, Ramey and Julie Kemp. My husband, Ramey III, and my children, Ray, Kevin, and Emily Grace, have been there every step of the way and have been incredibly patient when I had to set aside family time, ball games, band performances, and dance practices in order to finish yet another paper or piece of research. My extended family has pitched in to help when I needed it most. You have all loved, encouraged, and supported me on this journey in more ways than I could possibly describe in this space. Thank you.

Many friends and colleagues have been there to inspire, encourage, and support me. It is uncanny how often each of you have shown up at just the right time with a reminder to keep things in perspective and with words of encouragement and wisdom that both spurred me on in my research and kept me grounded. Your presence can only be described as God-sent. While I wish I had room here to name each and every one of you, there is one friend and colleague I must acknowledge. Dr. Dorothy Holley, you have been a lifeline and spent many, many hours giving advice, proofreading my work, saying, “Kim, you can do this!” when I felt like giving up, and praying with me. Thank you! While so many have encouraged me along the way, a former principal, the late Dr. Patricia Harris, was the first person who truly made me see that I had the potential to become a scholar beyond my own classroom. I mentioned that I had thought about “one day” trying to attain my National Board Certification or possibly applying to graduate school. At the time, it was no more than wishful thinking. She said, “I don’t see why you can’t do both. And don’t stop there!” I wish she could see that I have accomplished all she saw in me many years ago before I had the confidence to see my own potential.

I am thankful for my incredible professors at North Carolina State University. So many have provided guidance and encouragement, and I would like to especially thank my committee. Dr. Dennis Davis, my adviser and committee chair, you have shared a wealth of guidance and knowledge over the past several years of this journey. I truly do not believe I would have stayed with the program without your continued support. Dr. Meghan Manfra, from the first class I took with you in my second semester, you have challenged my thinking and helped me grow. During each enrollment period, I looked to see what you would be teaching the next semester because I knew I needed to continue learning from you. Dr. Hiller Spires, while I was never fortunate enough to take one of your classes, I followed and was inspired by your work. I was thrilled when you agreed to be on my committee, and I appreciate the feedback you have provided. Dr. Jeffrey Reaser, the questions you asked and the suggestions you provided challenged my thinking and helped me think more critically about my work. Thank you.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank God for all of His many blessings. To God be the Glory!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES x
LIST OF FIGURES xi
CHAPTER 1 1
Statement of Problem 1
Rationale 2
Purpose and Research Questions 4
Researcher Positionality Statement 5
Chapter Summary 7
CHAPTER 2 8
Introduction to the Chapter 8
Theoretical Framework 8
Sociocultural Theory 8
Identity Theory 13
Previous Literature Regarding Readers with Literacy Difficulties 23
Text Comprehension 24
Tutoring as a Means for Learning 33
Writing for Authentic Audiences 37
Conclusion 41
CHAPTER 3 43
Description of the Curriculum Design Project 43
Case Study Methodology 46
Design-Based Research 48
Description of Research Site 49
The Classrooms 49
Participants 50
The Teachers 50
The Students 53
Brief introductions of students 55
Data Collection 61
Interviews 61
Participant Observations 62
Artifacts 63
Reflections 66
Data Analysis 66

Inductive Coding 66
Axial Coding 67
Analytical Memoing 69
Cross-Case Analysis 69
Ensuring Trustworthiness 74
Chapter Summary 74
CHAPTER 4 76
Introduction 76
RQ1: How does participation in a collaborative curriculum-design intervention impact the reading skills of adolescents with a history of literacy difficulties? 76
Active Reading Skills 77
Opportunity to Practice Metacognitive Skills 80
Practicing Points of View and Summary 83
Organization and Focus Lead to Better Comprehension 85
Transferring from Verbal to Written 87
Annotating and Independent Learning 89
RQ2: How does participation in the intervention impact students' identity and how they see themselves as readers? 92
Reader Identity of Students in the Study 92
Impact of the Project on Students' Identity 95
Helping Students Begin to Overcome Poor Reader Identity 95
Risk-free Opportunities Build Confidence 99
Changing Hesitancy to Motivation for Reading 101
RQ3: What design principles emerge from this work that can inform the field's understanding of reading intervention for adolescent readers? 105
Creating a Way for Students to Feel Successful with a Scaffolded Structure 106
Self-Pacing and Choice Give Students Ownership 107
Authentic Audiences Provide Reality for Students 108
Social Learning Builds Confidence 110
Reactions from Teachers Regarding the Project 112
Chapter Summary 112
CHAPTER 5 114
Introduction to the Chapter 114
Summary of Findings 114
Significance of the Findings 116
Active Reading Skills 116

Opportunities to Practice Metacognitive Skills 117
Taking on Other Points of View and Summary 117
Organization and Focus Lead to Better Comprehension 118
Transferring from Verbal to Written 118
Annotating and Independent Learning 119
Impact on Reader Identity 120
Helping Students Begin to Overcome Poor Reader Identity 120
Risk-Free Opportunities to Build Confidence 121
Changing Hesitancy to Motivation for Reading 121
Creating A Way for Students to Feel Successful with Scaffolded Structure 122
Self-Pacing and Choice Give Students Ownership 122
Authentic Audiences Provide Reality for Students 123
Social Learning Builds Confidence 123
Implications for Practice 124
Implications for Future Research 125
Limitations 126
REFERENCES 128
APPENDICES 139
Appendix A: Student Interview Questions 140
Student - Interview questions prior to study: 140
Student - Interview questions for approximately half-way through study: 141
Student - Final interview questions 142
Appendix B: Teacher - Interview Questions 143
Interview questions prior to study: 143
Interview questions for approximately half-way through the study: 143
Interview questions for the end of the study: 144
Appendix C: Lesson Plan for Teachers to Implement 145
Appendix D: Student Work - Directions/Worksheets 149
Book project - Lexile appropriate fluency text - worksheet 149
Book Project - Annotated Bibliography - worksheet 150
Book project - Vocabulary - worksheet 151
Book project - Stopping Points and Questions - Worksheet 152
Appendix E: Rubrics for Student Work 153
Lexile Appropriate Fluency Text Rubric 153
Annotated Bibliography Rubric 154
Vocabulary Rubric 155

Stopping Points and Questions Rubric 156

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 *Tutoring modules and student action*.....*46*

Table 3.2 *Student Testing Data*.....*55*

Table 3.3 *Initial inductive codes from student #1.*.....*68*

Table 3.4 *Relationship between research questions, findings, and final codes.*.....*70*

Table 4.1 *Student Progress in Active Reading.*.....*78*

Table 4.2 *Student Progress in Practicing Metacognitive Skills*.....*81*

Table 4.3 *Student Progress in Practicing Points of View and Summary.*.....*83*

Table 4.4 *Student Progress in Organization and Focus for Better Comprehension.* *85*

Table 4.5 *Student Progress in Transferring Verbal to Written Text.*.....*87*

Table 4.6 *Student Progress in Annotating and Independent Learning.*.....*89*

Table 4.7 *Reader Identity of Students in the Study.* *92*

Table 4.8 *Context of Early Reading Experiences.* *95*

Table 4.9 *Students Begin to Overcome Poor Reader Identity.* *96*

Table 4.10 *Students Build Confidence in Risk-free Classrooms*.....*99*

Table 4.11 *Students Change Hesitancy to Motivation for Reading.*.....*102*

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Work sample and rubric for Lexile Fluency Text. 63

Figure 2: Work sample and rubric for Annotated Bibliography. 64

Figure 3: Work sample and rubric for Vocabulary. 64

Figure 4: Work sample and rubric for Stopping Points and Questions 65

.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

According to the 2019 NAEP results, only 34 percent of 8th-grade students were proficient at reading, and 27 percent were below basic reading levels (NAEP, 2019). Students who have some degree of difficulty with reading comprehension need assistance before becoming proficient (Edmonds et al., 2009; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Hall (2004) defines readers with literacy difficulties as those who have "average to above average intelligence with reading skills that fall two or more years below their intellectual level, but have not been identified as having a learning disability" while others consider readers who struggle as any who are below grade level (Venegas, 2018; Hoyte, 2006). Some adolescents do not achieve reading success, and instructional practices need to improve in order to effectively prepare students (Edmonds et al., 2009). As it is assumed that students learn the foundation of reading in elementary school, secondary teachers are rarely taught how to help students who have difficulties in reading. A recent policy brief from the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation posits that "teachers need clarity with how to integrate word reading and early comprehension skills within content areas" and suggest steps that need to be taken at the state level to assist teachers in gaining the knowledge needed (Spires et al., 2022, p. 21).

At the school where I teach, many of the 9th-grade students, ages 13-16, struggle to read grade-level texts. While some struggle with fluency, others struggle more with comprehension. While some struggle because of skill difficulties, others lose motivation to read, which tends to decline in adolescence (Venegas, 2018; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). No matter the reason or in

what ways students struggle, a common factor is how they identify as readers and how that identity can help or hinder their future growth in literacy.

Reading ability and identity are often intertwined for adolescents. Any intervention that purports to address the unique needs of adolescent readers should focus on both of these important factors. In this project, I addressed these factors by engaging adolescents who have a history of literacy struggles in an innovative curriculum design project called *Designing for Younger Readers*.

Rationale

High school students do not want to be labeled as readers with literacy difficulties even though they know they are not reaching grade-level expectations. Most get stuck in a cycle of not understanding the material and falling further behind, and their negative reader identity further lowers. Many programs and supports put into place by teachers and well-meaning administrators do not meet the needs of these students. For example, an expensive, well-known computer-based program was purchased for the school district where I teach. The program came with promises that it would fix the deficits of our lowest readers. Students saw the program as too elementary, childish, monotonous, and it did not provide sufficient feedback to help them know how to improve their work. They had to keep trying the same questions over and over again without any direct feedback. Over a short period of time, many students stopped putting in the effort. With a lack of better answers, many teachers continue with whole-group instruction or even non-strategy targeted small group instruction with little to no benefit to students who need more support.

Working in small groups has the advantage of grouping students together to work on common problems and build their skills and comprehension. However, some students will

advance at slower levels or continue not to grow, but they will pretend they understand in order to move on with the group (Hall, 2010). This causes them to continue to have issues with comprehension and skills. Working individually with a student allows the teacher time to work specifically on areas students need to build growth in for decoding and comprehension. Unfortunately, time does not always allow for teachers to remediate individuals and so instead teachers opt for large-group remediation. Also, not all strategies work for each student, which is why small-group remediation over whole-group instruction is more effective when time allows Abbott et al., 2009).

Research shows that for students with serious deficits, one intervention, one semester, or perhaps not even a year will be enough to catch the student up to grade-level proficiency (Solis et al., 2018). However, some strategies and supports have shown positive results for those who have fallen behind grade level. Targeted strategies for reading comprehension such as using graphic organizers, relating to prior knowledge, annotating, writing summaries, and questioning are necessary. The present study cannot solve all of the problems, but it is a study to search for ways to assist students in filling some of the gaps.

While engaged in the curriculum design project reported in this study, adolescents took on the role of being the authority writers with an actual audience. The audience was the students at The Literacy Space, an afterschool reading support program at NC State University. The program serves children in grades 2-6 who need extra support in reading. Tutors use an inquiry-based format in which children read multiple texts on a compelling topic. As the children in the program explore these topics, they are provided with evidence-based instructional strategies for foundational areas of reading, including vocabulary, fluency, decoding, and comprehension. While not directly interacting with the children at the Literacy Space. The high school students in

this study were tasked to research what interests young readers and choose books to use in their self-created modules based on their own interests. Further, themes from the books they selected were utilized to conduct close readings. Students wrote reading comprehension questions and chose vocabulary words for the young readers. While engaging in these activities, they worked toward building their own reading skills while also establishing more positive identities as readers.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to design and investigate an innovative approach to helping adolescent readers with a history of difficulties in reading skills. The study explored how, given an actual audience for their work and an engaging purpose for conducting a detailed analysis of texts, high school students can read independently, work together in small groups to choose reading material and design modules to be used in tutoring sessions for elementary students. This curriculum-design experience gave participants an opportunity to practice and reflect on the skills needed for literacy success, including word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies, in a context in which they were positioned as experts whose work could positively impact younger readers. Through this, I examined how the students in the study described and articulated their own identities and histories as readers and what they learned about reading from the experience of the study. The following questions were addressed:

RQ1: How does participation in a collaborative curriculum-design intervention impact the reading skills of adolescents with a history of literacy difficulties?

RQ2: How does participation in the intervention impact students' identity and how they see themselves as readers?

RQ3: What design principles emerge from this work that can inform the field's understanding of reading intervention for adolescent readers?

Researcher Positionality Statement

As a high school English teacher with twenty-seven years of experience, I have evolved into seeing students differently than I did when I first started teaching, though I know I still have many biases which are present in my thinking and actions. Part of my view of students also comes from raising three children of my own, now ages 22, 21, and 15, and seeing structured education and academic struggles through their eyes. As I situate my study in sociocultural theory with an identity lens, I am reminded that each student is an individual with different experiences that have shaped their learning and their perception of themselves as readers. When I first started teaching, I had the idyllic notion that if the lesson was interesting enough, every child would learn, and if they did not, it was because they did not want to learn. My own parents and grandparents, though they did not advance very far in school themselves, valued education and made it a priority for me. As a younger student, I never understood others who did not do homework or pay attention in class. I took their lack of achievement as a lack of effort and care. From teaching experience and frustrating nights sitting at the kitchen table as my own children struggled through homework, my views have changed though I admit that I am still frustrated when students pass up learning opportunities. I am often puzzled by the reasons some students struggle despite interventions and efforts.

As an English teacher, I value the importance of reading, writing, and using correct grammar. I am daily frustrated that students do not value it as well. I have to remind myself that what comes naturally to me does not for others. When I interviewed students for this study, two of the questions were “Why do you read?” and “How do you see yourself as a reader?” Part of

my interest in their answers stems from my own viewpoints of enjoying historical fiction and young adult literature as both helped me acquire perspectives different from my reality. I see myself as someone who reads not only for enjoyment but for learning from and about those who have experiences other than my own. My husband and I have more books than we have shelf space on which to put them. I recently had to refrain from showing shock when a student told me the only books in his house are his school books. I acknowledge that one of my biases is towards parents who do not provide the same kinds of educational opportunities for their children that I experienced and provided for my own children.

I continually work on getting rid of biases towards people who are different from me. As an educated, heterosexual, white woman, I recognize my privilege in society. I have not been subjected to negative attention based on who I am. I grew up with two happily married parents and have been married for 29 years, so I do not have direct experience with single-parent households. As a Christian I have not felt discrimination based on my religious views. I remind myself that those different from me have had different experiences and difficulties that I cannot fully understand.

I also need to be aware that while conducting my research students and other teachers may judge me, but I need to be open with them so they can converse with me without hesitation. Teachers on my team have weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings where we discuss best practices and analyze student success data. I strive to collaborate with other teachers to learn from their strengths. The thought process behind this project is an extension of ongoing conversations with teachers about how students learn and how the way in which they identify as readers plays a part in that. I normally teach all levels (inclusion, standard, and honors) of English II, a tenth-grade course, which is the course following the one the students in the study

were in at the time, so I was particularly interested in the thought processes these students bring to their work.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the problem that the majority of secondary school students in our nation have not met proficiency in reading, and more than a quarter of our students are below the basic level. Therefore, I have also presented statements about what has not worked to solve the problem and my rationale for the present study, followed by my purpose statement and three research questions. Last, I have included my researcher positionality statement describing myself as a researcher and admitting my biases.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction to the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the framing of my study in socioculturalism as the theoretical framework and to review the research presenting identity as an essential factor for young adolescent readers with literacy difficulties. First, I will discuss sociocultural theory and define how it appropriately frames my study. Second, I will define and explain identity theory and how students see themselves as readers as well as those identities that are thrust upon them by teachers, peers, and family. Third, I discuss previous research on text comprehension and tutoring as a means for learning and writing for authentic audiences. Finally, the chapter concludes with an explanation of how these theories and approaches relate directly to my study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is undergirded by two theories: (1) sociocultural theory, and (2) identity theory. These theories will assist in informing and investigating an innovative approach for helping adolescent readers with a history of difficulties in reading skills. The following sections describe each of these theories.

Sociocultural Theory

This study is grounded in sociocultural theory. Of the many theories that help us explore and understand how students learn, sociocultural theory is at the heart of explaining and understanding the complexities of how students relate to the world around them and therefore to the curricula presented to them. Children learn on both social and internal levels, and the two work mutually together. Chirkov (2020) refers to this as the human sociocultural mind in which "[t]he sociocultural environment and the human mind are mutually constitutive, and they

continuously co-construct each other through structured and regulated social interactions among members of communities" (p. 120). Children learn from their surroundings, peers, parents, and teachers, though the lessons learned are not necessarily via direct instruction. What they experience, they internalize and thus make connections to learning. As a result, learners have an effect on the community around them and thus change it as well, which in turn has an effect on the experience of others.

Vygotsky (1978) had three tenets that developed his concept of internalization: a) social sources of development, b) semiotic mediation, and c) genetic analysis (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). In the social sources of development, individuals rely on the transmitted experiences of those around them. Learners rely on what others know that they do not. A parent teaches a young child not to touch a hot stove. A peer teaches him how to play a game. Sometimes the lesson is learned by observation rather than verbal interaction. Lessons can even come from a book, a video, or everyday happenings around us. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) posit that "[t]his process, whether in the classroom or elsewhere, includes transmission, construction, transaction, and transformation in a continuing, complex interplay" (p. 192). Semiotic mediation includes the use of signs, symbols, or tools to bring together the social community and the individual. These tools, which could be language, maps, warning signs, or anything of use in learning, are available to the individual by means of being a part of the community. Learning has to do with the way we make meaning out of what we read based on personal as well as generally agreed-upon social meanings (Brummett, 2019). Genetic analysis refers to the origins and history of phenomenon in which the focus is not on the product but rather on the process of the change that takes place leading to the "learning and development" that happens in "socially and culturally shaped contexts" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 194). Learning takes place through participation (Moje

& Lewis, 2007). Even when alone one must actively take part in their own learning. Even when learners are working independently, they are reading the work of others, thus interacting on another level (Moje & Lewis, 2007). Learning cannot be separated from the social context (Vygotsky, 1978). However, reading is more than decoding words. It is a "social practice in which individuals engage for specific purposes and through particular contexts" (Learned, 2016, p. 1272). Comprehension comes together when three critical elements are combined: the reader, the text, and the activity (Rosenblatt, 1994; Klauda & Guthrie, 2014; Edmonds, et al.). In this matter, we explore the capacity of the reader, the values given to the text, and the reader's activities, especially if they interact with other students while doing so. As a result, we have a sociocultural context (Rosenblatt, 1994; Klauda & Guthrie, 2014).

Most students, especially those who struggle to read, benefit from collaborative opportunities to learn what they see and hear through working together with teachers and other students (Rojas-Drummond et al., 2013). Social interaction is important to learning. As students participate in instruction and literacy activities with teachers and peers, they learn through social interaction. That is, even in reading comprehension, learning takes place with the mixture of three elements - the reader, the text, and the activity (Rosenblatt, 1994; Klauda & Guthrie, 2014; Edmonds, et al.), which often includes interaction with the teacher and other readers (Edmonds, et al., 2009). By watching, trying, and internalizing feedback and models, students learn. With this in mind, it is simple to understand Vygotsky's stance that the *process* of attaining higher knowledge is important (Vygotsky, 1978; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

A useful list of six key themes of sociocultural theory has been proposed by Packer and Goicoechea (2000):

1. The person is constructed

2. in a social context,
3. formed through practical activity
4. and formed in relationships of desire and recognition
5. that can split the person, and
6. motivating the search for identity (p. 228).

These six elements are central to the design of the current study. Each of these elements is discussed below.

First, "a person is constructed" means a "person is made, not born" (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 231) and that we are continually building ourselves. In this study, I consider that the students are made by what they do, that they are rebuilding parts of themselves through interaction with the text and with teachers and peers while also indirectly engaging with the yet unknown elementary students who will benefit from what the students in the study write. Second, "in a social context" refers to the ways in which people interact with the world in such a way that they can "be," which is "determined by the human practices in which it is encountered, grasped, and comprehended" (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 232). In this study, students will work in the context of classroom practices but will be given autonomy to complete the project with some choices and self-pacing. As such, they will interact with others and with the text and thus continue building who they are to "be." Third, "formed through practical activity" means simply that the relationship between the social context and people is actually through the activity that takes place, not the activity itself. In this study, the activity of producing tutoring modules is the means by which change and improvement take place.

Fourth, "formed in relationships of desire and recognition" refers to the idea that wanting recognition for the sake of oneself is fruitless, but recognition for the sake of others is of

importance. In this study, students are working to produce a product that can help others, thus removing the focus from what they do to how it will be experienced by others. Fifth, “that can split the person” means that the person is separated internally as he struggles with the “oppositions of thought and action, conscious and unconscious, self and other, subject and object are created, not natural” (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 233). In other words, “Our activity produces a social context that defines who we are. But that context also confronts us as something alien, so we are divided from ourselves and need to discover ourselves” (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 234). In this study, students faced the paradox of being both students and teachers as they wrote the tutoring modules. Students will engage with the text and required segments of the project, but they will also position themselves as the teachers who make decisions about what and how others will learn. Finally, “motivating the search for identity” means the person wants to find identity in which they are becoming and not what society says they are. In this study, students will challenge whom they believe they are, and how they see themselves as readers and extend their reach.

Therefore, the six tenets of sociocultural theory show how people learn through social relationships. Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) presents how learning is done with social supports. Accordingly, these two theories are complementary to one another. One talks about learning in relationship. The other talks about learning through relational support. This is often represented by three circles of ability. The outer circle is where learning is near impossible because the task is too difficult without assistance. The inner circle is where the learner can be independent and can complete the task with no help at all. The middle circle is where optimal learning, or proximal development, can take place as there is a guide, the more capable peers, to assist in learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

It is through this interaction with the environment, with tools and signs, with others, and even with the self that learning takes place. As people interact, they "build and rebuild contexts" (Learned, 2016, p. 1273; Erickson & Schultz, 1997). By accepting, resisting, and in the process, becoming, new identities of the learner are created. Learning is a process by which one becomes who they are, and that is ever-changing.

Therefore, sociocultural theory is a framework which stresses that individuals learn by interacting on both social and internal levels. Learners rely on the social environment and all of the tools and experiences available to them with a focus on the process in which change and learning take place as they build the context of whom they become as learners. This theory provides practitioners and researchers with a way to view how children learn as well as what they contribute to others and the world around them. Specifically, this theory will assist in this study by challenging negative identities put on students by school labels and trying on a new identity as a successful creator of the curriculum. To study how educators and students interact with text and make meanings through comprehension, I will use a sociocultural perspective. By framing the study with this lens, I will further examine how students approach reading while applying their own identities.

Identity Theory

Framed within sociocultural theory, this study will employ the lens of identity theory by examining both the identity students carry about themselves, and discursive identities projected upon students by others. Identity is a complex concept that goes well beyond the apparent markers of male, female, student, teacher, etc. Identity, especially in educational research, has many layers and interpretations that, once recognized, can help us understand not only how we identify others, but how one's own identity can aid or hinder learning. As teachers and

researchers, it is easy to put a label on a student (good reader, poor reader, intentional non-learner, etc.), but without delving into the thoughts of the student, we face the danger of misinterpreting what they intend and how they identify themselves which can be very different than what we perceive. There is a stigma associated with being a poor student or a reader with literacy difficulties. Many students will do whatever it takes, sometimes to their own detriment, to keep from being labeled as such. Though students often want the "good-reader" identity, they sometimes avoid reading tasks that would bring to the attention of others that they are poor readers. Therefore, students also cut themselves off from practices that will help them improve (Hall, 2010). Some may choose not to apply the strategies they are being taught and thus "marginalize their abilities to grow as readers" (Hall, 2010, 2007). For students of color, who are already marginalized, these students face a double marginalization: they could be perceived as a marginalized reader from a marginalized group (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). Therefore, studying how identity affects a student is of utmost importance.

In a chapter on "Literacy and Identity," Lewis and Del Valle (2009) examine multiple studies over the past several decades. As an example, to point out ways in which adolescents use literacy in different areas of their lives, they depict how middle school girls in three of their natural settings (home, with peers, and school) utilize different literacies in each. These authors found that in each setting, different expectations of communication and literacy were expected of them (Lewis & Del Valle, 2009; Finders, 1996). Many teens can use literacy "for their own powerful purposes and identity representations" (Lewis & Del Valle, 2009, p. 313) even when that is not what teachers observe at school. Adolescents may be struggling in school settings yet able to soar in their own spaces at times when they are taking part in their chosen activities outside of the school confines and expectations (Lewis & Del Valle, 2009, p. 313; Guzzetti &

Gamboa, 2004) or even in alternative learning spaces within the larger school context (Glenn et al., 2018). A student who struggles to complete even simple classwork may be an avid reader of vampire romance and write and publish fan fiction on online social sites creating her own fan base.

Several concepts of identity play a prominent role in research, and they have been used in several studies that have paved the way for this study. There is one framework in particular that helps us understand the reasons some students do as they do. Discursive identities are those identities put upon, even pushed upon people by others. It is how people are identified by other people (Gee, 2000; Hall, 2010). Gee (2000) explains that how we recognize a "kind of person" can change as the context changes or we interact with and interpret who the person is. The aspect of identity most interesting as it applies to this present study is discursive identity. This is defined as how a person is viewed through their interactions with others. Affinity groups are those identity groups with which people align themselves because of particular interests. Gee (2000) uses them to explain how identity relates to education. Gee describes the teacher as being the manager of student experiences, and the teacher has all the authority. He presents a scenario of a literacy lesson with second grade students. The teacher reprimands a student in the lower reading group for pointing out several answers at once rather than waiting until they get to them as a class. The same girl is reprimanded again later for bouncing up and down in her seat as she excitedly volunteers to answer questions, but the teacher tells her to calm down, falling to their roles of teacher/manager and student/controllee. Teachers' interaction with various students sends different messages that the students internalize. Some are negative, and some are positive, but these messages become a part of the students' discursive identities (Gee, 2000).

Students come to our classrooms with their identities, some of which could interfere with their academics. Hall noted Maslow's (1968; Hall, 2010) statement that identity is something we can only partly discover because we create them, and they are what Wortham refers to as models of identity (2006; Hall, 2010). She also acknowledged that people have identities fixed or stable and others are fluid or perhaps based on judgments and appearances. For example, a 14-year-old male who has traditionally received low test scores and rarely participates in class is quiet but friendly and well-liked by his teachers and peers. Because of his lack of participation in class discussions and halted fluency when he reads aloud, he is viewed as a reader with literacy difficulties. This is part of his discursive identity. He plays soccer on a local team and likes anything related to sports. All of these are worthy to note, but the one that is most concerning is the discursive identity.

In a descriptive multiple-case study, Hall (2010) explored how three middle school students and their content area teachers worked together to make decisions regarding reading tasks over the period of one school year. Reading teachers may make decisions about instruction based on reading scores and the skills needed. However, Hall strove to look at the reasons students were not achieving and whether those reasons were linked to identity rather than a cognitive disability or other reasons (Core & Levine, 2002; Hall, 2010). Something generally desirable in most contexts, such as making good grades or desirable physical features, could be considered identity capital. Students want to be good readers (Tegmark, 2022). Hall (2010) further acknowledges that identities can be shaped and reshaped by the norms of our society (Egan-Robertson, 1998; Sarup, 1996; Hall. 2010). Identities are fluid and can have a great effect on learners. Hall used theories of identity such as identity capital and discursive identity to examine how teachers interact with readers with literacy difficulties and how students in turn

identify themselves as readers and why they make the decisions they do that either propel them forward or keep them from improving their reading skills and participating in literacy lessons. As Hall sees discursive identities, they "are socially constructed based on people's interactions with each other, how they interpret those interactions, and how they view those interactions in relation to the models of identity that exist within the community" (2010, p. 1795). Considering this previous research, Hall designed her study with three student/teacher pairs. She examined how they engaged in one 6th-grade social studies classroom, one 7th-grade mathematics classroom, and one 8th-grade science classroom. The students were Sarah, 6th grade; Nicole, 7th grade; and Alisa, 8th grade. All students were identified as reading one or more years below grade level but did not have any identified learning disabilities. Hall was a participant observer on biweekly visits. She did not plan or provide additional information about the study and asked the teachers not to change anything they would normally do due to the study and told them that she would discuss strategies with them after the conclusion of the study. Data collection began on the first day of school and ended at the beginning of May. Data sources included biweekly observations, questionnaires (October), interviews (October, January, and May), and graded class work. An overview of the findings showed that teachers' interactions with students with literacy difficulties were based on (1) their own ideas of what it meant to be a good reader and (2) the discursive ideas they created for their students. Students' interaction with the reading tasks was based on (1) how they identified themselves as readers and (2) their goals to prevent others from constructing discursive identities of them as poor readers (p. 1801).

By interviewing both students and teachers, Hall (2010) found that there was a disconnect in how the groups viewed the adolescents' identities. The students said they did not answer questions in class or ask for assistance because they did not want to be considered poor readers.

When she talked with the teachers of those same students, the teachers admitted that they did not give much attention to those students or call on them often because the students, in her opinion, obviously did not want to learn so the teachers did not want to waste their time. In those classrooms in that study, if students wanted attention from teachers, they would have to compete for it (Hall, 2010). Hall (2010) and other researchers also talk about identity capital which may seem to be a separate concept. However, it is tied to discursive identity in that the capital, those aspects of identity that are deemed to be desirable, are either given by others or attempted to be manipulated by those who want them. The identity capital is not just a part of the classroom. Many students adopt positive identities when their teachers value out-of-school literacy practices and connect them with in-school activities and assignments (O'Brien et al., 2007). When the teachers show no interest, or worse, cast a disapproving eye on what students value, the opposite effect often takes place. When schools do not respond to what students need, the "ascribed identities are further 'substantiated' in the minds of readers" (Glenn et al., 2018, p.327).

Similarly, Coombs (2012) also conducted a multiple case study with seven adolescents from freshmen in high school to sophomores in college who volunteered to be in her study. All of them self-identified as being readers with literacy difficulties, though she had only requested volunteers who would participate in a study on reading. She conducted three to five in-depth semi-structured interviews and five to ten observations. Once the interviews and field notes were transcribed, she used Ricoeur's threefold mimesis (Ricoeur, 1984) to analyze the narratives, focusing particularly on the experiences as readers. Though Coombs uses the term "pre-understandings" rather than what Hall (2010) calls "discursive identity," the way she uses and discusses the term throughout her study aligns with how many researchers and educators look at discursive identity. Coombs presented her overall findings but chose to focus on one participant

to discuss in detail in the article. The findings presented, in narrative format, Sarah, a long-time reader with literacy difficulties, who has made sense of her struggles and overcomes many of them by looking at her identity through narratives. Her difficulties seemed to begin in first grade and continued throughout her school days. She recounted stories of damaged identity due to events such as being denied the opportunity to check out books of interest in her school library because they were higher than her reading level. As she tells her story, it is apparent that teachers' voices are the ones she heard often as she replayed events in her memory. She revealed that she was deeply affected by the way she was placed into reading groups and how it affected her identity. As she created the narratives, these voices merged with test scores and other frustrations to form her identity. One voice, in particular, a professor who told her she was not going to make it, was dominant in her narratives. She was convinced that her reading level was third grade though that label was an old one. Coombs, the researcher, noted that she believed Sarah's reading level was certainly higher than that. However, Sarah had internalized that message long ago and had trouble believing she could surpass it. Her "past experiences as a learner conflicted with her current abilities," which stalled her progress as a learner (p. 95). In short, a college professor worked with Sarah and helped her see past the internal voices that had long plagued her and gave her the encouragement she needed to create new narratives, thus identities, of herself. Sarah took longer than usual to complete college, but she did it. The message here is that discursive identities become internalized, and they hold the learner back. However, identity is fluid. While most of the examples above show the negative effects of identities, there is an opportunity to change. Additionally, Coombs found that sometimes the message is more subtle. Either way, it is human nature to be affected by interactions with others.

If someone uses a sharp tone in casual, brief interaction, it is within a person's nature to wonder why that person spoke to them in that manner (Coombs, 2012).

Others have studied this idea of being told what kind of reader or learner they are and the effect that follows them long after. The message can be positive, but most often it is perceived as unfavorable. Glenn et al. (2018) found that when reading identities associated with school are negative, students are particularly vulnerable. The reaction is likely to be carried over into future interactions and create inner views that may or may not be accurate, but it is nonetheless now a part of that person. In Sarah's case, the memory she recalled of not being allowed to check out only library books in her reading level took place ten years before the research study in which the painful memory was recounted (Coombs, 2012). The moments that follow us can be created by anyone. The way a teacher or peer reacts when a student answers a question incorrectly is likely to stay with the student long past the moment. However, it does not just have to stay on the student like an ominous cloud.

In further explanation to help us understand Coomb's study, Hermans, and Kempen (1993) explain that individuals are continually reordering and reinterpreting events in their minds as they go through life to try to make meaning out of experiences. These events are shuffled, joined with others, tinted according to view, and perhaps even played in slow motion. Coombs further explains Hermans and Kempen's assertion this way: "life stories are never fixed because people are always working from an experienced past in a present state in anticipation of the future. Over time they tell and retell stories as situations change; in turn, their stories change as well" (Coombs, 2012, p. 86). As fragmented and even unrelated experiences come together, the created stories gain meaning as new events are introduced to the narrative (Coombs, 2012; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Ricoeur, 1984). These inner stories create identities that are fluid and

changing as new experiences are encountered. Learning takes place as "shifts in identity," and as one takes on new knowledge, new identities can be formed (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 19). Though they are created individually, the guiding experiences and messages come from others and thus are discursive.

Studying the attitudes of reading helps us better understand that adolescents have multiple reading identities that go beyond what is taught and expected in school-based literacies (McKenna et al., 2012). McKenna et al. (2012) conducted a survey study of 4,491 middle school students in 23 states and the District of Columbia to assess the attitudes middle school students have toward reading. Though they use the term "attitudes" rather than "identity," the way they use and discuss the term throughout their study aligns with how many students and educators look at reading identity. They looked at attitudes regarding medium (print vs. digital) and purpose for reading (recreational vs. academic). They found that many teachers use digital text as a substitute for printed text and not in ways in which students found value leaving potential leading to "increasing engagement and fostering social interaction remains unrealized, and students' attitude toward reading are likely to be similar with respect to the two environments" (McKenna et al., 2012, p. 299). As a result, reader attitudes, and therefore identity, are not likely to change for the positive in situations like this.

The identity of readers with literacy difficulties intersects with the reading, learning, and participation of adolescents in the English/language arts classroom. In light of more recent research, it is difficult to think about readers with literacy difficulties without further thoughts of identity issues and vice versa. As Moje and Lewis wrote, "the two [literacy and identity] breathe life into each other" (2009, p. 416). Alvermann tells us that literacy education is more about

culture and understanding and less about developing skills (2001). Of course, the skills are important, but they are meaningless when students do not connect and identify as learners.

In a year-long qualitative study, Learned (2016) shadowed eight 9th-grade students across content classes. The students had been identified as readers with literacy difficulties, but none had learning disabilities. Through the course of the year, she logged 425 hours of observations, 64 interviews, and studied assessments, school records, and artifacts. She was interested to learn how the institutions, those in leadership in the schools, otherwise regarded these students who had documented learning gaps. She looked for how the role of the institution plays in adolescent literacy and how they "make apparent, if not produce, learning difficulty" (p. 1274). Previous studies found that students are often negatively positioned and especially marginalized (Fabelo et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Students are often at a disadvantage of not being exposed to high-quality texts and literacy skill acquisition but also in the area of school discipline. While looking for contexts, she employed the actor-network theory to "consider how contexts are constructed not only by social interactions but also with the tools and objects that actors use to make meaning throughout their networks" (p. 1273). This was a way for her to see what was happening in the school among administrators, teachers, and students. Learned found that navigating school is more difficult for students who struggle and especially how classroom contexts mediate adolescents' literacies, skills, and practices (p. 1273). She found that problems were systematic because of how students were grouped into not only academic levels but ones that marginalized students. Labels such as struggling reader and writer are not helpful, and she also raises a concern that Response to Intervention (RtI) models, though they seek to organize reading assessment and instruction, are not "culturally responsive" as there is the risk of putting students in the deficit category (p. 1275). Findings showed that as she shadowed the students,

> participants' interactions with interrelated processes for reading interventions and school discipline tend to position students as deficient readers and deviant youths regardless, sometimes, of engaged, skillful reading. Youth, however, continually sought to reposition themselves as learners and readers (page 1283)

She further examined the institutional contexts and the ways in which they mediated the students' reading and identities (p. 1284). She hailed the students for the way they navigated and resisted these positions with "perseverance, creativity, and wit" while repositioning themselves as learners (p. 1298). The study raised further concerns regarding the labeling of students such as through the RtI program. The program also tended to exacerbate the behavior/reading problems as essential aspects of their identities (p. 1301). Her findings support long-standing cautions about deficit labels in literacy. She proposes further research on RtIs implementation in secondary schools and the effect on social and academic growth (p. 1301).

Therefore, identity theory is a way to understand how students see themselves. This theory provides practitioners and researchers a window into the identity students carry about themselves as well as the effect of the discursive identity put on them by others. Specifically, this theory will assist in this study by helping me understand some of the actions and attitudes students have regarding their own learning and reading ability. The following section will present previous literature regarding readers with literacy difficulties.

Previous Literature Regarding Readers with Literacy Difficulties

> "It is of particular concern that current theories may not apply fully to struggling readers."
>
> (Klauda & Guthrie, 2014, p. 240)

The quote above is of particular interest because even with the thousands of research articles and books written in the last few decades, much work still needs to be done. There is a

wealth of research regarding reading, but the majority of those studies relate to younger children learning to read. The literature search results narrow significantly when keywords such as "adolescent" or "secondary schools" are added to the search. This is surprising considering that as many as 70% of secondary students have some degree of difficulty with reading comprehension and need direct assistance before becoming proficient (Edmonds et al., 2009). Reports show that many secondary students with literacy difficulty read three to seven years below grade level (Hall, 2004). Studies show that many adolescents are not achieving reading success and that instructional practices need to improve in order to effectively prepare students (Edmonds et al., 2009) for the next grade levels and for high-stakes assessments and especially to be literate members of society.

Across the literature that addresses adolescent difficulties with reading, a number of concepts are commonly discussed. Based on the insights from sociocultural theory and identity research that inform the present understanding, I have chosen to focus on improving text comprehension, the benefit of tutoring as a means of learning, and how writing for authentic audiences helps readers who have difficulty performing at grade level.

Text Comprehension

Research on text comprehension instruction can provide guidance for how to support adolescent students. Text comprehension, including decoding words, fluency, understanding word meanings, making connections to prior knowledge, and consistently utilizing strategies, remains a challenge for adolescent students in secondary schools (Edmonds et al., 2009). Researchers often use metaphors to describe what it looks like when readers are engaged in successful comprehension practices. For instance, Brevik (2017) describes reading by contrasting what she calls the Nike mode of reading with the Sherlock Holmes mode. In the former, readers

"Just do it!" and merely read without employing strategies or analyzing the task of working through the text. In the latter, readers act as detectives and search for clues and inferences as they read, using strategies such as activating prior knowledge, noting keywords, questioning what they read, and summarizing. Using a similar metaphor, Brummett (2019) refers to the reader as a "meaning detective" who examines the evidence in the reading for plausible and socially shared meanings of a text. In many school-based reading practices, being a detective while reading is what we strive to teach students to do, but instructional support is key.

Researchers state that targeted strategies are necessary to further reading comprehension. For optimal benefit, students must keep their purpose for reading in mind, interact with text, and engage during all processes of reading - before, during, and after (Magnusson et al., 2018; Brevik, 2014). Readers who are likely to "wear" the discursive identity of good readers often read strategically in this way. However, those identified as readers with literacy difficulties need targeted support to learn to do this. However, Magnusson et al. (2018), in their video study of 47 8th-grade language arts classrooms (13 to 14-year-olds) in Norway, found that in only 74 of 159 (46.5%) recorded lessons, teachers engaged in specific comprehension reading strategy instruction. Only 13% were of what they deemed high-level instruction. They concluded that moving from low-level to higher-level instruction on reading comprehension strategies could "potentially impact students' reading development" (p. 205). Further, teaching students how to use these strategies is necessary for instructional support. Strategies should be flexible and used as tools to comprehend texts and should be able to be transferred from text to text since different texts should be read differently. Strategies should be modeled with ample explanation and scaffolding to teach students how to read a variety of text types (Magnusson et al., 2018). Once

students learn to use these strategies, they will be in a position to help others as well as themselves.

> Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris defined strategies as:
>
> deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of the text. The reader's deliberate control of work, the goal-directedness of the work, and the reader's awareness of work define a strategy. (2017, p.38)

Some of the strategies teachers provide for reading comprehension instruction include building vocabulary and language knowledge, summarizing main ideas, drawing inferences, using graphic organizers, questioning, making predictions, teaching text structure, incorporating background knowledge, and creating opportunities to discuss the text (Magnusson et al., 2018).

Denton et al. (2014) conducted a study in which they surveyed 1134 adolescents in grades 7 - 12 from a random sample of both adequate readers (those who scored above the 25th percentile) and readers with literacy difficulties (who scored at or below the 25th percentile). In doing so they administered the Gates–MacGinitie Reading Comprehension subtest (GMRT-RC) in which students read passages and answered literal and inferential multiple-choice questions and the Contextualized Reading Strategy Survey (CReSS), an instrument on which students self-reported strategies they use by responding to Likert-type scale and open-ended questions. The skilled readers in this study were often able to incorporate strategies aligning their knowledge of the topic.

Similarly, Clarke et al. (2017) conducted a 20-week reading intervention study for students with reading difficulties who were soon to enter secondary school. Trained teaching assistants worked three times per week with 287 students ages 11-13. During this intervention, students were divided into three groups: RI - Reading intervention consisting of word

recognition and decoding skills, RI + C - Reading intervention plus targeted comprehension strategies, and a waiting list control group who received no additional specified reading instruction. They found that students who received only RI training showed few gains while those in the RI + C group showed minor improvements in comprehension and knowledge of vocabulary both taught and untaught. They attribute the untaught vocabulary improvements to students applying strategies to new words. They propose that further research is needed to develop programs and interventions for students in secondary schools so appropriate support is given to students who have reading difficulties.

Solis et al. (2018) conducted an experimental study comparing a multi-component reading intervention to business-as-usual classes with no specified intervention. The researchers hired, trained, and supervised three intervention teachers who each held an advanced degree and a minimum of five years of teaching high school English. These three intervention teachers were further trained explicitly on strategies of modeling, think-alouds, examples/non-examples, and guided and independent practice. They were given lesson plans that included walk-in slips, essential words (5 per unit), text-based expository reading, narrative text reading, inference reading, and word study fluency. Though both word study and linguistic comprehension were incorporated, more emphasis was placed on comprehension. The study took place across five diverse high schools in two near-urban school districts. The students were 9th-grade students with low reading comprehension. These students had not passed state accountability reading tests as 7th graders and therefore were placed in a remediation reading course. From these courses, students chosen for the study met further criteria to narrow the participant sample to 100 students. Fifty-one were placed in the research-provided intervention and 49 were in the business-as-usual classes. Students in the study received approximately 114 hours of intervention

over two semesters. Though minor effects were detected on one standardized reading measure and no statistically significant measures on another, larger effects were found for vocabulary acquisition on two researcher-developed measures indicating students have the potential to improve vocabulary and comprehension. However, since students scored, on average, 2 standard deviations below the normative sample on both the pretest and the standardized measures of reading comprehension, findings indicate that students who are this far behind need more than one year of intervention to catch up. Researchers suggest there is a need for multiple years of intervention programs with "more customized reading interventions" (Solis et al., 2018, p. 550). Suggestions for future research include finding ways to incorporate interventions into courses that also meet content area course requirements rather than separate remedial courses that take away the opportunity for students to take electives. They acknowledge that students "giving up an elective course is less than ideal and other approaches should be considered" (Solis et al., 2018, p. 551; Solis et al., 2015).

In addition to studies seeking to improve vocabulary and text comprehension, researchers state that simply exposing children to challenging texts is not enough; there must be support. Lupo et al. (2019), in their study of 293 ninth-grade students, draw on Vygotsky's theories of sociocultural learning suggesting that with teacher support, students benefit when interacting with material just beyond their ability level. They found that with instructional support, most students can read and comprehend challenging texts. This is good news considering that secondary school students encounter texts that cover many school subjects and become more challenging and diverse each year (Magnusson et al., 2018; Edmonds et al., 2009). Lupo et al. (2019) found that instructional support is more important than using leveled, easier texts when building comprehension. Challenging texts are important because shorter and easier versions

tend to have the less challenging (more familiar and less academic) vocabulary and fewer details as well as less content (Lupo et al., 2019). This is why Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development should be defined by this instructional support and not the difficulty level of the text; the depth of support should match the text complexity (Lupo et al., 2019). This study further concluded that while most students benefit from challenging texts, students who read below grade level can benefit from reading both easy and challenging texts as long as instructional support is in place. An effective way to accomplish this and show that knowledge is built is with a simple KWL chart. Background knowledge should be used as a bridge to the text features; this gives better success with complex texts (Lupo et al., 2019).

In addition to supporting students with more complex texts, researchers state that scaffolding text is necessary for readers with literacy difficulties of all ages. While exposing students to complex texts has its merits, they need the opportunity to engage in material at a level at which they can work successfully and independently. Sometimes scaffolding begins with starting students where they are comfortable before moving on to more complex texts. Edmonds et al. (2009) stated, "the readability level of some text used in secondary classrooms may be too high for below-grade level readers, and the 'unfriendliness' of some text can result in comprehension challenges for many students."

Dunn (2020) conducted a study in 9th-grade and 12th-grade special education English Language Arts classes consisting of students with high-incidence disabilities related to reading. Ten students participated in the study and three were then chosen for a case study based on the criteria that they 1) had a Specific Learning Disability diagnosis, 2) had attended 90% of intervention sessions, and 3) had pretest scores indicating a range of learning. The purpose of the exploratory mixed methods study was to analyze how using elements of a screenplay to promote

visualization increases reading comprehension. Dunn posits that while good readers can easily develop a mental image of what they read, readers with literacy difficulties need to be taught this skill which leads to better comprehension. Based on Field's (2005) contention that screenplays are structured into three parts–beginning (introduction of characters, setting, and problem), middle (confrontation of the problem); and end (resolution of the problem)-- Dunn designed the three-week study in which students watched the screenplays after being introduced, via think aloud strategies, to specific elements that align to narrative text structure and then participated in both guided and independent activities on element recall and visualization. They then moved on to literature using children's books, following the same activities as before, for further practice in visualization, with each step removing supports, leading to the final phase of reading short stories with little to no illustrations. Throughout the process, students relied on using plot diagrams or story mapping as an aid. Results of the study were mixed. The twelfth-grade student scores declined from the pre to post-tests while the ninth-grade students showed increased scores. Some of the other positive results include that 1) participants in both grades were able to identify and describe elements in post-tests, 2) students were able to identify elements of the screenplays in the texts once skills had been explicitly taught, and 3) student scores indicated improved accuracy when answering open-ended questions regarding the texts. While the positive outcomes are encouraging, Dunn suggests further research as this was a small sampling of students over a short period of time. A longer intervention period would afford students more opportunities to practice these skills.

Liang (2011), in her study to examine two popular approaches, the Reader Response Approach and the Cognitive-Oriented Approach, to teaching literature to adolescents, used the Scaffolded Reading Experience Framework (SRE) (Graves & Graves, 2003), which assists

teachers in scaffolding texts for students. The study consisted of 85 sixth-grade students and two teachers. Liang designed the SREs for short stories to be used in both approaches. For the reader response approach, students responded to the text using a variety of response types (i.e., connections to other books, what students liked or did not like about the story, or critique about the way the story was written). Students were encouraged to respond in multiple ways and then share their responses with their classmates. For the cognitive-oriented approach, students used textual evidence to answer comprehension questions and then were asked to indicate if the answer was "right there" or "inferred" (p. 7) and then to defend their answers. Students were then given surveys to gauge their attitudes towards both their opinions of the stories and the instructional methods used for each. Liang observed classes, kept field notes, and interviewed 16 of the students and both teachers. Results were mixed as for each of the approaches, one of the two stories showed improvement over the control week while the other showed a decline. In the cognitive-oriented group, teachers cut one activity in favor of extra modeling and whole class practice when students showed signs of struggling to defend their answers. Students spoke to the usefulness of some of the activities, such as writing questions to better understand the types of comprehension questions. In the reader response group, there were mixed reactions to the activities, though they generally liked them and reported they found them useful. Both teachers had positive comments regarding the project and saw the need for both approaches. The teachers planned to share the SREs with their colleagues. Results further show that the SRE is a successful framework in assisting students' basic understanding of texts.

An important strategy to aid in text comprehension is annotation. Learning to annotate, a structured way to mark text so it is more manageable, helps students understand text "structure, analyze ideas, derive meaning, and communicate understandings" as well as *how* to approach a

text for comprehension purposes (Zywica & Gomez, 2008, p. 156). As students engage in the text in this way, they become more active readers. Zywica and Gomez (2008) conducted a small study to measure the effectiveness of annotation as an approach to cognitive learning. They gave three science teachers in a large urban high school a 12-step guide for annotation to use with their students and asked them to use chapters in their content area as the text. Researchers gathered data from the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) comprehension test, chapter questions, and a teacher created the final exam. DRP scores over the course from October to May showed an increase in associated range from 0.25 to 0.55. Teachers reported student annotations and test scores showed that students benefit from using this strategy. A specific benefit is that with support and instruction in this strategy, students learn to monitor and self-regulate as they read (Zywica & Gomez, 2008). As a visualization tool, it forces students who would otherwise skim the text without focusing on important text structure, vocabulary, main idea, author's perspective, argument, and other important aspects (Zywica & Gomez, 2008). While readers with literacy difficulties use this as a tool to focus and mark specific text elements and information, they are learning a reading style, and "when they are able to deconstruct and evaluate the texts they read, students prepare for more advance readings" and as they continue to read for school and eventually work (Zywica & Gomez, 2008, p. 157).

Overall, studies regarding text comprehension are mixed as to what works best. Researchers have established that targeted strategies, exposing students to appropriate leveled texts with increasing complexity along with support, and scaffolding text are important for increasing students' comprehension. Researchers want further research into which strategies and methods work best for all students. My study utilizes a collaborative curriculum design

intervention which includes strategies and scaffolding in order to increase text comprehension of adolescents with a history of literacy difficulties.

Tutoring as a Means for Learning

Previous research regarding adolescent readers suggests there are benefits of opportunities for students to collaborate and work with other readers for whom they can serve as mentors. When students tutor other students, whether it is cross-age, when an older student helps younger students (Jacobson et al., 2001), or same-age tutoring, the tutor learns through the process (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). Students learn when they take on the teaching role, especially if they monitor their own learning processes and gain comprehension and knowledge. A review of the literature shows few empirical studies, though one is outlined at the end of this section, but several scholars have written about observations and theories of what one learns when teaching, or preparing to teach, someone else (Wang et al,, 2021). This process has been referred to as peer tutoring, peer teaching, teaching-to-learn, learning-by-teaching, and other similar names.

Roscoe and Chi (2007) note that reflective knowledge is when students "*metacognitively* reflect upon their own expertise and comprehension and *constructively* build upon their prior knowledge by generating inferences, integrating ideas across topics and domains, and repairing errors" (p. 541). This is a higher skill and more beneficial strategy than simply knowledge-telling in which the tutor reverts to summarization without much elaboration and simply explains what they already know without questioning the deeper aspects or the quality of the information (Roscoe and Chi, 2007, 2008; Duran, 2017). Learning to teach takes more cognitive skills than simply learning for oneself and learning and explaining take it a step beyond (Duran, 2017). While student tutors are not experts on the material being taught, they can take what they know and hone the knowledge through deep thought and investigation. They take their prior

knowledge and make connections that are “relevant, coherent, complete, and accurate” (Roscoe & Chi, 2007, p.545). Though they do not possess all of the necessary knowledge and may still have misconceptions, recognizing this may push the tutors to search for better understanding and ways to teach the tutee. Tutor-learners must confront their deficits, and they may use one of many strategies, such as self-explaining, to assess their own comprehension and make inferences to revise their understanding (Roscoe & Chi, 2008). By assessing their own knowledge and recognizing their lack of expertise, they are taking the first step in reflective knowledge-building (Roscoe & Chi, 2007).

One of the limitations of student tutors is that they may not recognize their own faults. Specifically, there are likely to be gaps in their understanding of knowledge that they do not know what they do not know. Therefore, it is important that someone with more expertise monitors young tutors as they plan for tutoring sessions. In addition, training the tutors to use strategies based on constructivist theories of learning, as students are learning together and from one another, is important (Fuchs et al., 1997; King et al., 1998), and studies show greater growth of trained tutors when compared to non-trained tutors (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). At this point, students confront their own Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As they take what they are able to teach unaided, they do not learn much if any new information. However, when they reach their ZPD where they are learning with the guidance of others, in this case with more training, they are reaching their potential development (Duran, 2017), both in regard to the content and methods of teaching.

There is value in each pedagogically appropriate question asked by a tutor. Questions for review are necessary to check for prior knowledge and understanding (Roscoe & Chi, 2007), but question variety must not stop there. The types of questions asked are important as different

types of questioning elicit different types of responses (King et al., 1998). Asking a factual question may only get a yes/no or other one-word answer from the learner, but asking a question that requires analysis will get quite another answer, one that requires more depth. Through generating thinking questions, those that require making inferences and integration of knowledge (Roscoe & Chi, 2007), the tutor is constructing their own knowledge (King et al., 1998). Tutors trained in sequenced-inquiry questioning strategies (i.e., review, probing, and thinking) developed more knowledge-building explanations versus knowledge-telling explanations than those who were not trained (Duran, 2017; Roscoe & Chi, 2007; King et al., 1998). This especially pertains to this present study as students question the literature for themselves and then write questions and suggested answers for the children who will benefit from the tutoring modules the secondary students write. Thus, they are learning by teaching in the tutoring process though indirect or imagined. They develop materials where they learn something and present it so that others will learn from it at a future date and thus become part of the Knowledge Society (Duran, 2017).

The benefits of tutoring for the tutor are worthy of consideration. The variables that make tutoring hard are the very things that make it better for learning. Not only have studies shown that tutors increase their own knowledge, but they also gain feelings of ownership for their own learning as well as that of their tutees. King et al. (1998) found that tutors took responsibility for their shortcomings and worked to improve them, suggesting that "children can learn to be more accountable for their learning, in particular their academic failures, when they are given more control over their own learning" (King et al., 1998, p. 151).

Wang et al. (2021) conducted a study with 597 high school students in 12 classes as part of their psychology course. The experiment was set to study levels of interactivity in teaching

(peer teaching vs. imagined teaching vs. no teaching). Students were further assigned to one of six experimental conditions: (1) peer teaching with teaching expectancy, (2) peer teaching with testing expectancy, (3) imagined teaching with teaching expectancy, (4) imagined teaching with testing expectancy, (5) no teaching with teaching expectancy, and (6) no teaching with testing expectancy. The researchers adapted material from previous research (Fiorella & Mayer, 2013) on the Doppler Effect. Students were given instruction sheets based on their assigned experiment conditions. After a specified time, depending on their experiment conditions, students were given a posttest. Four significant findings were discovered: (1) peer teaching in any form (direct, indirect, or imagined) led to better comprehension than when peer teaching was not included; (2) imagined teaching enhanced comprehension even after one week; (3) students with the intention to teach had the higher motivation and perceived learning even if they did not actually teach; (4) students who were expected to teach while reading perceived learning to be more difficult than those who engaged in imagined teaching; students who expected to test and engaged in peer teaching had higher motivation than those who tested with expectancy to teach. (Wang et al., 2021, p. 1286)

This study highlights the previous literature in several ways: (1) students benefit from any teaching-to-learn activity, whether it is direct (face-to-face peer tutoring) or indirect (including imagined tutoring in which the preparation is there even though it may not be carried out), (2) knowledge retention lasts longer than simply reading the information, and (3) it is through the cognitive process of questioning and preparing answers for others that students learn the information better for themselves.

Therefore, researchers have established that learning by teaching uses the processes of knowledge telling, making connections through prior knowledge, self-explaining to assess their

own comprehension and inferences, reflective knowledge building, and expectancy. Researchers do not understand the extent to which tutors can learn based on various factors such as perceived difficulty and motivation. Researchers want further research (as suggested by Roscoe and Chi, 2007) into how the learning process is shaped by program features and student characteristics in order to better prepare tutor training.

Based on these findings, the present study creates opportunities for students to prepare tutoring modules with the expectation that they will be used in teaching younger children. As such, the students are situated as tutors with an imagined audience which has more value than no tutoring at all (Wang et al., 2021). Working directly as a mentor to younger students is not always practical. To address this difficulty, the present study used an innovation on this idea in which adolescents served as designers of materials. This gave them a similar experience to having to think about what types of questions to ask, where tutors would pause in reading to ask questions, what suggested answers the tutor should expect, what vocabulary from the text is important, and how to best teach the vocabulary. In doing this, they are learning to teach, which takes more cognitive skill than learning only for the purposes of oneself (Duran, 2017) without the added logistical challenges of finding time within the day to meet with younger children.

Writing for Authentic Audiences

In her review of the literature to examine cognitive and social processes of writing as well as the conceptualization of the audience, Magnifico (2010) shows "how understandings of the audience can be linked to motivation and interest" in writing (p. 167). Of particular interest, as it informs this present study, as part of her literature review, she discusses a project in which middle school students wrote letters to pen pals overseas (Cohen & Riel, 1989) and the finding that these letters to authentic audiences were much stronger than the academic work students did

for the same teacher who assigned the pen pal project (Magnifico, 2010, p. 177). The researchers assert that this is because the students were forced to consider what their pen pals might already know and what they might need to know and find interesting. Thus, the student put more thought into the richer content and better-organized structure of the letters than they did when they wrote for class assignments which typically included mostly knowledge-telling or recounting facts. Students also know that the teacher is usually most concerned with content knowledge and the mechanics of writing. Magnifico also examined factors that influence students regarding audience. The one of particular interest here is students' perceptions of how practical the task may be, which she directly relates to having an authentic audience. Young writers want to know their writing matters. She states that students who participate in "active writing communities, whether online or in person, may have an additional advantage in finding their interest in and motivation to write because these communities provide an embedded, authentic audience" (Magnifico, 2010, p. 178). She further posits that from a sociocultural viewpoint, "communication with an audience is a component of *how* expert writers learn to write" (Magnifico, 2010, p. 178). The feedback from an authentic audience is "critical to her continued work and her identity as a writer" (Magnifico, 2010, p. 178). Though much attention is given to authentic audiences being public or distant, Magnifico also states that the literature shows an authentic audience can be in a classroom, though not always easy, as long as the teachers situate the writing as something students see as important and therefore serve as motivation for writing.

In a descriptive case study with one student, Xavier, Behizadeh (2014) asserts that there are major factors to consider when weighing the authenticity of writing tasks: "choice of valued topic, writing for impact, and dominance of expression over conventions. . . [and also] students' need to share their work" are all crucial (p. 291). Xavier had stated that school writing and home

writing were different and that he could not express himself in school writing. After working with Xavier to get at the root of what he considered authentic writing, he was able to complete the assignment on an issue important to him, a generational piece, and he was willing to let his peers, an authentic audience, read it. Helping students create value in their work often comes with giving them "leeway" for writing rather than telling them what they have to write though they still need help in making good choices. When students see the task as just another school assignment, as Xavier initially did, there is little motivation to move past the required task. However, when given an external audience, students tend to put more effort into all steps of the assignment (Behizadeh, 2014).

When defining what is authentic in a writing task for students, it is essential to remember that it is not the task itself that must be declared meaningful by the teacher but rather the student's perception of the meaningfulness of the task. The topic, purpose, and audience are mutually important (Magnifico, 2010; Roth, 1987). Authentic tasks encourage students to engage at deeper levels because they see value in their work (Magnifico, 2010).

In a three-week experimental study with 12 secondary school students, Lammers and Van Alstyne (2019) explored what happened when students were introduced to online writing spaces and encouraged to publish in those spaces. They were interested in what happens when "writing becomes networked and thus shaped by direct feedback and (in)direct expectations of the audience" (p. 654), as they noticed that some students encounter a disconnect between what they write at school and what they write out-of-school. The project they designed used the networked public as the audience for students' writing, giving students the opportunity for a wider audience for feedback and review. The three-week project gave students more awareness of online writing spaces and the researchers encouraged students to explore, among other types, fanfiction as

"research has shown that fanfiction provides writers with important scaffolds that leverage their familiarity with existing storylines and characters to support their creative production" (Lammers & Van Alstyne, 2019, p. 654; Matthew & Adams, 2009). The researchers sought to "reinforce the interconnectedness of audience, writer, and text within the medium of networked writing" (Lammers & Van Alstyne, 2019, p. 654) as they encouraged students to seek mentor texts on the online writing spaces in order to inform their writing. Lammers and Van Alstyne found that their novice writers were insecure and felt judged by their peers and teachers and therefore liked being anonymous and having an audience who knew little about them, though some noted it was disappointing not to get much, if any, feedback from readers. Conceptualizing an audience gives power to these choices as the writer must decide what to include and what approach to use. One student came to appreciate her imagined community and said, "Basically, I learned how to write for the kind of audience I wanted" (p. 660).

Sometimes the authentic audience can be found within the walls of the school. Ring (2020) chose an audience outside the classroom for her students' writing workshops and argued that assignments take on a real-world purpose when the target audience is someone other than the teacher. For her poetry project, she decided the audience would be those who visit the school library. For the project, she informed the students they would write their poetry on bookmarks, and when someone checked out a book, they would get a bookmark to take home. She found that in all parts of the writing process for the unit, students were more engaged. Knowing who their audience would be:

> "affected topic selection, word choice, revision, and attention to editing. Students were thinking about whether they wanted to make their readers laugh or cry or show them how beautiful something is. They searched for the perfect words to communicate their intent.

(p. 101)

Through every step of the process, students were more thoughtful and purposeful. Ring tells her students the intended audience at the start of each writing project and carries through with ensuring the writing gets to the intended audience. Some of her past audiences are "posting pieces to our classroom website, submitting to writing competitions, displaying books in our school library, writing to local community members (e.g., veterans, patients at hospitals), and reading final pieces to cross-grade-level reading buddies" (p. 101). Though Ring teaches elementary school, the same idea can be carried out at any grade level with some adjustments to the audience list.

Writers face similar audiences when their readers can respond in some way, whether face-to-face or through written comments on platforms such as blogs. In many cases, writers face an imagined audience in which they assume there will be readers, but they do not know much about them and do not generally get feedback. In either case, the writer has to decide what the audience wants and needs.

Therefore, researchers have established that students are engaged at deeper levels when they write for authentic audiences. Writing for an authentic audience, whoever that may be for that student, makes the writing task meaningful. Researchers want more information on the degree of the impact it has on the student over a more extended period of time.

Conclusion

Researchers understand that text comprehension requires targeted intervention and strategies in order to improve. Scholars are unclear as to which specific strategies work best for most students, though they have identified some that work well and some that do not regarding students who have more significant reading deficits. Researchers recommend further research

into providing more targeted interventions over more extended periods of time for students two more years below grade level. They also propose creative scheduling or finding better ways to incorporate interventions into the content areas core classes so that students do not have to forgo an elective class.

Relating to tutoring as a means for learning, scholars established that in order to improve text comprehension and targeted strategies, peer tutors are used both for the benefit of the student who needs help and for the student who teaches as a means for learning. Still, researchers do not understand the best methods for training peer tutors so that adequate learning is retained and beneficial for both. Accordingly, researchers want future research regarding the impact questioning has on the teaching and learning of students and how the efficacy of this method be improved.

Concerning writing for authentic audiences, research shows that students are more deeply engaged and excited to write when they know they have an authentic audience. Scholars highlight a gap in understanding regarding the depth of the benefit, so researchers want more research regarding measured progress in this area. Thus, the purpose of this study is to design and investigate an innovative approach to helping adolescent readers with a history of difficulties in reading skills.

Based on this previous research, the present study uses sociocultural theory with an identity lens. It focuses on text comprehension, tutoring as a learning method, and writing for authentic audiences. My study aims to direct poor readers to incorporate strategies aligning their prior knowledge of topics, skills, and goals for reading. While my study did not use standardized assessments, my students used strategies to learn and teach new vocabulary and strengthen their comprehension skills through various exercises written for an authentic audience.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative multi-case study, I examine how high school students with a history of literacy difficulties engaged in a curriculum design project that provided them with an authentic purpose of creating materials for younger readers. To understand how this project might be beneficial for adolescent literacy learning, I pursued the following questions in this research:

RQ1: How does participation in a collaborative curriculum design project impact the reading skills of adolescents with a history of literacy difficulties?

RQ2: How does participation in the intervention impact students' identity and how they see themselves as readers?

Furthermore, because this study was conducted using principles of design-based research, I addressed an additional research question to inform revisions to the curriculum project and the development of similar projects for high school learners:

RQ3: What design principles emerge from this work that can inform the field's understanding of reading intervention for adolescent readers?

Description of the Curriculum Design Project

Using previous literature and theory on adolescent literacy, I designed an innovative approach to helping students with a history of literacy difficulty engage in reading and writing. In this approach, high school students were asked to work together in groups to create a learning module that could be used in a tutoring program for children in second through fifth grade. As curriculum designers, the high school students were supported by their teachers as they completed several design steps (outlined in Figure 3.1). First, they chose the topics for the

module. As a class, they came up with ideas of the types of books they thought children would enjoy, and of course, they picked what they would enjoy as well. For example, one of the selected topics was biographies of famous people. As COVID protocols in the school system at the time prevented students from visiting the library to choose books, the media specialist at one of the local elementary schools pulled age and reading level appropriate books from his school's media center based on some of the requests of the students. To add to the possibilities and to accommodate students who were attending school virtually, I provided a link to children's online books. Students chose books of interest to complete the requirements. My intention was for them to work together, but many students were reluctant to work in virtual groups and chose to complete much of the work independently. Once they chose their books, they wrote short fluency texts for each book. They were instructed how to do this by following directions from their teachers based on the plan and example I provided for them. A fluency text is a brief summary written on the Lexile level intended for the reader. Students also chose vocabulary words from the books and determined how to best teach those words. As an example, one student suggested having visual tools to show for each word so that students could make concrete connections. Finally, students determined the best places for tutors to stop to discuss and ask questions with the children. They also write the questions tutors could use when reading the books with young children.

The project was designed so that adolescents would have to think about how a younger student might approach the text. Students had to read and closely analyze texts, not only for their own understanding, but also consider how the other student might read and analyze, in order to complete it. The project also was designed so that students could see themselves as capable

readers and designers rather than being positioned as students who struggle, which is how they often are positioned in remedial instruction in high school contexts.

I created the project documents along with directions and examples for students to follow. I met with the participating teachers first as a group to explain the project and then followed up with each one to verify their understanding and to exchange ideas about how to assist students who needed additional support. Teachers were provided with digital copies of the directions and examples for students as well as the set of library books and the link for the digital books. I set up a Google Classroom, the school's preferred Learning Management System (LMS), so that all students in the two classes had access to materials as well as a place to upload their finished work. Although I was a participant observer at times, the teachers implemented the project during the class blocks in which they had the student groups chosen for the study. The study took place during the last quarter of the 2020-2021 school year. As they were also finishing their required curriculum and preparing for end-of-year testing, this project was considered a supplemental project for which teachers offered students extra credit for satisfactory completion of the project. As such, each teacher offered segments of class time a day or two each week for students to work on it.

The project was completed during the time when schools were implementing safety protocols to protect students and staff from COVID-19. Students attended school on a hybrid schedule in which they were at school two days a week and virtually the rest of the week, or they were attending virtually the entire week. Therefore, certain modifications were required to the project. Students were not allowed to work at tables together in face-to-face interaction. Instead, their teachers suggested they work together virtually using Google Meet or other technology platforms, but many resisted and chose to work alone.

Table 3.1

Tutoring modules and student action.

Module Needs:	**Student action:**
A set of books on the same topic to build depth of knowledge.	1. Students determined topics children in grades 2-5 would want to learn more about. 2. Students read books on the chosen topics to determine which ones to use. Students were encouraged to read several books to choose the ones with the best quality. Students discussed, as a class, since they could not meet in small groups and came to a consensus on their criterion for choosing the books and which books were chosen. Many students defaulted to books of their own interests. 3. Students determined the main ideas that connect the books as well as the main idea for each book individually. 4. Students used answer stems from commenting on their rationale for choosing the books they chose. (¨I chose the book _____ to be part of our module because _____, _____, and _____.¨)
Four of the books should be fluency texts with core concepts the child needs to know (main idea).	1. For each of the books chosen, students wrote a brief annotated bibliography. 2. Students wrote Lexile-appropriate fluency texts about each book.
Key vocabulary from the books	1. Students chose key vocabulary from the books and determined the best way to teach the vocabulary words (meaning and usage) to the children. Students were encouraged to find creative ways (e.g.: video-acting out the words) to teach the vocabulary. 2. Students were encouraged to construct a quiz for the vocabulary words chosen.
Discussion guide the tutor can use when working with the child	1. Students identified stopping points for discussion in the reading. 2. Students wrote thoughtful comprehension questions which tutors can use when reading with the children.

Case Study Methodology

I chose qualitative case study as the primary method for examining the process in which students engaged in and learned from the curriculum design project (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2008). Yin defines case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (2008, p. 18). It is in studying the aspects of this case that I strived to make sense of identity and how

accompanying that with comprehension, tutoring, and writing for authentic audiences informs our understanding on how to better teach adolescent readers who need additional support.

This method provided a systematic way to observe students as they worked. It also provided an opportunity to interview them about their thoughts about reading, why they approach reading tasks the way they do, and what happens when working with peers to design modules younger readers with literacy difficulties can use. In short, it gave me a way to study how students who struggle with their own reading skills react and work when given a specific purpose for learning.

Among the types of case study research, I chose instrumental case study as the appropriate method for this study. In instrumental case studies, the researcher comes to a new understanding of the topic at hand rather than the case itself (Merriam, 2009). My interest in how students who normally struggle might work together to become expert readers on a topic prompted me to want to provide materials for younger readers with literacy difficulties and that led me to this study. Prior to the study, I wondered the following: How would they react? Would they work together to help one another overcome hurdles? Would they persevere to finish the work that would lead to not only their own building of skills and knowledge but also produce work that would help others? The results varied from student to student.

Further, this is a descriptive study with the product being a "thick" description of what is being studied. Merriam explains that "thick description" is a term taken from the field of anthropology and means "the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (2009, p. 43). The description is clear enough that the reader can "see" what happened, how it happened, what was said, and thus be able to make their own inferences. It can

take many forms, including creative use of prose, telling a story, even to the point that the factual information may read more like a short story. That is what I have strived to do here.

Design-Based Research

Since this study focused not only on understanding the experience of adolescent readers but also on the development of an innovative pedagogical approach, I chose to align with several principles of design-based research where formative experiments in the classroom have yielded positive results. Research conducted in this tradition seeks to "determine how an intervention can be implemented in an authentic instructional context" to achieve the goal (Howell et al., 2017, p. 186). In this kind of research, the researcher establishes a pedagogical goal, implements a tentative approach to instruction aimed at that goal, and then systematically examines how or why the goal was met in order to identify improvements for the next iteration of the approach. Further, practices should "develop competence and confidence in learners" and thus include "careful scaffolding and supports for students to undertake rich, engaging, authentic tasks, creating zone of proximal development for rich learning through active inquiry and strategic, explicit instruction" (Design Principles, 2022, p. 61).

In this study, I explore how a curriculum design project can assist adolescent students with a history of reading difficulty. Ninth-grade students with limited success in reading and ELA skills will use children's books to write tutoring modules for younger students. By reading on a level that more closely aligns with their own reading abilities and writing for an authentic audience, they will become more successful in reading. Further, they will grow in their abilities and grow in how they perceive themselves as readers. The research design allowed me to examine what worked and what did not work and how the design can be modified with those factors in mind as well as observe any unanticipated outcomes (Colwell & Reinking, 2016).

Description of Research Site

Phillips Webb High School (pseudonym) was the research site. The school is a 9-12 public high school in a growing but rural area between several small to medium-sized towns and 30 miles from a larger city. The school is part of a large and fast-growing school district in the Southeastern United States.

At the time of the study, the school's population for grades 9-12 was 1383 and the freshman class had 409 students. The ethnic breakdown of students is 63% white, 11% African American, 21% Hispanic, with 5% reporting multi-cultural or other. Our free and reduced lunch rate is 28.25%. The majority of students in the 9th-grade class come from one of three feeder schools in the district with a few others who move to the district or come into high school after being homeschooled through 8th grade.

The Classrooms

The site of the research study was two 9th-grade classrooms taught by two teachers plus two Exceptional Children (EC) inclusion teachers. In the semester of the study, students were in the English I course, but all of the students considered for the study also took Essentials of English, which is the foundational course lower-level students must take before going on to English I. This course is designed for students who struggle with English Language Arts skills and are not considered ready for the English I course at the start of the freshman year. These are students who test at the lower level at the elementary and early middle school levels in reading. Several parameters, including middle school Reading End of Grade (EOG) test and MAP scores were used to determine which students are placed in this course. Students in the class were chosen for this study based on these standardized test scores, the curriculum pre-test, and teacher observations and recommendations.

Two ELA teachers were the lead teachers for the study, and as their classes were inclusion model classrooms that included EC students, there were special education teachers who team-taught with them. Both teachers had interaction and instruction with all students, whether they were classified as EC inclusion or not. I also entered the classroom virtually, due to COVID protocol at the time, as a participant observer on some days. At the time of the study, students were attending either fully virtual or on a hybrid A/B schedule due to continuing COVID cases and protocols in the spring of 2021.

Participants

The multicase case study took place in two English I inclusion classrooms. As such, there were a total of four teachers, as each classroom also had an Exception Children (EC) teacher working with the regular education ELA teacher. From the two classrooms, there were 62 students. A convenience sample of eight students participated in the study although all students worked on the project. All names are pseudonyms.

The Teachers

Mr. Stallings (all names are pseudonyms) has been teaching high school English for nineteen years and sees the struggle many students experience with reading. He said he sees it with “every single class” and it ranges from high school students on a first-grade level to students who are on level but want to get better (interview February 4, 2021). As student reading problems run the spectrum, I asked him to elaborate. He noted that in a regular education classroom, above 50% of the students struggle with reading while in an inclusion classroom, which mainstreams exceptional children (EC) who are classified as such due to learning disabilities, along with regular education students, 60-75% of the students struggle (interview February 4, 2021). According to Mr. Stallings, the struggles students have ranged from sight-

word identification to comprehension. In his fourth block inclusion class, the class in this study, there were students classified as regular inclusion/EC, Occupational Course of Study (OCS), and the rest of the students were not identified as having a specific disability but were low to average level students. Of the 37 students in the class, more than half had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Mrs. Walton is also an English teacher and has taught both middle and high school for thirty-one years. She is troubled by the fact that students who struggle with reading "hate it," which makes her job more difficult. She stated, "if you can get any kind of success with a struggling reader in high school, you're making progress" (interview February 5, 2021). I asked about the frequency with which she encounters students who struggle with reading. She laughed and answered, "Daily. Every hour… because that's just the nature of what I teach" (interview February 5, 2021). While Mrs. Walton has taught some honors English classes, she usually has some of the lower-level classes because she has had repeated success with getting unmotivated students to work and show growth. She said the specific difficulties her students have is

> "a lack of comprehension that they don't understand what they are reading, and I guess that's coming from a lack of vocabulary. Ummm a lack of reading period, having the practice, you know, reading at home or reading growing up, someone didn't read with them, or they didn't read. Ummm, (pause) just mainly comprehension, I guess, stemming from a number of reasons" (interview February 5, 2021).

Ms. Sutton is an EC teacher with twenty years at the elementary level before moving to the high school level three years ago. She noted that with the inclusion classes "probably half the students, if not more, actually have trouble reading grade level texts" (interview February 4, 2021). Although she works primarily with EC students, she has noticed that "a lot of the non-

identified EC students also have trouble with grade-level texts and grade-level vocabulary" (interview February 4, 2021). A problem she noted is that the curriculum recently adopted by the district is at a higher level and regarding comprehension and vocabulary, "the majority of our students wrestle with the material" (interview February 4, 2021). She said she spends much of her time working with students to decode the reading, but that comprehension is also a problem. When I asked her about the biggest issues with comprehension problems, she said:

> I think there are two things. I think when we read the story aloud or when the computer reads the story aloud, we are up against a deficit in vocabulary. The students just don't have the knowledge of what the words mean, and I also think we are up against keeping their interest. I feel like when we start to read to them, it's like the commercial that comes on in the video you're trying to watch; you just tune it out and wait for something to get back to what we're looking for. But I have a feeling that sometimes if we push play and let the computer read it or we start reading it, a lot of the students are just tuning that out instead of trying to really get into the story, listen to the story and try to understand it. They are already thinking, "Okay, what questions do I have to answer?" (interview February 4, 2021).

She followed up by stating that there are three problems: decoding, as students do not have foundational skills; vocabulary and the use and application of vocabulary words; and the remote learning system we had at the time due to COVID.

Mrs. Perkins is also an EC teacher who has a background in teaching self-contained life skills, resources, Occupational Course of Study (OCS), and inclusion classes. This year she is working with Mrs. Walton in the inclusion class in this study. She has taught at the high school level for six years, with a total of twelve years of teaching experience. As the other teachers

noted, Mrs. Perkins also said students “don’t have a good phonemic awareness or vocabulary base,” so they struggle with higher-level texts (interview February 8, 2021). As a result, she said that “within at least every class, there are five to ten kids that do not have the ability to read well, and I have encountered some that cannot read at all in high school” (interview February 8, 2021). Lack of phonemic awareness and vocabulary deficits add to the larger problem of comprehension and understanding inferences. She said, “Some kids can read all day long, but they have no clue what they have read when they get to the end of it” (interview February 8, 2021). As an EC teacher who works across the curriculum, she sees this problem in other classes as well. For example, in math class, there are vocabulary terms that students cannot decipher and, therefore, cannot comprehend because they do not have the phonemic awareness to be able to break things apart to understand.

The Students

Eight students started the study, though all students in the two classrooms participated in the project per their teachers’ directions. Two students are Hispanic, one is mixed race, and five identified as white. All speak English and two speak English as their second language. The eight students met the requirements I set for the study, mainly that they were placed in a foundational/remedial ELA class before being allowed to take English I 2nd semester of their freshman year. Of the eight, two failed the foundational/remedial course and had to take a credit recovery online course after school to earn the credit. Also, of the eight, two failed English I during the semester of the study and attended summer school to recover the credit. Table 3.2 shows the breakdown of participating students’ standardized test scores.

Of the eight students who began the study, six participated in classroom activities, contributed to the project, and participated in all the associated interviews. One student, Ally,

participated in the classroom activities and contributed to the project, but did not provide substantive, robust interview responses. Another student, Holly, was y absent during the last two weeks of the study. Thus, her project was incomplete and she only participated in two of the three interviews. Therefore, while eight students participated in the study, only six provided robust data.

Table 3.2

Student Testing Data.

Student	Final grade in foundational/remedial ELA class	Final grade in English I	Last ELA EOG score level* (7th grade due to COVID)	Last ELA EOG percentile (7th grade due to COVID)	MAP reading percentile September 2020	MAP reading percentile December 2020	ELL level
Steven	80	90	1	13th	10th	17th	N/A
Ellen	60	70	2	28th	2nd	1st	N/A
Mateo	60	71	–	–	7th	8th	2.8 of 6
Lucas	66	74	1	3rd	53rd	–	N/A
Holly	57	46	2	15th	19th	23rd	N/A
Joshua	43	60	2	20th	–	–	N/A
Ally	60	49	1	7th	43rd	40th	N/A
Michael	79	76	–	–	24th	48th	N/A

*Note. "--" denotes data unavailable. *Levels defined by North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) (1-2, not proficient; 3, on grade level; 4-5, on track for competitive employment and post-secondary education). NCDPI defines non-proficient students as "[demonstrating] inconsistent understanding of grade-level content standards and will need support."*

Brief introductions of students

In this section, I will introduce the eight students who took part in the study. While there are commonalities among the students, there are also vast differences in their backgrounds, academic levels, personalities, and what they completed for the project.

Steven is a student who wants to do well, but he readily admits he only reads because he has to for school assignments. When I asked about reading for enjoyment, he responded that he does not because he "usually [doesn't] have the time" because it "takes a long time to read a whole book." He equated "reading" with academics and didn't seem to consider that reading social media or sites on the internet as actually reading. When he does occasionally read outside

of school, it is usually something related to sports, especially basketball and football, as that is his main interest. He also admitted that most of his time reading outside of class is spent on social media or on websites. He said he mainly reads "what people post on social media. I read, like how much something is to buy like for clothes and stuff, I see what's my size…. Sometimes, I look at, like, there's like a thing for football where I can see all the stats you have. I usually read that sometimes to see where we are in the conference and stuff like that. On a website. That's mainly it." Like many other students, if he is going to read, he wants it to be something of his own choosing. He said it mostly depends on his mood, but if he needed to pick something to read, it would probably be non-fiction, such as sports, or maybe even science fiction.

Ellen contradicts herself often when describing herself as a reader. She said she likes to read and in the next moment or two said she does not like it. She has a wide range of interests and talked as if she was wholly intrigued but then said she did not like it. Her teacher even described her as running hot and cold depending on the day when referring to how engaged she was in class. She likes reading when it is assigned if it is something she finds interesting. She said sometimes a story is good in the beginning but can get boring towards the end, and if she does not like it, she zones out and does not know what she is reading. She said, "I'd forget it, and then I'd have to read it over again, and then I'm like no, I'm not doing it, uh uh." As a general rule, she does not choose to read for enjoyment. She said, "Ahhh, I don't really do that, except for like, Instagram posts." When pressed about reading books or short stories, her response was, "I don't really like fairy tales and all that crap," but she does like reading about historical events such as 9/11 and the Twin Towers. She also likes reading about animals. Even when it is of something of interest, she will only read for pleasure "once in a blue moon."

Mateo is a quiet student who does not like to talk about himself or work with others in the class. He likes to blend in and not be noticed. Of all the students in the study, Mateo was perhaps the most brutally honest about his struggles with reading. He humbly described how he felt about it and initially hesitated when I first asked him about reading. In a low voice, he said, "I have trouble reading. I don't understand the words. When there is a lot, my eyes hurt. Sometimes I use a pencil to hold my place in the line or I put paper over part of the book to read one line at a time." He described himself as a slow reader and said, "It's just hard. It makes my head hurt." Not surprisingly, he admitted that he only reads when he has to and does not enjoy it at all. In fact, he said he often needs someone to read the text to him. I pushed a little further and asked what, if anything, he ever reads for fun. His response was, "I don't. Only when forced." I had observed him in class on his phone, so I asked what he reads other than books and assignments for school. He said he does like to look at Instagram and reads posts about sports. In addition, he occasionally responds to soccer posts with uplifting and encouraging messages like "don't give up" or "work harder." He seemed a little surprised when I pointed out that he was actually reading, and writing, using social media. In his mind, reading is limited to school assignments. His EC teacher, Ms. Sutton, described him as a student with "a reading learning disability, is an ELL, and has a limited vocabulary. He is a consistently hard worker but has a hard time understanding what the assignment is asking for." In addition, Ms. Sutton pointed out that he is the oldest child in his family and has a lot of responsibility at home to help take care of his three younger siblings. She said, "He is worried about his siblings and keeping them safe. I think he takes on a lot of adult worries that he shouldn't necessarily have to take on" (interview, June 3, 2021).

Lucas is a budding musician who gives the appearance of a student who is confident and cool under the pressure of balancing school with extracurricular activities. He agreed to be in the study at the request of his teacher and his mother, but he seemed to think he was above the others in the group. Lucas sees reading as mainly a means to do schoolwork and only reads for pleasure, but not often if it is something he is "genuinely into reading." While he does not like to read, he says he does not mind it when it is required for class and will read "if it's for homework." When he was younger, he did enjoy reading books such as *Goosebumps* or the *I Survived* series. He enjoyed reading mostly horror or nonfiction. However, he said, "It just doesn't catch my interest anymore." He said he does not read any magazines, social media, or anything else other than what he has to read for school, though he does text family and friends.

Holly is a student who does not like to be in school. Her English teacher noted that she is often absent, and there were several days when I observed the class when she was not present at school or attending virtually, or when I planned to meet with Holly via Zoom and she did not show up or respond to requests to meet virtually. In fact, I was not able to meet with her for her final interview due to repeated absences and a lack of response to email requests for Google Meets. When she is in school, she shows little interest in anything academic, though there were sparks of interest during our beginning and midpoint interviews. Like many teenagers and most of the students in the study, Holly's most frequent activity in reading is from text messages and Instagram posts. On comprehension, Holly said she only sometimes understands what she reads. She said, "Not all of it clicks in my brain. Some of it does, but not all of it." At the midpoint interview, she said she was comprehending what she read because she was choosing a quiet place to read. She has learned that she gets distracted easily, and she has a hard time when people in the class are too loud.

Joshua, like many students, only likes reading when it is on a topic of his choosing. He said he used to "think it was silly" to have to read but that he had to "in order to get answers" and has figured out it is a good way to learn about topics he wants to know more about. His favorite topic is dinosaurs. At some points during the project, both during interviews and class observations, he declared that reading is boring. However, at other times he said reading is fun and that sometimes it is even "a feeling of relief at its finest. Just being able to read something to tell you what to do." He contradicted himself when talking about his favorite types of books. He mentions chapter books but also says his favorite type of book is a comic book or graphic novel. He said, "I just don't like books that don't have a lot of words in them and has these pictures that don't correlate with the words on the page. I like picture books but only when it is a comic book so I can physically see what's going on, or in a chapter book, I know what's going on because it says it in all the words." He said "the graphic novel is more understandable than the book…. A lot of things that they say in the book makes way more sense when you actually see it in the graphic novel." After further questioning, he admitted that he does like reading when it is clear that there is much imagery that helps him picture what the author is saying. He said, "I like that there is a lot of detail in it, and instead of them showing an actual picture, you can kind of get an idea in your head…And also the fact that there can be a lot of mystery in it better than tv shows or movies." He describes himself as a slow reader, and it often takes him longer than 20 minutes to get halfway through a chapter. This is part of the reason he does not read much for enjoyment. He would rather spend his time playing video games with his brothers.

Ally described herself as a slow reader and said she gets "distracted really fast with other stuff." However, if it is something she is reading for enjoyment, she said she "can read those really fast and something I would actually pay attention to" (interview, March 25, 2021). She

prefers short books rather than long ones and when she gets to choose, which she admitted is not very often, perhaps once a month, she prefers action books. I asked about her favorite book. She said, “I forgot the name, um, it was something I read that they got, like, stuck somewhere. It’s a popular book. I don’t remember the name, though. The one where they got locked in, like the forest and stuff, and most of them kind of just died” (interview, March 25, 2021). Like most students, she said Instagram is what she reads when choosing a medium other than books. What she likes about it is that “It’s different stuff every time” (interview, March 25, 2021).

Michael, of all the students in the study, is the one who reads the most and although he admits that it is not his favorite thing to do, he does enjoy it, and he appreciates the craft and nuances of language authors put into writing. He said that reading just for pleasure is “not that often” but he will read “when I don’t feel like doing anything else so I have time to do it, and I will” (interview, March 26, 2021). His favorite genres are fiction, action, history, and Greek mythology. Prior to beginning this study, Michael’s English class had been reading *The Odyssey,* which he very much enjoyed. When he does not enjoy reading and “probably ready to put it down,” it is usually “a science book or something like that.” One aspect of reading literature that Michael enjoys is “How much more detailed it is for one, and all the literary devices that are in reading, which usually you wouldn’t think about so much of those when you’re reading a book but …” He further explained that by “more detailed” he meant that it has “alliteration and other literary devices that work together to make a good book” because it makes the writing more complex and that “it has meaning behind it” but he dislikes having to think about punctuation and grammar (interview, February 26, 2021). Other than books, Michael said he spends time reading text messages and social media. Instagram is his favorite because “There are so many posts on it and so many people on it” (interview, March 26, 2021).

Data Collection

Data included a series of interviews, participant observations, artifacts, and reflections.

Interviews

In order to find out as much as possible about student identity and what students perceive about reading and their skills, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant, with the exception of one student who was absent the last two weeks and did not respond to email requests for the final interview. The first set of interviews was conducted at the beginning of the study. These questions for the students were constructed for the purpose of getting to know the readers' point of view on reading as well as their history, both academic and personal as it relates to books and reading at home. The questions for the teachers were constructed for the purpose of learning about their teaching experience, their experience teaching students who have a history of literacy difficulties, and what strategies for reading comprehension teachers have found to work well with these students.

The second set of interviews was conducted approximately halfway through the study. These questions for students aimed towards understanding students' current attitudes about reading and whether any changes were taking place. The questions for teachers were to assess how their students were progressing with the project and their thoughts on the implementation of the project itself.

The third and final set of interviews was at the end of the study. The purpose of the final interviews for students was to gauge what they learned about themselves as readers and their perceptions of reading, what they learned from participating in the project, and their ideas for future use of the project. A second purpose of the final interview for the teachers was to get their

perceptions of how students benefited from working on the project. A list of questions for each set of interviews is in the Appendix.

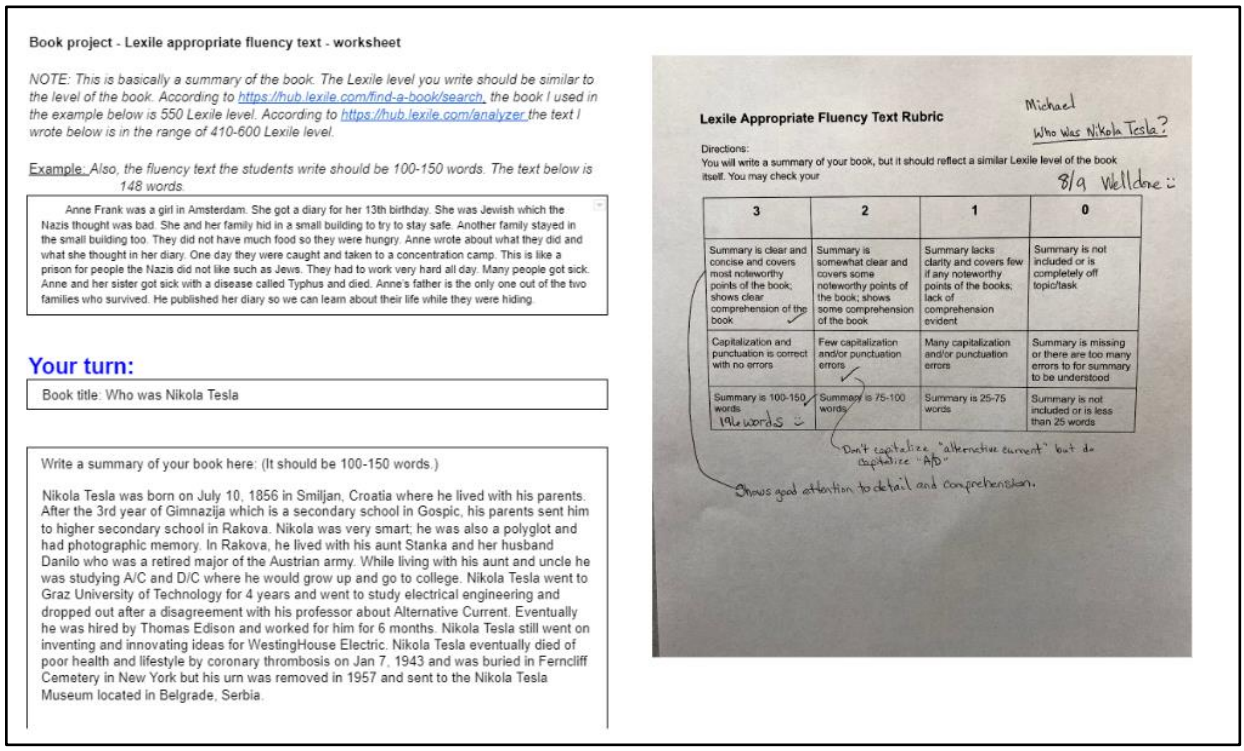
Interviews were conducted individually on Zoom and lasted approximately 20 to 40 minutes each. The questions were used as a guide as they were open-ended and student responses often led to more questions (Creswell, 2014). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. After all interviews were completed at the end of the study, I wrote narrative descriptions for each of the student participants. I asked teachers to look over my narratives as a way of member checking that I had accurately represented the students, especially in regard to teacher/student interactions. Parts of those narrative descriptions are what is used above in the section "Brief introduction of students."

Participant Observations

In addition to the teachers in the classroom, I became a participant observer (Creswell, 2014). Due to COVID and the protocol approved by IRB, I observed virtually via the teachers' Google Classroom links. I observed each of the two classes once a week for approximately 20 minutes each time. At various points during observations, I asked students to share what they were working on and if they had questions or concerns. As I observed the classes, I took observation notes either in the moment or as soon as I could by the end of the day. My notes centered on the instruction taking place and questions students asked. There were times during these virtual observations that the camera was on the teacher and not on the students or the screen shared was the teacher's screen, so it was difficult to observe much in the way of student work habits. An added challenge to observing classes was that on any given day, approximately half the students were joining virtually. The school district did not require students to turn on their cameras during remote instruction, and many did not participate verbally either.

Artifacts

Student work samples were collected and analyzed. For the books they chose to read, students submitted Lexile-level fluency texts, annotated bibliographies, vocabulary words gleaned from the reading, and discussion questions. For each of these assignments, I used a rubric as a means of objectively analyzing the piece. An example of each is included in the figures below. Due to COVID protocols of the IRB, I was not allowed to collect paper copies, and the majority of the work was submitted electronically. However, two students struggled with this and convinced their teacher that they work better on paper than on the computer. Since these were students who attended class two days a week on the hybrid schedule, the teacher allowed students to submit their work on paper. The teacher provided digital copies for me which you will see in two of the work samples below.



Book project - Lexile appropriate fluency text - worksheet

NOTE: This is basically a summary of the book. The Lexile level you write should be similar to the level of the book. According to https://hub.lexile.com/find-a-book/search, the book I used in the example below is 550 Lexile level. According to https://hub.lexile.com/analyzer the text I wrote below is in the range of 410-600 Lexile level.

Example: *Also, the fluency text the students write should be 100-150 words. The text below is 148 words.*

Anne Frank was a girl in Amsterdam. She got a diary for her 13th birthday. She was Jewish which the Nazis thought was bad. She and her family hid in a small building to try to stay safe. Another family stayed in the small building too. They did not have much food so they were hungry. Anne wrote about what they did and what she thought in her diary. One day they were caught and taken to a concentration camp. This is like a prison for people the Nazis did not like such as Jews. They had to work very hard all day. Many people got sick. Anne and her sister got sick with a disease called Typhus and died. Anne's father is the only one out of the two families who survived. He published her diary so we can learn about their life while they were hiding.

Your turn:

Book title: Who was Nikola Tesla

Write a summary of your book here: (It should be 100-150 words.)

Nikola Tesla was born on July 10, 1856 in Smiljan, Croatia where he lived with his parents. After the 3rd year of Gimnazija which is a secondary school in Gospic, his parents sent him to higher secondary school in Rakova. Nikola was very smart; he was also a polyglot and had photographic memory. In Rakova, he lived with his aunt Stanka and her husband Danilo who was a retired major of the Austrian army. While living with his aunt and uncle he was studying A/C and D/C where he would grow up and go to college. Nikola Tesla went to Graz University of Technology for 4 years and went to study electrical engineering and dropped out after a disagreement with his professor about Alternative Current. Eventually he was hired by Thomas Edison and worked for him for 6 months. Nikola Tesla still went on inventing and innovating ideas for WestingHouse Electric. Nikola Tesla eventually died of poor health and lifestyle by coronary thrombosis on Jan 7, 1943 and was buried in Ferncliff Cemetery in New York but his urn was removed in 1957 and sent to the Nikola Tesla Museum located in Belgrade, Serbia.

Lexile Appropriate Fluency Text Rubric

Michael
Who Was Nikola Tesla?

Directions:
You will write a summary of your book, but it should reflect a similar Lexile level of the book itself. You may check your

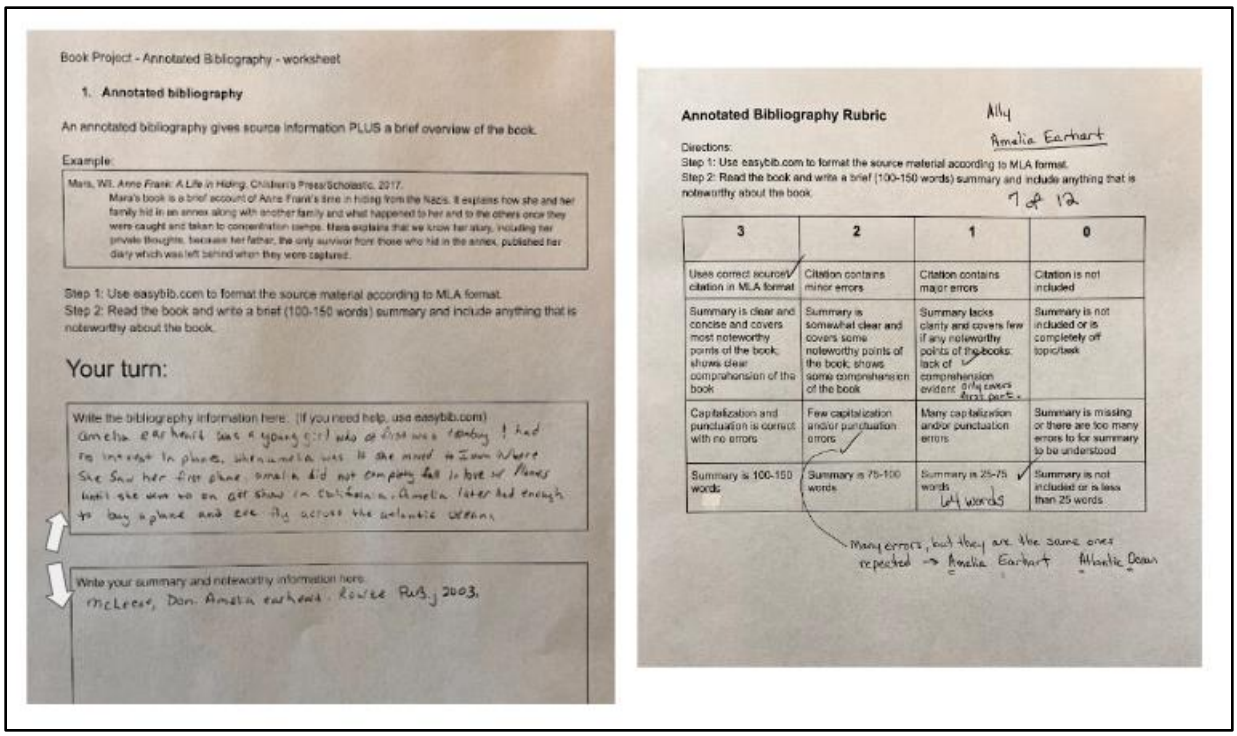
8/9 Well done :)

3	2	1	0
Summary is clear and concise and covers most noteworthy points of the book; shows clear comprehension of the book ✓	Summary is somewhat clear and covers some noteworthy points of the book; shows some comprehension of the book	Summary lacks clarity and covers few if any noteworthy points of the books; lack of comprehension evident	Summary is not included or is completely off topic/task
Capitalization and punctuation is correct with no errors	Few capitalization and/or punctuation errors ✓	Many capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Summary is missing or there are too many errors to for summary to be understood
Summary is 100-150 words ✓ 196 words :)	Summary is 75-100 words	Summary is 25-75 words	Summary is not included or is less than 25 words

Don't capitalize "alternative current" but do capitalize "AC"

Shows good attention to detail and comprehension.

Figure 1: Work sample and rubric for Lexile Fluency Text.



Book Project - Annotated Bibliography - worksheet

1. **Annotated bibliography**

An annotated bibliography gives source information PLUS a brief overview of the book.

Example:

Mara, Wil. *Anne Frank: A Life in Hiding*. Children's Press/Scholastic, 2017.
Mara's book is a brief account of Anne Frank's time in hiding from the Nazis. It explains how she and her family hid in an annex along with another family and what happened to her and to the others once they were caught and taken to concentration camps. Mara explains that we know her story, including her private thoughts, because her father, the only survivor from those who hid in the annex, published her diary which was left behind when they were captured.

Step 1: Use easybib.com to format the source material according to MLA format.
Step 2: Read the book and write a brief (100-150 words) summary and include anything that is noteworthy about the book.

Your turn:

Write the bibliography information here: (If you need help, use easybib.com)
Amelia Earhart was a young girl who at first was terrified I had no interest in planes. When Amelia was 10 she moved to Iowa where She saw her first plane. Amelia did not completly fall in love w/ Planes until she won an air show in California. Amelia later had enough to buy a plane and flew across the atlantic ocean.

Write your summary and noteworthy information here:
McLeese, Don. Amelia earhart. Rowes Pub, 2003.

Annotated Bibliography Rubric Ally Amelia Earhart

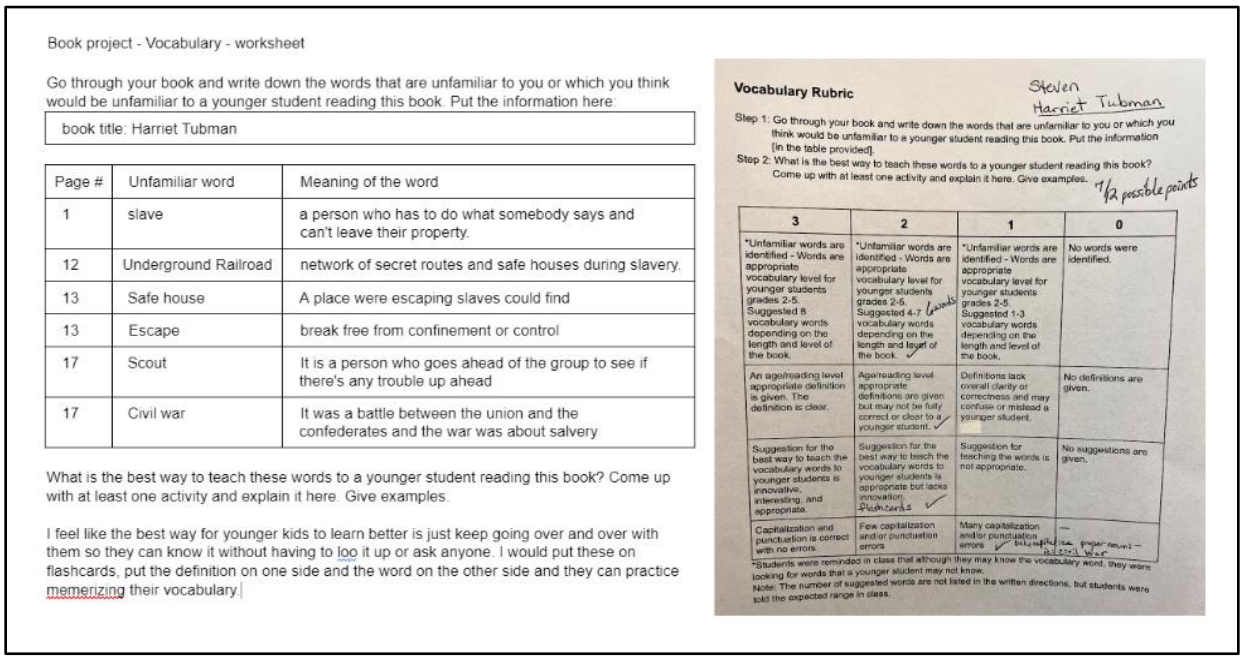
Directions:
Step 1: Use easybib.com to format the source material according to MLA format.
Step 2: Read the book and write a brief (100-150 words) summary and include anything that is noteworthy about the book.

7 of 12

3	2	1	0
Uses correct source/citation in MLA format	Citation contains minor errors	Citation contains major errors	Citation is not included
Summary is clear and concise and covers most noteworthy points of the book; shows clear comprehension of the book	Summary is somewhat clear and covers some noteworthy points of the book; shows some comprehension of the book	Summary lacks clarity and covers few if any noteworthy points of the books; lack of comprehension evident Billy leaves first part.	Summary is not included or is completely off topic/task
Capitalization and punctuation is correct with no errors	Few capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Many capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Summary is missing or there are too many errors to for summary to be understood
Summary is 100-150 words	Summary is 75-100 words	Summary is 25-75 words 64 words	Summary is not included or is less than 25 words

Many errors, but they are the same ones repeated → Amelia Earhart Atlantic Ocean

Figure 2: Work sample and rubric for Annotated Bibliography.



Book project - Vocabulary - worksheet

Go through your book and write down the words that are unfamiliar to you or which you think would be unfamiliar to a younger student reading this book. Put the information here:

book title: Harriet Tubman

Page #	Unfamiliar word	Meaning of the word
1	slave	a person who has to do what somebody says and can't leave their property.
12	Underground Railroad	network of secret routes and safe houses during slavery.
13	Safe house	A place were escaping slaves could find
13	Escape	break free from confinement or control
17	Scout	It is a person who goes ahead of the group to see if there's any trouble up ahead
17	Civil war	It was a battle between the union and the confederates and the war was about salvery

What is the best way to teach these words to a younger student reading this book? Come up with at least one activity and explain it here. Give examples.

I feel like the best way for younger kids to learn better is just keep going over and over with them so they can know it without having to loo it up or ask anyone. I would put these on flashcards, put the definition on one side and the word on the other side and they can practice memerizing their vocabulary.

Vocabulary Rubric Steven Harriet Tubman

Step 1: Go through your book and write down the words that are unfamiliar to you or which you think would be unfamiliar to a younger student reading this book. Put the information [in the table provided].
Step 2: What is the best way to teach these words to a younger student reading this book? Come up with at least one activity and explain it here. Give examples.

11/12 possible points

3	2	1	0
*Unfamiliar words are identified - Words are appropriate vocabulary level for younger students grades 2-5. Suggested 8 vocabulary words depending on the length and level of the book.	*Unfamiliar words are identified - Words are appropriate vocabulary level for younger students grades 2-5. Suggested 4-7 words vocabulary words depending on the length and level of the book. ✓	*Unfamiliar words are identified - Words are appropriate vocabulary level for younger students grades 2-5. Suggested 1-3 vocabulary words depending on the length and level of the book.	No words were identified.
An age/reading level appropriate definition is given. The definition is clear.	Age/reading level appropriate definitions are given but may not be fully correct or clear to a younger student. ✓	Definitions lack overall clarity or correctness and may confuse or mislead a younger student.	No definitions are given.
Suggestion for the best way to teach the vocabulary words to younger students is innovative, interesting, and appropriate.	Suggestion for the best way to teach the vocabulary words to younger students is appropriate but lacks innovation. Flashcards ✓	Suggestion for teaching the words is not appropriate.	No suggestions are given.
Capitalization and punctuation is correct with no errors	Few capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Many capitalization and/or punctuation errors ✓ billy/billies paper-mâché - Atlantic War	—

*Students were reminded in class that although they may know the vocabulary word, they were looking for words that a younger student may not know.
Note: The number of suggested words are not listed in the written directions, but students were told the expected range in class.

Figure 3: Work sample and rubric for Vocabulary.

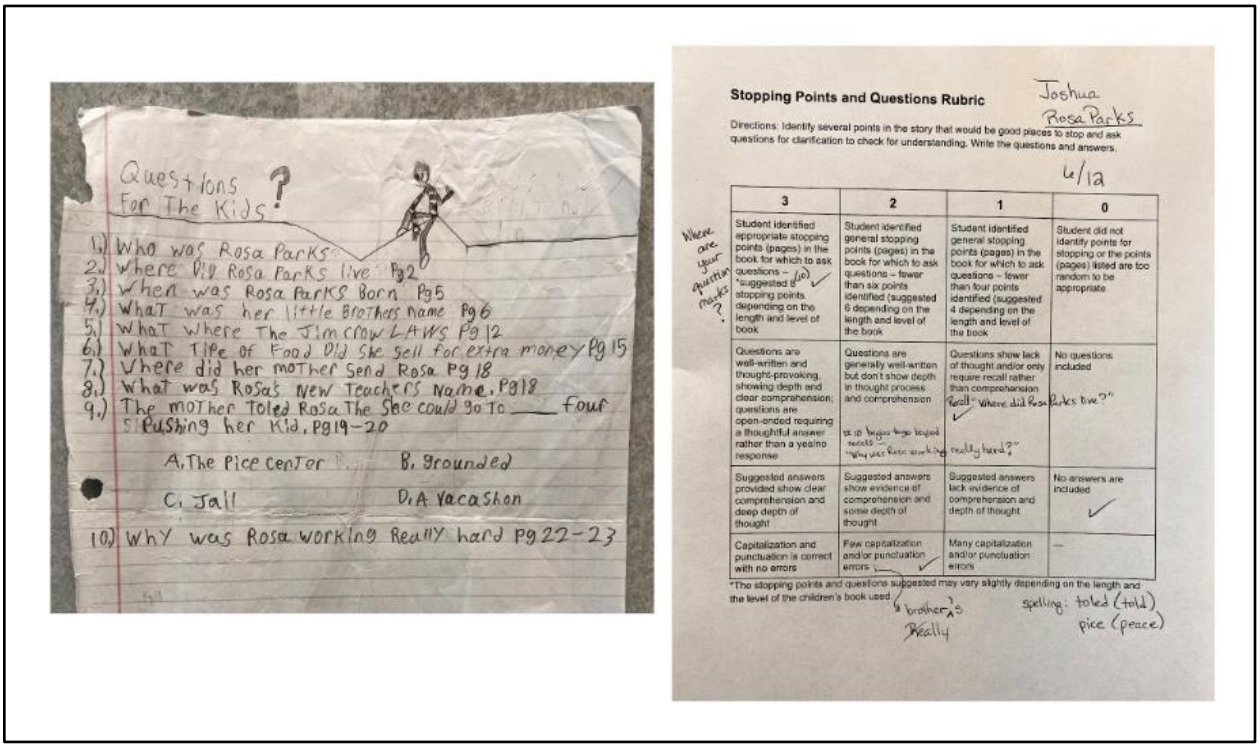


Figure 4: Work sample and rubric for Stopping Points and Questions.

Teachers also assigned a series of three grade-level passages for students to annotate. The purpose of this was to see how they interacted with text on the ninth-grade level since their other primary work was with children's books. My goal was to see any growth from the first to the last in regard to noting detail, recognizing and understanding the literary elements included in the pieces, and how well they comprehend the text. The first assigned annotation near the beginning of the project was given by the teachers and was based on *Romeo and Juliet*, the text students were reading in class at the time. The next two passages, given approximately half-way through the project and the last near the end, were an excerpt from "Our Good Day" from *House on Mango Street* and a news article "C.D.C. Advisers Endorse Pfizer Vaccine for Children Ages 12 to 15." In each, students were asked to annotate for new vocabulary, various literary elements such literary devices (simile, metaphor, etc.), and central/main idea. They were also asked to

write either an explanation of what they noted or write high-level questions they could ask a classmate to assess understanding and further discussion.

Reflections

After each phase of gathering data, I reflected on what had taken place and if any adjustments were necessary. For example, after the teachers gave the first annotation exercise, I realized I had not been specific enough about what needed to be included and that both teachers should give the same annotation assignment, not just from the same piece of literature. As a result, although I could use the student annotations, I knew there would not be a clear comparison as the annotations from the two classes showed very different skills. Also, after reflecting on the first round of interviews, I had a better idea of what I wanted to look for when I observed the students in class.

Data Analysis

Analysis was ongoing, which helped spur further questions and conclusions as well as triangulate data on a regular basis throughout the study. This was a cyclical coding approach to analyze data as I sought to make sense of it. Through this process I used both Dedoose software and coded manually for all student and teacher interviews. I coded student work samples/artifacts using descriptive codes and rubrics I designed according to the requirements of the task. The data analysis process took place over the following steps.

Inductive Coding

Inductive coding labels data with descriptive codes. In the first cycle I used inductive coding to label my data with an open mind to begin discovering what ideas emerged and make meaning of it (Saldaña, 2021). For example, I coded the first set of interviews in which I asked student participants about their opinions and experiences in reading. Most of the coding for this

part was In Vivo coding as I used students' own words, when possible, and used short quotes as the codes. To the question, "Why do you read?" Some of the coded responses were "because I have to," "for homework," "to learn about stuff," and "to get better." These answers to this first interview question illustrated right away that students have varying opinions about one of the most elemental parts of their education.

During the first cycle of coding for the student work samples, I used inductive/open coding along with a layer of descriptive coding to identify strengths and weaknesses of the students. These notes were coupled with rubrics I designed for each type of work sample. I used these notes and rubrics when getting feedback from their teachers as to their viewpoints on any improvement or growth they observed.

Throughout cycle one coding, I read through all of the data several times while refining the cycle one initial codes. Some codes needed to be adjusted, merged, or deleted for data reduction. For each student in the case study, I coded their interviews, what teachers said about them in interviews, and the work students produced throughout the study. I analyzed each case individually first in order to identify all patterns and nuances before mingling the results with other cases. With the completion of inductive coding, I proceeded with axial coding.

Axial Coding

Axial coding is grouping initial descriptions into larger categories. As I continued pulling out relevant quotes and ideas, I began to categorize them, putting similar quotes and ideas together. Table 1 illustrates the inductive coding process utilized in this study. In chapter 4, final codes are shown in relation to the findings of this study.

Table 3.3

Initial inductive codes from student #1.

Initial codes	Preliminary categories
"I have to" "Average…above average" "Not the fastest" "Everyone should be able to" "Should be able to" "Don't have time" "That is how people get smarter" "Sports…that's what I'm into" "Takes a long time" "Sports" "Depends on how the mood is" "Social media" "Somewhere quiet" "Social media" kid books Dr. Seuss Book fair when little…bought books" "Didn't have time" Read to grandparents Clock-out sheets "Had to [read] to … get better" Mom reads when bored Bookcase of books No one negative "Keep doing it over and over until you do it good again" "That's how you get smart" "If you can't read you can't do nothing" encourage/motivate "well-paid job" "Everyone should do it" "Should always read something"	**Reasons/what I read:** "I have to" "Social media" "Social media" **Reasons I don't read:** "Don't have time" "Depends on how the mood is" "Takes a long time" "Didn't have time" **Reasons to read:** "Everyone should be able to" "Should be able to" "That is how people get smarter" " That's how you get smart" "If you can't read you can't do nothing" encourage/motivate "well-paid job" "Everyone should do it" "Should always read something" **Perceptions of self:** "Average…above average" "Not the fastest" **Environmental/experiential:** "Somewhere quiet" Book fair when little…bought books" Read to grandparents Clock-out sheets Mom reads when bored Bookcase of books at home

At the conclusion of axial coding, 121 codes were merged and revised down to 53 revised codes, which resulted in 12 initial findings across three research questions. With the completion of axial coding, I proceeded to analytical memoing. (See Table X in chapter 4.)

Analytical Memoing

Analytical memoing (Saldaña, 2021) situates the data in a narrative context. Saldaña refers to this as a means to "dump your brain" (p. 58, 2021) of all of the information regarding participants, artifacts, etc. These memos are notes to me and were written concurrently during both rounds of coding. Some of these memos are thoughts for which there was so far not a clear piece of evidence to code. For example, I noted in my analytical memos that of all the student participants, Steven seemed to be the most confident in his abilities and was the most serious about his academic work. However, while he was studious, he still had academic struggles and ranked in the lower percentile on standardized tests and made an 80, barely a B, in Essentials of English. Writing this memo helped me see and document the larger picture more so than his actual words in the interview or his work samples.

Cross-Case Analysis

Cross-case analysis examines multiple participants across the study to examine their similarities and differences. After individual cases were coded by both inductive and axial coding, I conducted a cross-case analysis to make observations to analyze findings. I created a matrix for data display that shows patterns of each individual case for comparison (Hall, 2010). As I coded and analyzed across cases, I looked for how these similarities and differences may be described. Throughout the process, coding was updated and adjusted. At this point in the process, as I coded and reread the data, I began to use the larger coding categories that were consistent across the cases to develop assertions that addressed the study's research questions. These assertions include the major concepts that emerged across cases, and they comprise the main findings of the study. The movement from individual codes to categories and to findings is shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Relationship between research questions, findings, and final codes.

Research Questions	Initial Codes	Revised Codes	Findings Categorized
RQ1: How does participation in a collaborative curriculum-design intervention impact the foundational reading skills of adolescents with a history of literacy difficulties?	*engagement, ownership, questioning text, reading with purpose, task completion, motivation, focus, digging deeper*	*engagement, ownership, questioning text, reading with purpose, task completion*	active reading skills
	repeated practice, "doing the thing in my head", transfer skills to other assignments, active reading, asking question of text, practice before speaking, internalize, reflecting, internalizing	*"In my head", transfer skills, questioning text, reflecting*	opportunity to practice metacognitive skills
	other points of view, beyond initial realization, objective, summarizing, reflecting	*other points of view, objective summary*	objective points of view and summary
	focus on tasks, struggles with organization and focus, compartmentalize, easily distracted, successful completion of project, benefit of organizing = better comprehension, challenges self, teacher/helper role, step-by-step allowed not to be overwhelmed	*focus, compartmentalize, relieving distractions*	organization and focus lead to better comprehension

Table 3.4 (continued)

	from verbal to written, internalizes first, relieve academic/grade pressure, stress ability to write, talk at length (verbal), doodles on paper, focus	*internalize/ externalize, verbalizing, ability to write, relieve pressure to write*	transferring from verbal to written
	organizing tool, self-driven to answer own questions, figure out elements, self-sufficient, challenge, most helpful	*organizing, challenge/helpful, self-driven*	annotating and independent learning
RQ2: How does participation in the intervention impact students' identity and how they see themselves as readers?	*believe about self, discursive identities, performing in social and academic situations, embarrassed by mistakes, poor/slow readers, lose interest, get distracted, don't like reading, read only when forced, read to as children, perceived abilities, aware of limitations*	*belief in self, discursive identities, embarrassed by mistakes, poor/slow readers, no interest in reading, distracted, perceived abilities*	reader identity of students in the study

Table 3.4 (continued)

	relieve academic/grade pressure, aware of limitations, belief in intelligence, ownership for learning, enjoyment/success through accomplishment, reaches potential, motivation, internal struggle, help younger students, maturity, takes risks, willing to try, fascinated by what they read, sounds like someone who enjoys reading, willingness to accept help, all in his head, frustration, mad when teased by peers, seeing herself as a reader, unsure if working correctly, lack of trust in self, work with guidance toward success, Became enthusiastic, builds confidence, okay to make mistakes	*relieve pressure, ownership for learning, helping others, taking risks, permission to make mistakes, enjoying reading, seeing self as reader, trust in self*	impact of the project on students' identity

Table 3.4 (continued)

RQ3: What design principles emerge from this work that can inform the field's understanding of reading intervention for adolescent readers?	*step-by-step allowed not to be overwhelmed, scaffolding, build on skills, struggle with new task, confidence, helping others, individual parts, anxiety/overwhelmed, self-esteem, focus, organizing, jump from task to task, self-paced, active reading, engaged*	*Step-by-step, building skills, confidence, organizing, engaged*	creating a way for students to feel successful with a scaffolded structure
	enough time, self-pacing, own pace, slow and steady, autonomy, dedication to task, follow through on requirements, choice, confidence, empowerment, reluctant students, doodles, jumpstart, get on board	*self-pacing, autonomy, confidence, follow-through, ownership*	self-pacing and choice give students ownership
	buy-in, enthused, questions for others, help the kids, reluctant learners, willing to work, got on board, helping others, present best work, feeling empowered, motivation, "for the kids"	*help the kids, presenting best effort, getting on board, feeling empowered*	authentic audiences provide reality writing for students
	COVID protocols hampers collaboration, talk through thoughts, social learner, share it, individual vs collaborative, work on own = concentration, bounce ideas, interact with text	*talking through thoughts helps, social learning through interaction, building confidence, sharing ideas*	social learning builds confidence

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Building trustworthiness is key, and to establish this I followed Guba and Lincoln's (1981) four dimensions: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Guba and Lincoln describe credibility as identifying factors of the research problem and describing those factors as they relate to the data. Under the umbrella of credibility, I interviewed and observed, thus spending time with and getting to know the students in the study, triangulated data, and conducted member checks with the participating teachers so they could verify my notes (Erlandson et al., 1993). Several researchers relate reading and evaluating all data on a weekly or other regular basis to triangulate the information. Hall (2016) points out that multiple interviews help to clarify anything noticed during observations. Actions can be misinterpreted, but letting the student explain why he did what he did helped me better understand his process, thus adding a layer of credibility. For transferability, I included thick descriptions from my observations, interviews, and artifacts. In doing so, I applied the findings and linked them to the theories and research. For dependability, I kept detailed notes during the process and analysis. I asked two peer debriefers to review my notes and coding to ensure I was on the right track. Finally, I confirmed all data through consistency of notes and analysis.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the qualitative case study to examine how adolescent readers with literacy difficulties identify as readers while engaging in the curriculum-designed project in which they take on the role of experts to help younger students who are also building foundational skills. Throughout the study, I observed the classes on multiple days, talked often with the teachers of the classes, interviewed participants, and analyzed their artifacts. Due to

COVID protocols, much of this had to take place virtually. I also described the teachers and students in the study in order to give the reader a better understanding of the participants.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I explain the results of the study and the findings pertaining to each of the students as well as commonalities found across the group. Specifically, I also explain how working on a curriculum-design intervention impacted the reading skills of students with a history of literacy difficulties, how participation impacted students' identity and how they see themselves as readers, and what design principles emerged from this work that can inform the field's understanding of reading intervention for adolescent readers. I organize the findings by research question.

RQ1: How does participation in a collaborative curriculum-design intervention impact the reading skills of adolescents with a history of literacy difficulties?

All of the students in the study have a history of literacy difficulties. By introducing the curriculum-design intervention project, I was able to evaluate the impact it had on the students' foundational skills. Six impacts were evident across data sources and are outlined in the sections below. Teachers reported that students showed small gains for some students but not much evidence of gains for other students. While the gains might not have been great, it appears one positive is that students had a positive perception of working through the project and teachers reported that students learned strategies to help boost their reading ability. For example, Lucas stated that what he did on the project helped him when he got to the Shakespeare unit, which ran concurrent to all of what we did about Shakespeare. So that kind of eased my mind up about the whole reading thing" (interview, May 24, 2021). In addition, when I asked students, "What have

you learned about yourself [through this project] as a reader?" several had trouble articulating an answer. Ellen and Mateo did not answer at first, and Ally never answered even with a follow-up question. However, when I asked if I should do this project again with other students, most of them indicated that they recognized it as beneficial and said I should do it again to help other kids learn. Ellen said, "Yeah, 'cause it helps us understand better" (interview, May 24, 2021). Mateo nodded and said that kids need to read a book. Steven noted that it would help students prepare for their exams while Michael stated, "Of course. So you can figure out new things and what people struggle with so you can help them out about it" (interview, May 27, 2021). Through the analysis, six findings emerged including: (a) active reading skills, (b) opportunity to practice, (c) taking on other points of view and summary, (d) organization and focus leads to better comprehension, (e) transferring from verbal to written, and (f) annotating and independent learning.

Active Reading Skills

One of the biggest insights to emerge from the study was that most of the students honed their skills as active readers. Active reading is the practice of reading with the purpose of understanding various layers of meaning in a piece of writing rather than just reading for general information. Since students were given the task of reading children's books and then writing tutoring modules for younger students, they were put into the position of having to choose the vocabulary words, stopping points and questions/answers, and providing Lexile appropriate summaries of the books. They had to use their active reading skills to look beyond simply reading and comprehending the story.

Five of the eight students in this study showed small improvements in the area of active reading skills. They are noted in the table below. Table 4.1 presents the students' progress in active reading.

Table 4.1

Student Progress in Active Reading.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	–	–	–
Ellen	Reads "only in a blue moon," teacher describes her academic engagement as "hot and cold" as she was inconsistent from day to day	Teachers state that Ellen honed her metacognitive skills	Small improvements noted and are described in more detail in the next section
Mateo	Reads only when required though teachers note he is very much below grade level but has a strong work ethic	Teachers note Mateo has become better at using active reading strategies: annotating, questioning, and engaging with the text	Small improvement in active reading skills
Lucas	Used to read more but "it doesn't catch my interest anymore," reads only for homework, teachers note he procrastinates which limits his engagement	Though he was slow to get started, he became more engaged in questioning the text and his "good" answers were no longer good enough for him as he challenged himself to dig deeper	Small improvement in active reading skills
Holly	Absences make it difficult to complete work as she is inconsistent	–	–
Joshua	Not turning in work, low engagement, "Reading can be fun if it's something I like"	Highly engaged, turning in work, teacher said "Joshua made gains across the board" especially in questioning text and writing questions	Small improvement in active reading skills
Ally	Attendance is sporadic and work is inconsistent	–	–
Michael	Described himself as a "careless reader," teacher reported he has a history of not working to potential	Michael noted he was enjoying reading more which is "more interesting than I thought it was, teachers note he is digging deeper into the text and is more engaged	Small improvements are noted in active reading skills

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

Michael noted in an interview that he was a "careless" reader and Ms. Sutton had noted that he has a history of not working to his potential. Yet after this project, his teachers spoke highly that he had become more self-driven and taken ownership of his part in this project as he began finding answers to his own questions while digging deeper into the reading as evidenced by Ms. Sutton. During his midpoint interview, he talked at length about Nikola Tesla's biography and what he was learning from it. His work samples show detail about the topic; however, the questions and answers he wrote for the module are on a recall level rather than going deeper into the comprehension levels.

Similarly, Joshua also made gains with active reading skills. Mr. Stallings said the gains were across the board, primarily because of active reading and being engaged as well as taking ownership of his own learning. He added that in the past, Joshua would have an initial reaction to what he read, and that was it, but he got engaged with the text and spent more time deciding what questions to ask and what vocabulary was essential. As a result, he began to take ownership of his own learning and became more motivated in general. Ms. Sutton noted that at the beginning of the semester Joshua would not turn in any work at all, but that there was a "big change the last part of this semester" as he worked on the project (interview June 3, 2021).

Three teachers (English, EC, and case manager) all noted that Lucas became more of an active reader during and towards the end of the project. Mr. Stallings had early-on expressed frustration that Lucas was procrastinating and not completing work. However, in a joint effort among the teachers to help Lucas focus on his work, he was able to begin work and became more engaged in the text. Ms. Sutton stated, "He has tried to gain a deeper comprehension level…he wanted to not just comprehend on the surface, but go a little bit deeper" (interview June 3, 2021). In addition, all three teachers pointed out that Lucas began to isolate himself from

the rest of the class, sometimes in a different room with a smaller group and one of the teachers, in order to focus and complete his work.

Of all the students, Mateo is the one who struggled most with both regular classwork and with this project. Ms. Sutton stated that he is very much below grade level but is a "consistently hard worker, but has a hard time understanding what the assignment is asking for" (interview, June 3, 2021). Though Mateo produced minimal work, he showed improvement over what teachers had seen so far in the semester. Mr. Stallings said Mateo "is a more active reader now. He's questioning the text as he reads. He is engaging with the text as he reads…. He's showing improvement in self-discipline, perseverance, and task completion (interview June 3, 2021). This is particularly worth noting as Mateo told me during his first and midpoint interviews that he usually doesn't understand what he reads and that reading makes his head hurt.

Therefore, several of the students became active readers. Students became more engaged in the text by questioning the text, reading with a purpose, and completing the tasks which, according to the teachers, was an improvement for several students. As a result of active reading, students took ownership of their learning through this project.

Opportunity to Practice Metacognitive Skills

Another finding is that this project gave students the chance to practice metacognitive skills. Metacognitive skills involve deeper thought about what and how the task is done and includes self-questioning, self-monitoring, planning, and creating. Students were able to think about what they were doing rather than simply following directions. Two of the eight students displayed evidence of practicing metacognitive skills. Table 4.2 presents student progress in practicing metacognitive skills.

Table 4.2

Student Progress in Practicing Metacognitive Skills.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	–	–	–
Ellen	Prior to the project, Ellen would "read to be done" rather than read for learning, admits she "zones out" when reading and would have to start over again	Teacher noted a positive change in reading habits of purposely thinking through the process by formulating answers before writing or speaking, self-questioning, and planning	Small improvement in metacognitive skills
Mateo	–	–	–
Lucas	Teachers noted his tendency to become distracted easily when working on assignments, tends to jump from task to task	Teacher noted Lucas was more introspective about his work, became better at self-questioning and self-monitoring	Small improvement in metacognitive skills
Holly	–	–	–
Joshua	–	–	–
Ally	–	–	–
Michael	–	–	–

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

Ellen is a student who made a few small steps in her learning. Mr. Stallings noted that he saw her change her reading habits and strategies because she was beginning to think through the process of what to do next. She was self-questioning and planning. Prior to and at the beginning of this project, she would "read to be done," but as the project progressed, she began to "become a more active reader and more engaged in her reading and asking herself questions as she went along" (Stallings interview, June 3, 2021). Ellen described it as "doing the thing in my head" whereas she would practice what she was going to say or write before doing so to be sure she was getting it right. In an earlier interview, she said she comprehends what she reads, "If I read it more than once. At first, like I read the words and it goes right over my head, like I don't

remember crap. And then, I read it again and I'm good" (interview, March 19, 2021). Mr. Stallings noted that

> Her comprehension skills have improved dramatically . . . and everything that goes along with that, the active reading, incorporating reading strategies, those are the gains. The improvements would be both, I mean the simple nuts and bolts of her grade have caught up as a result of becoming more actively engaged in her learning. But additionally, her organizational skills and her self-discipline and her motivation all improved. (interview, June 3, 2021)

Ms. Sutton added she saw that Ellen used some of the metacognitive skills she honed while working on the project on other assignments as well and said "[Ellen] realized that it's not just something that is going to happen in one room, that it's going to be across the board and it's going to probably pertain to her future English courses" (interview, June 3, 2021).

Ms. Sutton noted that Lucas was becoming more introspective about his learning and was thinking more about what he was doing and his approach to it. She said, "as the semester went on, his answers were good but no longer good enough [for him] and when he realized that then he would challenge himself to try some answers that were a little deeper" (interview, June 3, 2021). She relayed concern that he still doubted himself, but she thought that was good because it showed he was thinking about what he knows and what he does not.

The finding of practicing metacognitive skills shows a small but important step for these students as they begin thinking more deeply about what they are doing, what they know and do not know, and what they can do to achieve the task. Both Ellen and Lucas showed small strides in this area.

Practicing Points of View and Summary

Taking on other points of view is being able to acknowledge and examine a thought, comment, event, or phenomenon in a way that is different from simply holding one's own opinion. Many students have difficulty looking beyond their own opinions and worldview, the way they interpret the world around them. Two of the eight students showed small improvement in this skill. Table 4.3 presents student progress in practicing points of view and summary.

Table 4.3

Student Progress in Practicing Points of View and Summary.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	–	–	–
Ellen	–	–	–
Mateo	–	–	–
Lucas	–	–	–
Holly	–	–	–
Joshua	Teacher noted that prior to the study, Joshua only responded to his own initial reaction to the text, he had a difficult time relating to other points of view	Teacher stated that Joshua "had to think above and beyond his own personal point of view… able to really master objective summary."	Small improvement in skill
Ally	–	–	–
Michael	Teacher noted Michael omitted details and had trouble thinking objectively	Teacher noted Michael's summarizing skills increased, work samples show details about the topic but written questions show minimal recall level	Small improvement in skill

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

Mr. Stallings was pleased to note that Joshua, a student with strong viewpoints and opinions, was able to demonstrate this. He said, "As far as improvements, the ability to reflect upon a reading, a book, and look at it from points of view other than his own," and that was a big step for him. Mr. Stallings continued to explain that in the past Joshua only reacted and

responded to his own initial reaction to the text, but "through the project and having to come up with ways to gauge other's comprehension of it, he had to think above and beyond his own personal point of view, to think about some objective points of view, as well as from different, very different viewpoints." Being able to do this led to a skill I had not anticipated. Mr. Stallings was happy to see that "with [Joshua], one of the gains was he was able to really master objective summary. He hadn't been able to get that without subjective for most of the year, for most of the fourth marking period while he was engaged in the class" (interview, June 3, 2021).

Summarizing is a skill many students lack as they want to include their own opinions and not objectively report, so I have included it in this section of taking on other points of view. Both Mr. Stallings and Michael commented that Michael made small strides in effectively summarizing material, therefore becoming more objective. This is a skill that had previously been a struggle for him, but by writing the fluency text and annotated bibliography paragraph, he had to think objectively and write from a perspective outside of his own point of view. Michael also noted that he has become more aware of his strengths and weaknesses in this area and has worked on a plan to strengthen his skills. He claimed that annotating while he read was a big help, though his perception of this particular improvement was not on the annotation task. He did an adequate job, but improvements were not noteworthy.

Therefore, an objective point of view, including the skill of summarizing, is one that helps students look beyond their immediate perspectives and beliefs to acknowledge the viewpoints of others. The importance of this skill is two-fold: (1) As students study both informational and fictional text, they need to be able to assess the viewpoints expressed by the author, and (2) they need to be able to discern the words and actions of those they encounter on a daily basis.

Organization and Focus Lead to Better Comprehension

Organization is a skill that is necessary, especially for a student who has academic difficulties, in order to manage tasks. Focus, though not necessarily defined as a skill, is also a goal for students to learn better. This study shows a relationship between organization, focus, and better comprehension of text. Two of the eight students, as well as their teachers, noted that students were able to focus on the tasks, something that did not come easily for them in their regular schoolwork. Table 4.4 presents students progress in organization and focus which resulted in better comprehension.

Table 4.4

Student Progress in Organization and Focus for Better Comprehension.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	–	–	–
Ellen	–	–	–
Mateo	Student noted he often doesn't understand what to do, teacher noted Mateo often sits and stare at an assignment not knowing what to do next, he does not often ask for help, synthesizing information is difficult for him	Teachers noted that once Mateo had one-on-one help to plan and organize his work, he was able to focus on the tasks and understand the text	Small improvement in skill though with one-on-one guidance
Lucas	Teachers noted a tendency for Lucas to get distracted and have trouble focusing on tasks, a tendency to jump from task to task, lacked organizational skills	Teachers noted the project helped him stay focused, Lucas was able to identify when he was beginning to lose focus and self-redirect, improved organizational skills to focus on one skill at a time for better comprehension	Small improvement in skill
Holly	–	–	–
Joshua	–	–	–
Ally	–	–	–
Michael	–	–	–

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

Lucas is a student who struggles with organization and focus, especially with tasks he does not enjoy. Mrs. Perkins, his EC case manager, as well as Mr. Stallings and Ms. Sutton, his teachers in the classroom, all noted that although this has been a major problem for him, he was able to show improvement during the time of the study. Mrs. Perkins helped Lucas organize the tasks into smaller parts. Mr. Stallings noted that Lucas originally assumed the directions and did the work his own way, but when he took it to him for review, Lucas had not done what was asked of him. Lucas and Mr. Stallings decided one of his issues was that he was easily distracted, so once Lucas isolated himself from the group, he was able to refocus, "and once he took his time and really focused on what was being asked of him, then he was able to successfully complete the project" said Mr. Stallings (interview, June 3, 2021). A huge benefit of organizing and focusing is better comprehension. Ms. Sutton added that Lucas gained a deeper comprehension level and challenged himself to dig deeper. She said, "As the semester went on his answers were good but no longer good enough, and when he realized that, then he would challenge himself to try some answers that were a little deeper, but he still had the sound of the question mark at the end" like he was not quite sure, but he kept working at it. Ms. Sutton added, "I think that he is starting to challenge himself more and maybe that is because he was taking on more what he considered a teacher role or helper role" due to the project designed to write modules to be used in tutoring for younger students (interview, June 3, 2021).

Mateo indicated that he did not know what to do until a teacher helped him break it down into manageable chunks. He would get to a point where he would not know what to do next and would not ask for help. Mr. Stalling said Mateo would just sit and stare at it and when Ms. Sutton asked why he was not working; he said he did not know what to do. She intervened and asked probing questions about what he understood and what he did not. Then she helped him decide

what the next step should be. For example, she helped him read through the directions and then asked questions about his book to get him to a point where he understood enough to start working again. Mr. Stallings stated that Mateo was finally able to gain focus on his book and was thus able to have a little more success comprehending what he read.

Organizing tasks and information seems to be a simple skill until one is faced with overwhelming information or unfamiliar tasks. When students learned skills for organizing their work they were able to better focus on what to do. In the two cases above, Lucas and Mateo were both able to eventually show some success, thereby indicating a better degree of comprehension once these skills were in place.

Transferring from Verbal to Written

Two of the eight students struggled to transfer to written form what they were able to verbalize. They were able to explain their books in detail but had trouble breaking through what teachers determined was anxiety based hesitancy to write what they thought. Table 4.5 presents student progress in transferring verbal knowledge to written text.

Table 4.5

Student Progress in Transferring Verbal to Written Text.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	–	–	–
Ellen	–	–	–
Mateo	–	–	–
Lucas	Teacher notes Lucas internalizes and comprehends information but has difficulty writing it, Lucas displayed signs of anxiety related to writing	Through working with a teacher who scaffolded the writing assignments, Lucas was able to take what he could verbalize and write it in smaller increments.	Small improvement in skill though still lacking in detail
Holly	–	–	–

Table 4.5 (continued)

Joshua	Researcher observed that Joshua can verbalize his thoughts and information to a high degree, but he struggles to transfer that knowledge to paper, the teacher noted possible anxiety that prevents him from putting thoughts on paper	Teachers noted that after much encouragement, Joshua was finally able, over several class sessions, to submit the minimum required work on paper.	Small improvement though lacking in detail
Ally	–	–	–
Michael	–	–	–

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

Mrs. Perkins noted that Lucas struggles with getting what is in his mind, what he can verbalize, onto paper or into a word document. She said he "internalizes it more first, reads, comprehends everything internally, has difficulty putting things on paper, but speaking them and words and telling somebody about something is a lot easier for him" (interview, June 15, 2021). By working on this project in smaller parts and without the pressure of a heavy grade, it has "stretched his ability to be able to physically write things on paper" (interview, June 15, 2021).

Joshua also has this problem. He internalizes much information and can verbalize his thoughts much of the time, but he has great trouble transferring that to paper. I saw this firsthand in both class observations and viewing his artifacts as well. Ms. Sutton noted that she thinks he has anxiety towards writing and that prevents him from "typing that first word or opening up that file" (interview June 3, 2021). Joshua finally did submit a limited handwritten project accentuated with doodles, mostly of dinosaurs or whimsical people (you can see his handiwork in Figure 4 in Chapter 3), which is not what his reading was about. When I asked him to explain his work to me, he talked at length about what he read and what he would do if helping a younger student learn the information from the book.

Some students struggle with getting what is in their minds onto paper. Both Lucas and Joshua could discuss their books and what they wanted to do for their projects, but both had trouble transferring those thoughts to paper. However, both were able to produce work with guidance. Both work samples were lacking in detail compared to what the students discussed with teachers and what they told me about their books and projects during interviews. It might be worth considering allowing multimodal avenues for future projects.

Annotating and Independent Learning

While annotating reading material is a strategy many strong readers regularly use, many readers with literacy difficulties do not. As the teachers noted, while the curriculum design project included annotation exercises, the results for most students were more mediocre than anticipated. That is, teachers stated that while students did mark their work with at least some of the required or even suggested elements, the detail was not at the expected level. While all students completed annotation tasks, teachers only focused on three of the students regarding this task during interviews. Table 4.6 presents the progress of the eight students in annotating and independent learning.

Table 4.6

Student Progress in Annotating and Independent Learning.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	Teacher noted that Steven needed to develop annotation skills	Teacher noted that Steven got good practice, though work samples showed no marked improvement	No improvement noted

Table 4.6 (continued)

Ellen	1st annotation task showed effort but incorrect identification of theme; 2nd task showed a decline in effort with few details and basic questioning., teacher noted she struggled because she was unsure she was doing it correctly and unsure of herself	3rd annotation task showed more correct labeling of required elements and higher level questioning, teacher noted that with guidance, she was able to annotate to satisfaction	Small improvement in skill
Mateo	Student was assigned annotation tasks	Work samples showed no marked improvement	No improvement noted
Lucas	Student was assigned annotation tasks	Work samples showed no marked improvement	No improvement noted
Holly	Student was assigned annotation tasks	Did not complete all three annotation tasks	Data inconclusive
Joshua	Student was assigned annotation tasks	Work samples showed no marked improvement	No improvement noted
Ally	Student was assigned annotation tasks	Did not complete all three annotation tasks	Data inconclusive
Michael	Michael noted he needed help with annotating skills, teacher noted that while he is a bright student, he was not fulfilling his potential to achieve	Michael noted that annotating was both his biggest challenge but what helped the most, teachers noted that annotating and monitoring his own reading process he became more self-driven and independent	Small improvement in skill for completed annotation tasks, but the process spurred other benefits

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

When annotating, students should actively engage in the text by making notes about what captures their attention and what is noteworthy to understand, track important details, write questions about what they do not understand or what would further group discussion, and overall help the student better focus on the material. Michael noted that the tasks really did help him understand the material better and that he enjoyed using annotation skills to help him figure out elements such as the main idea and figures of speech. When I asked what from the project helped him the most, he replied, "annotating for sure." When I asked what the most challenging was, he also replied, "probably still, the annotating." An added bonus to this is, as Ms. Sutton noted,

Michael became more independent at looking up what he did not know as he read and "became more self-driven as far as answering his own questions" (interview, June 3, 2021). He tried to figure it out on his own first and then asked for confirmation.

Mrs. Walton noted that Steven benefited from annotating what they read. She noted that Steven got "really good annotation practice, and that is a skill that he has to have to be successful, so the more practice he gets with this skill, the better off he is" (interview, June 3, 2021). However, work samples showed little to no improvement in this skill.

Ellen demonstrated slightly higher level skills in her annotating tasks. As evidenced by her work scored by the rubric, on the first one, she commented on the text and attempted to note the theme but was incorrect. The second annotation task showed a decline in the effort as she did not note many details and only listed basic recall questions such as "Who is Cathy?" However, on the third and final annotation task, Ellen was more particular in labeling the required elements such as the central idea, support for the central idea, and contrasting statements. The questions she asked also showed higher level questioning. For example, she asked, "What made this vaccine have negligible side effects?" Mr. Stallings also noted her improvement with annotating. He said that at the start, she struggled with annotating because "she was just unsure that she was doing it correctly, and she did not believe, she did not trust herself and so she struggled with that and so with a little bit of guidance, she was able to get that to her satisfaction" (interview, June 3, 2021).

Annotating text, any text, can be beneficial, especially for students who need a methodical way to track what they read. Students benefit, as seen by Michael and Steven above, when they hone this skill. The stronger their annotation skills the more independent they can be when engaging with text.

RQ2: How does participation in the intervention impact students' identity and how they see themselves as readers?

Students carry identity, both what they believe about themselves as well as those discursive identities placed on them by others. How students identify as readers affects how they feel about their abilities as well as how they perform in social and academic situations. Identity is also fluid and can change over time, though identities are internalized and often deeply ingrained, so changing is not easy. Because high school readers with literacy difficulties are reading at middle school or elementary school levels, I have chosen to focus on their reader identity.

Reader Identity of Students in the Study

As stated above, reader identity is linked to how students see themselves, thus how they identify as readers, namely in their capability to read well. Table 4.7 presents the reader identity of the readers in the study.

Table 4.7

Reader Identity of Students in the Study.

Name	Beginning self-described reader identity	Negative Experiences?
Steven	Average to above average reader	None noted
Ellen	Okay reader	Yes
Mateo	Slow reader	Yes
Lucas	"I don't know how to describe myself as a reader."	None noted
Holly	Slow reader	None noted
Joshua	Slow reader	Yes
Ally	Slow reader	None noted
Michael	Careless	None noted

The first couple of questions I asked students in the first interview were for the purpose of examining how they identify as readers and what attitudes they have about reading. Four students stated they are slow readers and one identified as a careless reader. Only one of the eight students, Steven, said he was an "average to above average" reader. The rest were critical of themselves. Joshua said he is sometimes embarrassed if he mispronounces a word. This embarrassment is caused likely because he has internalized a negative identity, and it is also possible that discursive identities, those identities that are constructed based on people's interactions with each other, have had an impact on him as well. However, when I asked if he remembered a time someone reacted negatively to his reading, he said not and specified that no one had ever bullied him because of it. Ellen and Mateo both discussed feeling frustrated due to reactions from their peers. Mateo remembers going to the school book fair in 4th grade and being criticized by classmates for the book he wanted to buy. They laughed and told him he reads too slow and needed to pay attention in class. Mateo said it made him feel really sad because he had tried. Ellen discussed how she has had a negative self-image regarding academics since she was in kindergarten when she realized she was in the lowest reading group after being tested. She said, "They made us read to see what level we were on. … I was at, well, I'm an IEP, so I'm on a lower level than I'm supposed to be, but I thought I was reading good (nervous laugh) 'cause I was like, well I did good, and then the test scores came back or whatever and they showed me lower" (interview, March 30, 2021). She described how frustrated it made her feel. She said she did not understand why she was reading at a lower level than the other kids when she could do other things the same as them. Through the years, she would get upset and "mad" when she had to read in class because the other students would say, "You're too slow." It was obvious not only through her words but through her demeanor during the interviews that this affects the way she

sees herself as a reader. These experiences have had a negative impact on the reader's identity for both Mateo and Ellen.

Studying attitudes about reading helps us better understand reading identity. Several of the students said that while reading can be important for school or jobs, they really do not like it, and most of them do not read for pleasure because reading does not hold their interest. Follow-up questions indicate that they are not interested in reading because they do not think they are capable readers, thus their reader identity has a negative impact. Their identity is linked to their experiences. Several stated that they will read only when "forced" or if they like the book. Mateo stated that he does not read because it "hurts my head." Ellen said she reads "once in a while… like once in a blue moon." Four of the students indicated they lose interest and get distracted easily when reading. All of these seem like general attitudes toward reading, but previous research indicates that these are signs of poor reader identity. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Perhaps many of the attitudes, and thus facets of identity, of reading come early in childhood and can be shaped by early experiences, so I asked students if they were read to as a child. Four stated that they remember adults reading bedtime stories to them when they were young. Two could not remember if anyone read to them or not, and one stated matter of factly, "No one read to me." Perhaps it is not just the memories of the students reading but what is modeled for them at home. I asked if students see the adults in their home reading either for pleasure or work. As important as having reading modeled is actually having access to books in the home. Many of these experiences align with the students' answers as to their opinion of reading and their own perceived abilities as I explain below.

Table 4.8

Context of Early Reading Experiences.

Student	Read to as a child?	Adults in home model reading?	Books in the home?
Steven	Yes, and he read to them as well.	Mom reads when bored	Yes - a bookcase full of books
Ellen	Yes - bedtimes stories	Step mom reads "all the time"	Yes, but "I don't touch those books" and they are not hers
Mateo	"No one read to me"	Never seen them read	Only his school books are in the house
Lucas	Doesn't remember being read to	Mom used to read magazines but doesn't anymore	Used to have children's books but not sure what happened to them
Holly	Only if she needed help with school books	Parents only read for work	"Maybe 10" books in the home
Joshua	Mom and Nana read bedtimes stories	Grandparents read every day; Mom only reads closed captions on TV as she is hearing impaired	A "bit too many"
Ally	Can't remember anyone reading to her at home but a teacher "read all the time"	Mom did while getting GED but doesn't any more	Only a few "kid books" for younger brother
Michael	Parents and grandmother read to him	Grandma loves to read	"10, probably, a good 10"

Impact of the Project on Students' Identity

An overall finding is that there was a small impact of the curriculum design project on some of the participants' reading identity. For example, a close reading of the children's books and the individual tasks they completed impacted their identity in three ways. For simplicity, this finding is discussed in three parts below.

Helping Students Begin to Overcome Poor Reader Identity

Teachers and school support staff can help students begin to overcome poor reader identity. Two of the eight students showed small improvement in overcoming poor reader identity. Table 4.9 presents students beginning to overcome poor reader identity.

Table 4.9

Students Begin to Overcome Poor Reader Identity.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	Of the eight students in the study, Steven answered most positively noting he is an average to above average reader. He was also the most outwardly self-confident student in the study.	–	No evidence of change in identity
Ellen	Ellen resisted answering question about reader identity, teacher noted that she struggled with reading and did not trust herself or believe she could be correct in her answers	Both teachers note improvements in reading, one teacher noted that Ellen is enthusiastic about her academic work	Small to moderate improvement in identity
Mateo	Mateo identified as a slow reader and recounted a time classmates chastised him for planning to purchase a book from the school bookfair and told him he read too slow. He said it makes him sad to think about it.	–	No evidence of change in identity
Lucas	Lucas reported he did not know how to describe himself as a reader, one teacher noted he carries the facade of being "cool" to cover for academic gaps though he seemed to believe he was a higher level than the other students in the class, two teachers noted that they were frustrated that he was not completing assignments	Teachers note that Lucas increased his self-awareness and began to experience small successes	Small improvement in identity
Holly	Holly said she is a slow reader but will read if she is interested. However, she said it sometimes doesn't "click in [her] brain"	–	No evidence of change in identity

Table 4.9 (continued)

Joshua	Joshua had a long pause when I asked what kind of reader he was. He avoided the question by talking about different books and after being asked again he said he was a slow reader. He said he likes to read aloud when he is by himself but not in the classroom because he is embarrassed if he says something incorrectly.	–	No evidence of change in identity
Ally	Ally is soft-spoken and another student avoided the question at first but then said she is a slow reader. Her teacher noted that she avoids reading during class.	–	No evidence of change in identity
Michael	Michael said he is a careless reader and that he would read if something interested him, but he usually had other things to do. However, he spoke several time about enjoying word play and figuring out how literary devices are used. He also stated that he knew he needed to work on his reading skills. Teachers noted that he procrastinated and did not work to his potential.	–	No evidence of change in identity

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

When I asked Ellen at the midpoint interview what she had learned about herself as a reader, she quietly said, "I don't want to answer that" (interview, March 19, 2021). However, at the final interview a few weeks later, she responded to the same question with silence, and then quietly said, "It's iffy… I still have to reread, and reread, and do the before thing in my head first" to which she clarified that meant she practices reading it to herself before speaking (interview, May 24, 2021). While this is a small step, it shows a little progress. However, her teachers saw bigger strides in the classroom than Ellen herself acknowledged. At the end of the study, Mr. Stallings noted, "At the start, she struggled with the annotating because she was just

unsure that she was doing it correctly, and she didn't believe, she didn't trust herself and so she struggled with that and so with a little bit of guidance, she was able to get that to her satisfaction" (interview, June 3, 2021). Ms. Sutton noted a similar improvement in Ellen's attitude and identity as a reader. She said, "She is very enthusiastic which is a big change" (interview, June 3, 2021).

Lucas said in the first interview that he did not know how to describe himself as a reader, but he would only read what he was interested in reading. He did comment that he thought the project was easy and even said that he did not mean to sound "super cocky" (interview, May 24, 2021). However, there is more to the picture, and his teachers gave more insight. Mr. Stallings was frustrated with Lucas for the first half of the project because Lucas procrastinated and wasted time during class. At the midpoint, Lucas still had not started. However, as the project progressed and Lucas did get to work on it, Mr. Stallings noted that though he had started, he was not focused and was jumping from one task to another, based on personal preferences, without completion. He said, "He generally, I think, felt that his academic abilities were much greater than the project required, and so he did not take it as seriously as the other students did" (interview, June 3, 2021). In some ways, though there are noticeable gaps in skill level, he is a little more advanced than some of the other students in the study, and Ms. Sutton noted that "his ideas and connections are pretty advanced… but he is easily distracted." While it seems he may not have poor reader identity, Mrs. Perkins said she thinks the attitude he displays is a facade to cover feelings of inadequacy. She worked with him in small groups as his EC caseworker and noted that she could see that facade starting to break down as he genuinely started experiencing small successes not only on the project but in his extracurricular activities during this time.

Risk-free Opportunities Build Confidence

When teachers create risk-free opportunities in the classroom, students can begin to build confidence, which can have a positive effect on identity (Gee 2000). I observed that all four teachers in the study were friendly and engaged students in conversations about what they like to do outside of class. Mr. Stallings in particular seemed to know the hobbies and activities of all of his students and related those activities to class discussion. He also helped students choose books based on their interests. Both Mr. Stallings and Mrs. Walton gave students chances to redo work to improve their grades. They extended this policy to the project in this present study. Three of the eight students exhibited more confidence due to being in a risk-free environment. Table 4.10 presents students who built confidence in risk-free classrooms.

Table 4.10

Students Build Confidence in Risk-free Classrooms.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	–	–	–
Ellen	Due to past negative experiences, Ellen had low confidence in her academic abilities	Teacher noted that Ellen built her confidence and is willing to take more risks as the classroom environment	Small improvement in identity
Mateo	Lower level student who is aware of his limitations, teachers note that he has low reader identity and struggles with most if not all assignments	With encouragement from his teachers and assignments altered for his level, he completed minimal requirements which was a big step for him, teacher noted that Mateo was proud of his work	Small improvement in identity
Lucas	–	–	–
Holly	–	–	–
Joshua	–	–	–

Table 4.10 (continued)

Ally	–	–	–
Michael	Student described himself as a careless reader, teacher noted his past academic struggles	Teacher noted confidence improved as he became willing to take risks	Small improvement in identity

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

Mateo is affected by his low-level reading ability and does not display much confidence. This was apparent from the first question in our first interview when he was silent at first and then said, "I have trouble reading. I do not understand some words. When there is a lot, my eyes hurt" (interview, March 30, 2021). He has not had much success in the classroom and could only give one example of a time when a past teacher tried to help by giving him a clear blue sheet to put over his paper to help him focus. He added that he reads "only when forced," a classroom practice that has evidently lowered his confidence in reading since he describes himself as a slow reader. The only reading he enjoys is reading sports-related posts on social media. Mateo's teachers commented that how he sees himself affects his work. While Mateo did gain some benefits from the project, he also "struggled mightily" and does not often ask for help (Stallings, interview, June 3, 2021). Ms. Sutton added that Mateo is aware of his limitations and that diminishes his confidence. Through this project, Mr. Stallings gave Mateo smaller chunks of work to do and, knowing that Mateo would not ask for help, often asked him to show what he was working on and then offered suggestions. Smaller, more manageable, chunks of work and assistance along the way helped him progress in his work. Mateo was able to complete some of the project as he finally accepted help from both teachers. While his work was minimal, Mr. Stallings said Mateo seemed proud of what he turned in.

Ms. Sutton described that last year Ellen had many motivation issues and is now starting to build up her confidence more. Ms. Sutton credits both this project and her English I teacher

for providing an atmosphere where it was okay if mistakes were made and so students could build their confidence without having to feel like they were going to be belittled if they said something incorrect. She said Ellen is “definitely willing to take more risks. Again, I think her confidence has come up because she's been encouraged to take those risks, but also it's been acknowledged, whether she was successful or not, the fact that she was willing to try has been encouraged” (interview, June 3, 2021).

Another student who learned to try something out of his comfort zone was Michael. Ms. Sutton described how the first part of the semester he was behind on his work and would not do some of the assignments. That began to change as the semester progressed, and we began the project. She said, “But I feel like he also was willing to take some risks, and it was okay if he got it wrong, and you know he could laugh at himself, but he was still willing to take those risks” (interview, June 3, 2021).

Changing Hesitancy to Motivation for Reading

Many of the students in the study showed hesitancy to read, but three of the eight students in particular showed more motivation to read by the end of the project. Table 4.11 presents the change in hesitancy to motivation for reading.

Table 4.11

Students Change Hesitancy to Motivation for Reading.

Name	Beginning	End	Summary
Steven	Though he self-reported that he was an average to above-average reader, he also stated he only reads when he has to for assignments to make good grades	Motivation shifted from reading only to make good grades to that of his future career as well as helping the younger students through tutoring modules	Small improvement in motivation though for extrinsic reasons
Ellen	–	–	–
Mateo	–	–	–
Lucas	–	–	–
Holly	Student said she would only read if interested in the topic, teachers report she rarely finished work and submitted assignments	The student was absent the last two weeks of the project, but her teacher was thrilled that she submitted work until that point	Minimal but some improvement in motivation
Joshua	–	–	–
Ally	–	–	–
Michael	Student claimed in the first interview that reading was "not my favorite" and "I'm really picky about my reading" as it had to be something he really wanted to read before he would voluntarily read	Student said reading is "more interesting that I thought it was," teacher reported positive resorts from his guardian that he was enjoying school which was a change	Small improvement in identity

Note. No data is denoted by "--".

As we progressed with the project, I asked Michael at the midpoint if he enjoyed working on it. His answer surprised me when he said, "It gives me the chance to actually read a book; most of the time I wouldn't read if it was myself choosing" and added that reading is "more interesting… than I thought it was… I am enjoying it more than I thought I would" (interview, March 19, 2021). His teachers were able to shed some light on Michael's conflicting statements. According to Ms. Sutton, Michael had a hard time getting started on the project due to a lack of motivation. Ms. Sutton said she could not figure out if he was distracted or if something else kept

him from working to his potential. She felt that for some reason, he did not feel he could be successful so he put off doing the work. It seemed to be an internal struggle. Ms. Sutton noted that he was finally motivated to work due to the knowledge that this could help younger students. She also noted that although he was behind in his coursework, he wanted to do well. She added, in the prior semester, Michael had almost failed all of his classes "but he had an epiphany, I guess, and he said, 'you know what, I'm going to change that person… I don't like the direction things are going,'" and he took his grades from failing to the 70s and 80s. She also noted that his maturity level was improving. He is intelligent but "still likes to play it cool," and "overall, I think he also wants to have good grades. He participates in class, and he makes comments. He tries to dig a little bit deeper; he seems to like a challenge. I don't know if that was just the relationship with his English teacher. But I feel like he also was willing to take some risks, and it was okay if he got it wrong, and you know he could laugh at himself, but he was still willing to take those risks," according to Ms. Sutton. She could see that as the semester, and work on the project, progressed, he became more self-driven in answering his own questions. He wanted confirmation, but he began to take ownership of his own learning. She said she had recently received a message from Michael's grandmother, who is now his guardian, and said that "this semester he has enjoyed school more than he has ever enjoyed school, and she was pleased to see the difference." Ms. Sutton attributes part of that enjoyment and success to what he has accomplished through his English class, including this project. He is beginning to reach his potential and is starting to believe he is intelligent and can achieve higher, and he has "good stuff to contribute" (interview, June 3, 2021).

Holly claimed that she did not like to read and that she would only read if she was interested in a topic. However, at the midpoint of the project, she said she did like to read some

things and had concluded that it is okay to “branch out” and even research something you do not know. I asked follow-up questions and learned that she was intrigued with the part of the project in which these tutoring modules will be used to help younger readers. While this is an extrinsic reason and not related to a desire to improve her own reading skills, it is a first step towards changing hesitancy to motivation. While Holly was absent the last two weeks and did not finish the project, Mrs. Walton was thrilled that she did submit some work while she was at school, as Holly’s pattern was to participate little in class and not submit assignments.

Steven claimed in the first interview that he is an average to above-average reader, but he does not like to read and will not read unless it is for an assignment he must do. He said he reads online primarily to get football stats or to find something he wants to buy. However, his progression over the three interviews showed a slight increase in his willingness to read. To the question, “Why do YOU read?” He answered, “Because I have to” the first time but later “Everyone should be able to… It’s how you get smarter… leads to a good job” (interviews March 22, 2021, and May 17, 2021). His hesitancy shifted just a little from internal negative to external positive. Mrs. Perkins noted that Steven is a well-rounded student who plays sports and is part of several clubs at school. Since part of this project is situated in the possibility that the tutoring modules will be used with younger students, it gave Steven the opportunity to think as a leader and how he is reaching out to help someone. Thus his motivation is shifted from what grade he will get for turning in the assignment to how he is helping someone else.

This project showed slight evidence that identity is indeed fluid and can change over time when students have positive experiences and success. However, even when students look at themselves and see their growth, when considering the other person’s perspective, the students show that deeply rooted in their identity is the aspect that they are not good readers and this

cannot be turned around in just a few weeks. Core identity does not seem to have changed even though they themselves recognize they have grown in their abilities. For example, Michael stated that "they [skills in reading] are still changing and this [the project] has improved them" (interview, May 27, 2021).

RQ3: What design principles emerge from this work that can inform the field's understanding of reading intervention for adolescent readers?

A carefully designed project can be beneficial in many ways. For example, Joshua, though his work was minimal by most standards, experienced some success. Mr. Stallings claimed, "This project turned this boy around entirely" (interview, June 3, 2021). Joshua turned in no work to Mr. Stallings for the first quarter of the semester and he had a grade of "1," the school's code for work not submitted, going into report cards. He continued, "Once the project came along, his grades shot up…. I think, with him, the key is engagement and being challenged, and I think with the annotations combined with attempting to teach the book to others, I think that he felt challenged enough to be engaged and so he was motivated and focused" (interview, June 3, 2021). He added that whenever he had any troubles in any way, he sought assistance and accepted guidance. He finished by saying, "I just have nothing but glowing things to say about this project and this kid. It rocked for him" (interview, June 3, 2021).

There are several design principles from this study that can inform the field's understanding of reading interventions for adolescent readers. A design principle is an insight about how to best organize and facilitate instruction to accomplish a pedagogical goal. Through the analysis, four findings emerged including: (a) creating a way for students to feel successful with a scaffolded structure, (b) self-pacing and choice give students ownership, (c) authentic audiences provide reality for students, and (d) social learning builds confidence.

Creating a Way for Students to Feel Successful with a Scaffolded Structure

Scaffolding is not a new term for educators, but it is worth a reminder that students with limitations benefit greatly from the step-by-step guidance as they build on skills and produce a product such as the tutoring modules created by these students. The findings include two of the eight participants.

Joshua is a student who benefited from the scaffolding of the project. Mr. Stallings explained that Joshua needed step-by-step guidance. He struggled with the beginning of each new task because he just wanted to make sure that he was doing it the correct way. At the start of each section, he needed directions given to him individually and with guidance to get started, but "once he is confident with what is asked of him then he rolls and is able to work on his own and complete the work with a pretty solid degree of quality," said Mr. Stallings (interview, June 3, 2021). Once he had some assistance those struggles disappeared. Mr. Stallings added that it was key for him to be able to choose a book that he was interested in and that he thought other people should learn about. Ms. Sutton, the EC teacher in the classroom, added that Joshua was very interested in the idea of helping younger students, and even though he still tended to procrastinate, he took the assignments seriously. Once he understood the step-by-step process, "which allowed him to not be overwhelmed by the whole, but to look at each individual part and all the anxiety would normally have had with an assignment was able to be dispersed because he was able to just focus on first part, second part, third part" (Ms. Sutton, interview, June 3, 2021). She noted that he saw Joshua's self-esteem grow throughout the project.

Lucas had trouble focusing and organizing his thoughts enough to be successful in his work. Mr. Stallings said that Lucas typically tends to jump from task to task based on personal preferences regardless of systematic order. However, because this project was scaffolded with

specific steps to follow and yet was self-paced, Lucas could accomplish tasks he had not shown his teacher he could before. Mrs. Perkins said that Lucas comprehends information internally but has difficulty putting thoughts on paper and that speaking and telling somebody about something is a lot easier for him. She said this project "stretched his ability to be able to physically write things on paper, which is something that he needs to work on." She added that the improvement had much to do with being able to focus on one task of the larger project at a time and that this was "guided and narrow and it was not something so broad that caused him to be overwhelmed, [but] something more narrow and focused that he could grasp a little bit better." Mr. Stallings also noted that it made Lucas more active in his reading and more engaged with the text than he previously had been.

Self-Pacing and Choice Give Students Ownership

Self-pacing and choice are important for giving students ownership of their learning. Three of the eight students are included in the findings.

Both English teachers and students commented on the benefits of being able to work at one's own pace rather than adhering to a strict schedule of daily deadlines. Ellen told me that one of the things she liked about the project is that the teachers gave her enough time so that she did not feel rushed. She said, it helped "having the time you gave us. Like you didn't [just] give us a week to do this" (interview May 24, 2021). Other students benefited as well from the self-pacing aspect of the project.

Mateo experienced some success due to the self-pacing aspect of the project. Mr. Stallings noted that being able to work at his own pace was extremely beneficial. "I call him the tortoise. He is slow and steady wins the race. He just plods along and goes, step by step by step, and he'll need a little bit of assistance for each step, but once he's sure how it needs to be done

and what is expected of him, he just goes back to being the tortoise." Self-pacing was an asset because it gave students autonomy to explore the parts of the project which both captured their attention and gave them more immediate success. At the midpoint of the study, Mr. Stallings noted that Mateo was benefitting from the project because he was learning dedication to a task and following through on the requirements for the project as well as working on summarizing skills and active reading strategies, which he had enough time to do. He noted that Mateo was thriving on the self-paced tasks as well as being able to work on a lower Lexile level material from which he could build. In our final interview, Mr. Stallings said, "He's benefiting because he is able to self-pace. And he's able to take material that he is in full comprehension of. His reading skills are very low, so when he was able to choose his own book to read, that really motivated him to get going on it. And so, I think the benefits that he's got are more self-confidence, more empowerment" (interview, April 28, 2021).

Mrs. Perkins commented that Lucas is not very organized and has trouble finding that balance between extracurricular and schoolwork and home life, and perhaps that is why he puts things off. She added that he also struggles with a "disconnect with it's all in his head, can briefly tell you about it, but has a difficulty with writing stuff down," so it helped him to be able to work at his own pace so that he could work on that ability and make it a lot better (interview, June 3, 2021).

Authentic Audiences Provide Reality for Students

Writing for an authentic audience and not just something the teacher will read often gives students the buy-in needed for them to want to present their best work. This was true for several of the students and in midpoint and exit interviews, many of them noted that they liked doing work that would help younger students who have the same difficulties these students have had.

Writing for an authentic audience was an asset as it gave students a feeling of empowerment and motivation to be more engaged. This was true for most of the students, but especially for Joshua who, in all three interviews, talked about doing it "for the kids" referring to the possibility that the modules students made will be used to tutor younger students who also struggle with reading skills. That motivation was just what Joshua and Steven needed.

Joshua was enthused about working on the project, though he submitted very minimal work, both in quantity and quality. Even so, he mentioned several times that he liked helping "the kids." He does not like working on the computer, so rather than typing his work and submitting it digitally due to COVID protocol at the time, he wrote everything on paper and gave it to his teacher. Most of the paper also had random drawings, usually of dinosaurs, on them. According to his teacher, this was actually an improvement over the amount of work Joshua usually submitted. He said he enjoyed "doing the project" but that he was not finished because "I am usually doing [classroom teacher's] work in his classroom, and um, I haven't really been doing any homework at home." When I asked what part he did enjoy he said, "I enjoy, um, making the questions because I know the answers to them. I never really knew how easy it was to make the question than it is to answer the question." In other words, he liked being the one to write the questions others would have to answer, but he also thought it was "cool" to have to know enough about what he read to formulate the questions for others to answer. Since his teacher and I had explained to students that their projects could be used in the future to help younger students who struggle with reading, Joshua was very happy to do the work "to help the kids."

Mrs. Perkins noted that Steven is a well-rounded student who plays sports and is part of several clubs at school. Since part of this project is situated in the possibility that the tutoring

modules will be used with younger students, it gave Steven the opportunity to think as a leader and how he is reaching out to help someone, thus his viewpoint is shifted from what grade he will get for turning in the assignment to how he is helping someone else.

Social Learning Builds Confidence

Although the COVID protocols at the time of the study greatly diminished the opportunities for students to collaborate in the ways students had been accustomed to doing so before the pandemic, and therefore many students resisted collaborating at all, one student, in particular, showed benefit from being about to talk through what he was thinking and was able to do this with both classmates and his teachers. Whereas most of the students in the study preferred to work individually, as Michael did some of the time, Mr. Stallings noted that Michael is a social learner and "needs to talk through his thoughts and he needs to bounce ideas off of other people." He worked best when in the classroom where he could talk through what he was thinking; "when he would come up with something he thought was good, he would share it to get the input of other people around," according to Mr. Stallings.

Mr. Stallings noted that some students work well individually while others would have done better working collaboratively. He said that if COVID protocols had allowed face-to-face collaborative work, two of his students, Ellen and Mateo, "would have still sought to work on their own so that they could concentrate; they could take it at their own pace, but for Joshua, Ally, and Michael, all of them would have much rather been in a collaborative environment where they bounced off thoughts off of others, share ideas, challenge each other, things like that."

Since this study was conducted during the COVID pandemic, I have chosen to highlight a few insightful comments from the teachers about how this special time in history affected their participation and the impact of the curriculum design project.

Ms. Sutton noted the difficulty of working on this project because it was not a typical school year, and she was surprised that most of the students in the study willingly completed work on this project when they were "not choosing to keep up with their work" for many of their classes and were falling behind. She said the project "could be carried out so much easier if students were face to face, if there was more access to students" and that the most difficult part was "just having access to the students, especially the virtual students" (interview, June 3, 2021). While Mr. Stallings claimed, "the project itself is solid," it would have been much more beneficial if the students had been able to work collaboratively as planned at the inspiration of the project. He said, "some of the kids might get more out of it if they were able to team up or tackle that assignment as a group." Mrs. Perkins made similar statements and said that students "not being able to sit down at the table, all together, spread everything out to be able to go and be close enough to look at a screen together and go, 'Okay, well, this is my thoughts on this right here,' and just mashing their stuff together and being able to work together effectively. It's difficult when, you know, you're halfway across the room and you can't see their screen, you can't touch their screen, you can't touch their paper, you can't write notes and make notes and stuff back, so I agree. I think if we were in a more typical year, that and they had that ability to get together and that small group around the table and work, I think we could have seen a lot more from them, because then they could have been able to support each other a lot better. I think now they felt more like they were doing it separately and not as a group." I asked, even with all the digital tools, such as virtual breakout rooms, what limitations students still had with

collaborative learning. She agreed that what might have been easier for adults to learn to use did not mean that it worked well for lower-level students. She said the biggest problem is that "There's no accountability in the breakout room…. If you're in person and you're sitting there looking at somebody going, 'Hey, I need you to do this,' instead of at a computer screen that's got an icon on it going, 'Hey, are you there? Can you do this?' and nobody ever answers it, so I mean, even with breakout rooms and technology nothing beats sitting down in a small group at a table and working on something" (interview, June 3, 2021)

Reactions from Teachers Regarding the Project

Several of the teachers noted that they were pleasantly surprised with the willingness of some of their more reluctant students to work hard on the project. Mr. Stallings said, "most of the ones that really dove into the project were really reluctant learners beforehand…. They were filled with self-doubt about their academic abilities… and what surprised me was how much a project like this was able to boost or jumpstart them." Ms. Sutton said, "I was surprised at how many of them were willing to do it, honestly." Mrs. Perkins had similar thoughts and said that some of the students she did not think would be interested "really got on board with it." She added that "Once they realized that it was something that was going to reach beyond the walls here, and it was something that would maybe help younger students, knowing that they themselves have struggled in this aspect of reading, to be able to give back and help those students be successful, whereas they might not have been successful because they did not have access to a curriculum like this."

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have analyzed the results of the study in which I examined how the curriculum design intervention project impacted students' foundational skills, how the project

impacts students' identity and how they see themselves as readers, and what principles emerged that can inform the field for future intervention projects similar to this one. While students did not make great gains over the five weeks, there were small successes that are worth noting.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction to the Chapter

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case case study was to design and investigate an innovative approach to helping adolescent readers who have a history of literacy difficulties. I was interested in what would help the students not only with their reading skills but with the way they see themselves as readers and therefore make the decisions they do to either engage or not engage in literacy practices. My vision was to give students an innovative project that would capture their interests and give me insight into how they worked, what their thought processes were, and how we could change their identity as readers. Students this far below grade level need immediate interventions (Edmonds et al., 2009; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Without assistance, they are likely to fall further behind.

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings and situate them within previous research. Finally, I will present implications both for practitioners and for researchers.

Summary of Findings

This qualitative multi-case study is based on previous literature and theory on adolescent literacy. I designed an innovative approach to help students with a history of literacy difficulty engage in reading and writing. I positioned the students as the experts to write tutoring modules to be used by elementary-aged children at The Literacy Space at North Carolina State University. The study took place in two inclusion-based English I classrooms. The project was carried out by ELA and EC teachers. Students chose children's books and wrote fluency texts, annotated bibliographies, vocabulary lessons, and questions for each book. Several findings emerged from this study.

Regarding the first research question, which dealt with how the project would impact students' reading skills, I found that designing curricula for younger readers created opportunities for adolescents to practice active reading skills. In particular, students became more driven and took ownership of their own learning. Also, it gave them an opportunity to hone their metacognitive skills. Several students showed small signs of moving beyond simply recalling and retelling information and began questioning the text and themselves to find deeper meaning. Additionally, the project gave the opportunity for students to develop objective points of view and become better at reflecting on the viewpoints of others as well as taking on the roles of tutors and leaders. The project also helped students refine organization and focus leading to better comprehension. In particular, by breaking tasks into smaller more manageable sections they learned to focus on each part in order to gain a deeper comprehension level. Further, students who have internalized the information, yet hesitate to write, discovered tools to take what they could verbalize and transfer it to written text with the guidance of the teachers. Finally, students had the opportunity to practice annotation skills. Students practiced tracking important details, questioning what they read, and making connections between text and other experiences.

Regarding the second research question, which dealt with how the project would impact students' identity and how they see themselves as readers, I found that designing curricula for younger readers created opportunities for students to reflect on and verbalize their reader identity. In particular, students recalled times when they felt embarrassed or frustrated based on others’ reactions to their reading. Students began to overcome, albeit in small steps, poor reader identity. In particular, students began to change to more positive attitudes towards reading when they experienced success. Additionally, the project gave students the opportunity to build confidence by working in a risk-free environment. In particular, students felt free to make

mistakes when given the opportunity to keep trying until they were satisfied with their work. Finally, students experienced less hesitancy and more motivation to read, noting both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

In regard to the third research question, which dealt with what design principles emerged from this work that can inform the field's understanding of reading intervention for adolescent readers, I found that students experienced success with scaffolding structure in place. In particular, students were able to accomplish tasks when teachers adjusted directions with step-by-step instructions in smaller parts and focused on one part of the larger project at a time. Additionally, students were more productive when given autonomy to self-pace and have choices in some aspects of the project. Self-pacing and choice also prompted more buy-in from the students, which gave them more ownership of their learning. Finally, writing for an authentic audience provided reality for students. In particular, students took more time and effort on what they were doing since they knew someone other than the teacher would be reading the work.

Significance of the Findings

The findings of this study confirm and extend previous literature on which the study is based. Below I describe each of the major concepts that emerged in the analyses and their connection to the literature on which the study is based.

Active Reading Skills

Students became more engaged in reading while working on the project. This increase in engagement is important for adolescents and has been called for in the literature for many years. The literature defines engagement as "motivated and strategic interactions with text" (Daley et al., 2020, p. 279; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Wigfield et al., 2008;). Magnifico (2010) further asserts that understanding of the audience is linked to motivation and interest. Since students in

the present study were writing for younger students in tutoring sessions, they were motivated to produce quality work. By positioning students in this way as tutors, although indirectly, students had to think about what the younger student needed to know and how to present it. For example, when students chose vocabulary, they had to define the word in a way a younger student could understand. Roscoe and Chi (2007) assert that student tutors do not have to be experts. They just have to hone their knowledge through deep thought and make connections that are "relevant, coherent, complete, and accurate" (p. 545). Through this process, students became more driven and took ownership of their own learning.

Opportunities to Practice Metacognitive Skills

Through the active reading and tutoring modules noted above, students also had the opportunity to further practice their metacognitive skills. This is an important achievement for the students because the literature posits that "when students *metacognitively* reflect upon their own expertise and comprehension and *constructively* build upon their prior knowledge," they make connections and repair errors in their thinking (Roscoe & Chi, 2007, p. 541). This reflective knowledge is necessary for advanced learning and is more beneficial than simple knowledge-telling (Roscoe & Chi, 2007, 2008; Duran, 2017).

Taking on Other Points of View and Summary

Reflecting on texts, both written and visual, and challenging those texts, helped students shift from their own subjective views to other viewpoints. The importance of this is that when students read and can recognize other viewpoints, they can engage with the text on another level. Moje & Lewis (2007) posit that learning takes place through participation and even when learners are working independently, they are still reading the work of others and thus interacting with them. The individual relies on transmitted experiences (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1995). As

such, students learn to become more objective and are better able to reflect upon the viewpoints of others. Similarly, as students prepared to write for the younger students, they had to reflect on themselves including their own viewpoints and deficits, using strategies such as self-explaining in which they assess their own comprehension (Roscoe & Chi, 2008). In this, students learned how to see the viewpoints of others, but then had to challenge their own in order to come to an objective stance to be in agreement with others. Teachers discussed seeing the process of a student doing this.

Organization and Focus Lead to Better Comprehension

Organizational tools often help students better comprehend the text. Scaffolding texts while teaching students to use graphic organizers, incorporate background knowledge, make predictions, and summarizing main ideas are a few ways teachers can help students learn to organize information from their reading (Magnusson et al., 2018). Using explicit strategies can help, but McKeown et al., (2009) also argue that a content approach can help students focus more on the reading rather than trying to remember the specifics of several strategies. In the content approach, reading takes an interactive discussion approach in which students focus on portions of the text in order to build meaning (McKeown et al., 2009). Whatever the means used, the key is to help students organize text and activities for focus and better comprehension.

Transferring from Verbal to Written

A student who knows and can verbalize information may not easily be able to put that knowledge into written form. Some students have a type of writer's block when writing for school assignments. One cause is thought to be related to apprehension while students may see it as “an obstacle which makes a writing task ‘dangerous’ and unattractive” (Boscolo, 2006, p. 3). For other students the problem is that there are several processes that have to be balanced

simultaneously and that becomes overwhelming to a student who already struggles with reading and writing skills (Lin et al., 2007). Students may not be able to communicate their thoughts if they lack necessary working memory (Flanagan & Bouck, 2015). Two of the students in the present study experience difficulty taking what they can verbalize and transferring it to written form. Teachers were able to help combat this by scaffolding the writing part of the assignments. Flanagan & Rouck (2015) recommend using procedural facilitators as scaffolds and removing these supports over time as students become more adept at writing. Another suggestion is adapting traditional written assignments to multimodal opportunities in which students can use other modalities to express what they know (Darrington & Dousay, 2015).

Annotating and Independent Learning

In this study, the findings were mixed regarding annotation skills. Students perceived that the project helped them with annotation, and teachers were excited to see students annotating, but the results did not show in the work samples. Therefore, more work is needed to instruct students to use effective annotation methods. The literature asserts that students benefit from using a directed annotation strategy as they learn to self-monitor and self-regulate their own learning (Zywica & Gomez, 2008). Students noted that annotating is challenging but is a skill that has helped them track and better comprehend the text. Zywica & Gomez (2008) further indicated that this strategy can work well for students with reading difficulties to mark simple concepts such as new vocabulary words and the main idea of the text, but it is also a strategy that as they advance their skills the strategy can be used for more advanced readings for both education and work.

Impact on Reader Identity

This research found a reader's identity is impacted by the words and remarks of others. In a meta-synthesis of 21 studies, Frankel et al. (2021) found that most students, similar to some of the students in the present study, felt embarrassed by being placed in reading intervention classes and expressed their frustration, furthering the position of negative reader identity, and therefore emphasizing that attention needs to be given to the how students are impacted when placed in these courses. Solis et al. (2018) noted a similar finding that not only are students positioned negatively, they also have to give up the opportunity to take electives based on something they enjoy in order to be remediated. Identity is fluid, and the discursive identities we put on others through our words, expressions, and actions may last for years (Gee, 2000; Hall, 2010). Hall (2010) relates numerous stories about how teachers make assumptions about students' abilities due to how the student projects their reader identity in the classroom. Coombs (2012) relates stories similar to those in this study; the words of others had a profound impact upon their reader identity long after the incidents.

Helping Students Begin to Overcome Poor Reader Identity

Some students in the present study showed small shifts in reader identity and confidence by the completion of the project, thus illustrating what previous researchers have argued about the fluidity of identity. As I view identity as a lens in sociocultural theory, I look to researchers who assert that students learn from the world around them and that those lessons can come from any semiotic tool, even texts (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1994; Klauda & Guthrie, 2014). The literature on identity theory is clear that although identities may seem fixed or stable, they are indeed fluid (Hall, 2010) and can be shaped and reshaped by the norms of our society (Egan-Robertson, 1998; Hall, 2010) and as people interact, they "build and rebuild contexts"

(Learned, 2016b, p. 1273) which affects identity. Researchers further assert that learning takes place even when there are "shifts in identities" and new identities are formed as one takes on new knowledge (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 19).

Risk-Free Opportunities to Build Confidence

Students in this study were able to increase their confidence levels because of the risk-free environment the teachers provided. This is good information because it reminds educators that relationships matter and mistakes are expected as part of learning. Among the ways students indicated low risk was when there are positive relationships between students and teachers (Cantrell & Rintamaa, 2020; Frankel et al., 2021). Also, students adopt positive identities, and, therefore confidence, when teachers value out-of-school literacy and connect them with in-school activities (O'Brien et al., 2007; Masterson, 2020; Frankel et al., 2021). Finally, students report confidence when they are able to redo assignments and fix their mistakes. Research supports that there is value in learning from mistakes (Ellis & Davidi, 2005; Weinzimmer & Esken, 2017). Working within one's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) lends itself well to the risk-free classroom.

Changing Hesitancy to Motivation for Reading

Students in the present study indicated that they are motivated to read more. Some students were motivated by intrinsic factors such as being interested in a topic and wanting to have grades that they valued, though other students were more motivated by extrinsic factors such as a good job. This is important to know as it helps us leverage that motivation to keep students reading. Klauda and Guthrie (2014) assert that the most prominent motivations are intrinsic motivation and that students of lower ability levels are less likely to be motivated by assessment scores. Students have to want to read; teachers making them read will not have the

same benefit. In addition, Lewis and Del Valle (2009) assert that teens use literacy "for their own powerful purposes and identity representations" even when that is not what teachers observe at school (p. 313).

Creating A Way for Students to Feel Successful with Scaffolded Structure

One of the gems of this project is that there were some built-in scaffolds along with some helpful tools (Magnusson et al., 2018) and should be done within the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) while moving from low-level to higher-level on instruction as students are able to be successful (Magnusson et al., 2018; Brevik, 2017). The teachers further adjusted the scaffolding for a few students who needed more step-by-step instructions in smaller chunks. Students in this study experienced difficulty at first, but teachers facilitated learning by giving students step-by-step assistance or chunking the information to make it more manageable for students.

Students with literacy difficulties in this study benefited from simpler texts. Research supports that students who read below grade level can benefit from both easy and challenging texts as long as there is support in place (Lupo et al., 2019). The study used children's books as a way to position the students as the experts, which also gave several of the students a sense of accomplishment they had not been able to feel as current schoolbooks are outside their ZPD. Instructional support is key when using challenging texts. Targeted supports or strategies are necessary and should be flexible and used as tools that can be transferred from text to text (Magnusson et al., 2018; Brevik, 2017). Therefore, educators should use scaffolding and other supports to help students understand texts.

Self-Pacing and Choice Give Students Ownership

Students benefited from being able to self-pace and have some autonomy regarding the tasks, thus giving them buy-in. This is important as research supports that in giving students

choice, such as deciding what to read or, in the case of this study, setting the schedule for self-pacing, students had positive experiences (Frankel et al., 2021).

Authentic Audiences Provide Reality for Students

Students engaged in this project with the promise of an authentic audience. The literature indicates that when students know there is an actual audience, someone, other than the teacher, who is going to read their work and possibly interact with it in some way, students find value in it (Magnifico, 2010; Lammers & Van Alstyne, 2019; Ring, 2020). Students in this study spoke often about wanting to do this right "for the kids." Research supports the practice of having students write for authentic audiences, and this often impacts how motivated students are to write (Magnifico, 2010; Zumbrunn & Krause, 2012; Darrington & Dousay, 2015). Teachers should be mindful of what constitutes "authentic." For it to be authentic, it must matter to the student. They must perceive the meaningfulness of the task (Magnifico, 2010; Roth, 1987).

Social Learning Builds Confidence

Students are social learners and when engaging in positive social practices, confidence is built. Learning cannot be separated from the social context (Vygotsky, 1978). We learn from those around us (Chirkov, 2020), and the way we make meaning of interactions or what we read are based on personal as well as generally agreed upon social meanings (Brummett, 2019). Students in this study interacted with classmates and text in various ways to build confidence. Teachers noted that students need to be able to interact to discuss ideas and would have benefitted from a truly collaborative environment not hampered by COVID protocols.

As students are social learners, it is important to provide ample and appropriate opportunities for students to work in social contexts that work for them. This does not simply mean daily group work. In a sociocultural context, this also means providing students with rich

texts and materials as well as meaningful experiences. Through this, skills such as text comprehension take shape. Reading comprehension takes place with the combination of three things: the readers, the text, and the activity (Rosenblatt, 1994; Klauda & Guthrie, 2014; Learned, 2016; Edmonds et al., 2009). This may or may not include interaction with the teacher and other readers.

Implications for Practice

By drawing on tenets of design-based research, this study provides critical insights on how to improve the pedagogy of the curriculum design project. These insights not only inform teachers in the school where the study was conducted who might continue using the project but also educators in other contexts who are developing similar pedagogies. The following implications for practice were revealed by this study.

First, since students were more engaged when they knew their work would be used by students at the tutoring center, teachers should consider providing more instruction that provides for students to have an authentic audience and the opportunity to teach their knowledge to others. Second, because students were able to improve their work with activities and expectations of texts that were challenging for their individual levels, teachers should look for and give ample opportunity for lower-level students to move beyond their perceived skill level with daily activities that challenge students. Third, this study found that students need modeling on how to look beyond their view or perspective. Therefore, teachers should model this behavior, perhaps by talking about a controversial character and helping students see that there is almost always another viewpoint. In addition, because some students illustrated that they have difficulty transferring what they can verbalize to paper, teachers should consider incorporating additional writing supports and multimodal options into their curriculum.

Next, teachers said that students benefit from annotating to better comprehend the text. In future versions of the project, teachers may need to give more direct instruction for effective annotating skills. For best results, as suggested by the researchers, teachers should teach annotation skills within the content area rather than an isolated lesson. Further, teachers should be mindful of students' abilities and work within the ZPD to stretch a student to the next level while letting them work in the relative comfort of their ability levels.

Also, this study showed that students who have success in the classroom can begin to shift negative reader identities to the positive. As practitioners, we need to be aware of current research on the fluidity of reader identity and what we can do in the classroom to help students overcome poor reader identity or at least help them shift it in a positive direction. We also need to be aware that small changes in reading identity take place over time, and thus, while we hope to see changes, they may not show immediately. Teachers should keep the previous research in mind when working with students as negative comments about avoiding interaction send messages that become “substantiated in the minds of readers (Glenn et al., 2018).

In this study, students commented that their teachers made the activities low-stress and were willing to help them break down the work. So, teachers should scaffold assignments for students. During this study, students who had previously been reluctant to participate in class activities or complete assignments became more engaged; therefore, teachers should continue to look for ways to inspire and motivate students who are hesitant learners.

Implications for Future Research

Findings from this study opened several questions for which further research is needed. Students in this study began to show positive shifts in reader identity. Researchers should continue to study how teachers can help build confidence and, thereby, positive identities in

adolescent students who are below grade level in reading. Further research is needed as to how reading intervention approaches can increase the gains of positive reader identity.

The students in this study were enrolled in a reading intervention class the semester prior, and most expressed negative thoughts about being required to take the class. Similarly, Frankel et al. (2021) found via a meta-synthesis study of 21 studies on reading intervention that students were unhappy about having to miss an opportunity to take a class of interest instead of a remedial class on a subject for which they had already had much difficulty. Similarly, Solis et al. (2018) suggested that though interventions are needed, care should be given to ensure students were able to take the classes that hold high interest for them. Therefore, further research is needed to examine how school administrators and teachers can design instruction so that students are not penalized by having to give up courses of interest.

Findings showed benefits to students writing the tutoring modules for younger children. Researchers should examine the benefit to the younger students who, with an adult tutor, use the modules written by high school students with literacy difficulties.

COVID affected the way we were able to conduct the study due to protocols, but there is also much speculation about the effect on students' socialization and, therefore, collaborative skills. Further research to replicate this study in a few years to assess if the differences in socialization and face-to-face collaboration would yield different results.

Limitations

As versatile, relatable, and enlightening as case studies are, they also have their weaknesses. One limitation is that the findings of this case study cannot be directly generalized to other settings or participants. Another major criticism of this research method is the potential for researcher bias to affect the findings.. For this study, I had to be aware of my own prejudices

and consciously eliminate them from the study. If I am aware that I favor students with good behavior and have negative thoughts and reactions to students who have a history of suspension, then I must work to be sure that those biases do not affect my observational notes and the way I interpret them. Even well-meaning biases, such as showing favor, are a danger to research. Ethical issues must be handled with care as they can damage the integrity of the study, and indeed, the study is limited by the "sensitivity and integrity" of the researcher (Merriam, 2009, p. 52).

A further limitation of the study was the challenges of COVID 19 protocols. Many students were virtual only during the time of the study, and the other students were on a hybrid Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday in-person schedule, with Wednesdays as asynchronous days for all students. When students were at school, social distancing had to be maintained and exchange of papers and physical materials was not allowed. As many students did not participate fully on virtual days, it made it difficult to observe and track students. It was also difficult to schedule interviews virtually when many students were resistant. The original plan of having students work in groups disintegrated due to the protocols of the time, student attitudes towards virtual group work, and teacher direction to finish the project in the best way possible which eliminated forcing students to meet virtually. Thus, the collaborative piece of the study is lacking.

REFERENCES

Abbott, M., Wills, H., Greenwood, C. R., Kamps, D., Heitzman-Powell, L., & Selig, J. (2009). The combined effects of grade retention and targeted small-group intervention on students' literacy outcomes. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *26*(1), 4-25.

Afflerbach, P., Pearson, P. D., & Paris, S. (2017). Skills and strategies: Their differences, their relationships, and why they matter. In K. Mokhtari (Ed.), *Improving reading comprehension through metacognitive reading strategies instruction* (pp. 33-49). Rowman & Littlefield.

Alvermann, D. E., (2001). Reading adolescents' reading identities: Looking back to see ahead. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *44*(8), 676-690.

Behizadeh, N. (2014). Xavier's take on authentic writing: Structuring choices for expression and impact. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *58*(4), 289-298.

Biancarosa, G. & Snow, C. E. (2004). *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy. A report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Brevik, L. M., (2017). Strategies and shoes: Can we ever have enough? Teaching and using reading comprehension strategies in general and vocational programmes. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *61*(1), 76-94.

Brummett, B. (2019). On noticing what you see and hear. In *Techniques of close reading* (pp. 1-24). SAGE Publications, Inc, https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781071802595.n1

Cantrell, S. C., & Rintamaa, M. (2020). The nature of rural high school students' reading engagement. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 36(4), 297-319.

Chirkov, V. (2020). The sociocultural movement in psychology, the role of theories in sociocultural inquiries, and the theory of sociocultural models. *Asian J Soc Psychol*, *23* 119-134.

Clarke, P. J., Paul, S.A.S., Smith, G., Snowling, M. J., & Hulme, C. (2017). Reading intervention for poor readers at the transition to secondary school. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 21*(5), 408-427.

Cohen, M., & Riel, M. (1989). The effect of distant audiences on students' writing. *American Educational Research Journal, 26*(2), 143-159.

Colwell, J., & Reinking, D. (2016). A formative experiment to align middle-school history instruction with literacy goals. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, *118*(12), 1–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811611801201

Coombs, D. (2012). Using r\Ricoeur's mimetic process to examine the identities of struggling adolescent readers. *English Teaching, 11*(1), 82-n/a.

Core, J. E., & Levine, C. G. (2002). *Identity formation, agency, and culture.* Erlbaum.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Sage.

Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Daley, S. G., Xu, Y, Proctor, C. P, Rappolt-Schlichtmann, G. & Goldowsky, B. (2020). Behavioral engagement among adolescents with reading difficulties: The role of active involvement in a universally designed digital literacy platform, *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *36*(3), 278-295. DOI: 10.1080/10573569.2019.1635545

Darrington, B. & Dousay, T. (2015). Using multimodal writing to motivate struggling students to write. *Association for Educational Communication and Technology, 59*(6), 29-34.

Denton, C. A., Wolters, C. A., York, M. J., Swanson, E., Kulesz, P. A., & Francis, D. J. (2014). Adolescents' use of reading comprehension strategies: Differences related to reading proficiency, grade level, and gender. *Learning and Individual Differences, 37,* 81-95.

Design principles for schools: Putting the science of learning and development into action: Sold. Science of Learning and Development (SoLD) Alliance. (2022, March 22). Retrieved October 28, 2022, from https://soldalliance.org/design-principles/design-principles-for-schools-putting-the-science-of-learning-and-development-into-action/

Dunn, L. (2020). Using elements of a screenplay to promote visualization and increase reading comprehension in secondary students with high incidence disabilities. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 37*(5), 395-412.

Duran, D. (2017). Learning by teaching: Evidence and implications as a pedagogical mechanism. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 54*(5), 476-484.

Edmonds, M. S., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Reutebuch, C., Cable, A., Klingler Tackett, K., Schnakenberg, J. W. (2009). A synthesis of reading interventions and effects on reading comprehension outcomes for older struggling readers. *American Educational Research Association, 79*(1), 262-300.

Egan-Robertson, A. (1998). Learning about culture, language, and power: Understanding relationships among personhood, literacy practices, and intertextuality. *Journal of Literacy Research, 30*(4), 449–487.

Ellis, S. & Davidi, I. (2005). After event reviews: Drawing lessons from successful and failed experiences. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(5), 857-871.

Erickson, F., & Schultz J. (1997). When is a context? Some issues and methods in the analysis of social competence. In M. Cole, Y. Engeström & O. Vasquez (Eds.), *Mind, culture, and activity: Seminal papers from the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition* (pp. 22–31). Cambridge University Press.

Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E.L., Skipper, B.L., & Allen, S.D. (1993). *Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods*. Sage Publications.

Fabelo, T., Thompson, M. D., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks, M. P., III, & Booth, E. A. (2011). *Breaking schools' rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement.* New York, NY: Council of State Governments Justice Center.

Field, S. (2005). *Screenplay: The art of screenwriting*. Bantam Dell Publishing.

Finders, M. J. (1996). Queens and teen zines: Early adolescent females reading their way toward adulthood. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 27,* 71-89.

Fiorella, L., & Mayer, R. E. (2013). The relative benefits of learning by teaching and teaching expectancy. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *38*(4), 281– 288.

Flanagan, S. M. & Bouck, E. C. (2015). Supporting written expression in secondary students with a series of procedural facilitators: A pilot study." *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *31*, 316-333.

Frankel, K. K., Brooks, M. D., Learned, J. E. (2021). A meta–synthesis of qualitative research on reading intervention classes in secondary schools. *Teachers College Record*, *123*(8), 31-58.

Fuchs, L., Fuchs, D., Hamlett, C., Phillips, N., Karns, K., & Dutka, S. (1997). Enhancing students' helping behavior during peer-mediated instruction with conceptual mathematical explanations. *Elementary School Journal*, *97*(3), 223-249.

Gee, J. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education, 25*, 99-125.

Glenn, W., Ginsberg, R., King-Watkins, D. (2018). Resisting and persisting: Identity stability among adolescent readers labeled as struggling. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *33*(3), 306-331.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches. Jossey-Bass.

Guthrie, J. T., & Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement and motivation in reading. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson., & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (3rd ed., pp. 403 – 422). Longman.

Guzzetti, B., & Gamboa, M. (2004). Zines for social justice: Adolescent girls writing on their own. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *39*(4), 408–436.

Hall, L. A. (2004). Comprehending expository texts: Promising strategies for struggling readers and students with reading disabilities? *Reading Research and Instruction, 44*(2), 75-95.

Hall, L. A. (2010). The negative consequences of becoming a good reader: Identity theory as a lens for understanding struggling readers, teachers, and reading instruction. *Teachers College Record*, *112*(7), 1792.

Hall, L. A. (2016). The role of identity in reading comprehension development. *Reading &Writing Quarterly, 32*(1), 56-80.

Hall, L. A. (2007). Understanding the silence: Struggling readers discuss decisions about reading expository text. *The Journal of Educational Research, 100*(3), 132–141.

Hermans, H. J. M., & Kempen, H. J. G. (1993). The dialogical self: Meaning as a movement. Harcourt Brace.

Hidi, S. & Boscolo, P. (2006). *Writing and motivation*. Brill.

Howell, E., Butler, T., & Reinking, D. (2017). Integrating multimodal arguments into high school writing instruction. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *49*(2), 181–209. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296x17700456

Hoyte, C.A. (2006). Authors hook reluctant readers. *Canadian Children's Book News*, 29,10.

Jacobson, J., Thrope, L., Fisher, D., Lapp, D., Frey, N., & Flood, J. (2001). Cross-age tutoring: A literacy improvement approach for struggling adolescent readers. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 44*(6), 528-536.

John-Steiner, V., & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational Psychologist, 31*(3/4), 191-206.

King, A., Staffieri, A., & Adelgais, A. (1998). Mutual peer tutoring: Effects of structuring tutorial interaction to scaffold peer learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *90*(1), 134-152.

Klauda, S. L., & Guthrie, J. T. (2014). Comparing relations of motivation, engagement, and achievement among struggling and advanced adolescent readers. *Reading and Writing, 28*(2), 239-269. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-014-9523-2

Lammers, J. C., Van Alstyne, J. H. (2019). Building bridges from classrooms to networked publics: Helping students write for the audience they want. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *62*(6), 653-662.

Learned, J. E. (2016). “The behavior kids”: Examining the conflation of youth difficulty and behavior problem positioning among school institutional contexts. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(5), 1271-1309.

Lewis, C., & Del Valle, A. (2009). Literacy and identity: Implications for research and practice. In L. Christenbury, R. Bomer & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent literacy research* (pp. 307-322). The Guilford Press.

Liang, L. A. (2011). Scaffolding middle school students’ comprehension and response to short stories. *RMLE Online Research in Middle Level Education, 34*(8), 1-16.

Lin, S. C., Monroe, B., & Troia, G. (2007). Development of writing knowledge in grades 2-8: A comparison of typically developing writers and their struggling peers, *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, *23*(3), 207-230.

Lupo, S. M., Tortorelli, L., Invernizzi, M., Ryoo, J. H., Strong, J. Z. (2019). An exploration of text difficulty and knowledge support on adolescents’ comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly, 54*(4), 457-479.

Magnifico, A. (2010). Writing for whom? Cognition, motivation, and a writer's audience. *Educational Psychologist*, *45*(3), 167-184.

Magnusson, C. G., Roe, A., & Blikstad-Balas, M. (2018). To what extent and how are reading comprehension strategies part of language arts instruction? A study of lower secondary classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *54*(2), 187-212.

Maslow, A. (1968). Peak-experiences as acute identity-experiences. In C. Gordon & K. J. Gergen (Eds.), The self in social interaction (pp.275–280). Wiley.

Masterson, J. E. (2020). Reading in “purgatory”: Tactical literacies in a remedial reading class. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *57*(1), 91-109.

Matthew, K. L., & Adams, D.C. (2009). I love your book, but I love my version more: Fanfiction in the English language arts classroom. The ALAN Review, *36*(3), 35–41.

McKenna, M. C., Conradi, K., Lawrence, C., Jang, B. G., & Meyer, J. P. (2012). Reading attitudes of middle school students: Results of a U.S. survey. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *47*(3), 283-306.

McKeown, M. G., Beck, I. L., & Blake, R. G. K. (2009). Reading comprehension instruction: Focus on content or strategies? *Perspectives on Language and Literacy, 35*(2), *28-32.*

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* Sage.

Moje, E. B. and Lewis, C. (2007). Examining opportunities to learn literacy: The role of critical sociocultural literacy research. *Reframing sociocultural research on literacy: Identity, agency, and power.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2019). The nation's report card. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). NC DPI. Retrieved October 11, 2022, from https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/technical-information-state-tests

O'Brien, D., Beach, R., & Scharber, C. (2007). "Struggling" middle schoolers: Engagement and literate competence in a reading writing intervention class. *Reading Psychology, 28* (1), 51-73.

Packer, M.J., & Goicoechea, J. (2000). Sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning: ontology, not just epistemology. *Educational Psychologist, 35*(4), 227-241.

Ricoeur, P. (1984). *Time and narrative* (Volume 1). University of Chicago Press.

Ring, M. (2020). Motivating writers with authentic audiences. *The Reading Teacher 74*(1), 101-102.

Rojas-Drummond, S., Torreblanca, O., Pedrazza, H., Vélez, M., Guzmén, K. (2013). Dialogic scaffolding: Enhancing learning and understanding in collaborative contexts. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction,* 2, 11-21.

Roscoe, R., & Chi, M. (2007). Understanding tutor learning: Knowledge-building and knowledge telling in peer tutors' explanations and questions. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(4), 534-574.

Roscoe, R., & Chi, M. (2008). Tutor learning, the role of explaining and responding to questions. *Instructional Science, 36*(4), 321-350.

Rosenblatt, L. (1994). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work. 2nd ed.* Southern Illinois University Press.

Roth, R.G. (1987). The evolving audience: Alternatives to audience accommodation. *College Composition and Communication,* 38, 47-55.

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative Researchers*. sage.

San Pedro, T. & Kinloch, V. (2017). Toward projects in humanization: Research on co-creating and sustaining dialogic relationships. *American Educational Research Journal, 54*(1), 373S-394S.

Sarup, M. (1996). *Identity, culture, and the postmodern world.* University of Georgia Press.

Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C.G., Rausch, M. K., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, *40*(1), 85-107.

Solis, M., Vaughn, S., & Scammacca, N. (2015). The effects of intensive reading intervention for ninth graders with very low reading comprehension. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 30(3),* 104-113.

Solis, M., Vaughn, S., Stillman-Spisak, S., & Cho, E. (2018). Effects of reading comprehension and vocabulary intervention on comprehension-related outcomes for ninth graders with low reading comprehension. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 34(6),* 537-533.

Spires, H. A., Bausell, S. B., Himes, M., Edwards, C. W., Davis, D., & Fofaria, R. (2022). *Meeting the moment: Strategic recommendations for literacy & equity in North Carolina.* The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation [Policy Brief]. http://friday.institute/10474

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Sage.

Tegmark, M, Alatalo, T., Vinterek, M., & Winberg, M. (2022). What motivates students to read at school? Student views on reading practices in middle and lower-secondary school. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *45*(1), 100-118.

Unrau, N. & Schlackman, J. (2006). Motivation and its relationship with reading achievement in an urban middle school. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100, 81-101.

Venegas, E.M. (2018). Strengthening the reader self-efficacies of reluctant and struggling readers through literature circles. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *34*(5), 419-435.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scriber & U. E. Souberman, Trans. & Eds.). Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1934).

Wang, Y., Lin, L., & Chen O. (2021). The benefits of teaching on comprehension, motivation, and perceived difficulty: Empirical evidence of teaching expectancy and the interactivity of teaching. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 91*(4), 1275-1290.

Weinzimmer, L.G. & Esken, C. A. (2017). Learning from mistakes: How mistake tolerance positively affects organizational learning and performance. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 53*(3), 322-348.

Wortham, S. (2006). *Learning identity: The joint emergence of social identification and academic learning*. Cambridge University Press.

Yin, R. K. (2008). *Case study research: Design and methods. (4th ed).* Sage.

Zumbrunn, S., & Krause, K. (2012). Conversations with leaders: Principles of effective writing instruction. *Reading Teacher, 65*(5), 346-353.

Zywica, J. & Gomez, K. (2008). Annotating to support learning in the content areas: Teaching and learning science. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 52*(2), 155-164.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Student Interview Questions

Student - Interview questions prior to study:

*I will ask follow-up questions as needed or ask the students to expound on what they say.

Introduction script for all three semi-structured interviews:
Thanks for meeting with me. A couple of administrative things before we begin:

1. This conversation will be audio recorded. Do you have any questions about that?
2. Because it is going to be recorded, please do not mention the names of others (students, colleagues, etc.), but you can mention them by their role (such as "student," "colleague," etc.). If you accidentally mention a student's name, I will scrub it from the recording prior to any data analysis occurring.

If you do not have any (more) questions, let us begin!

1. Why do YOU read?
2. What is your opinion about reading?
    . What is your opinion about reading for English class?
    a. What is your opinion about reading for enjoyment?
    b. If you enjoy it, what do you like about it?
    c. If you do not enjoy it, why not?
3. What do you choose to read for pleasure?
    a. How often do you read for pleasure?
    b. What types/genres of books or other sources (magazines, etc.) do you enjoy?
    c. When you read, what format do you read primarily (books? magazines? eBooks? online ?)
    d. Where do you like to read? Why?
4. Why do you read to learn?
5. How much time do you read to learn?

6. When you were a child, did your parents or another person read to you for pleasure?
7. What were your favorite books as a child?
8. When you were a child, did you go to the library and check out books? (Or, did you go to bookstores to purchase books?)
    a. How often?
    b. What kinds of books did you check out/buy?
    c. Did you always read the books you checked out or bought?
9. Do you remember seeing your parents or other adults read at home for work or pleasure when you were growing up? Do they read much now?
10. How many and what types of books are available in your house?
11. What would encourage you to read more?
12. Why is it important to know how to read?
13. Do you comprehend what you read?

Student - Interview questions for approximately half-way through study:

1. Have your thoughts about reading changed any since the beginning of our project? If so, how?
2. Do you enjoy working on our project?
    a. If so, which parts specifically do you like? Why?
    b. If not, what do you think is keeping you from enjoying it?
3. What have you learned so far from working on our project?
    a. What have you learned about the topic?

   b. What have you learned about yourself as a reader and collaborator?
   c. Are you comprehending what you read? If so, what helps you do so?
   d. What have you learned from your group members?
4. Is there anything we need to change about the way we are working together on this project?
5. Why do YOU read?

Student - Final interview questions

Now that you have finished designing this project, what have you learned about yourself as a reader? What have you learned about the topic?

Should I do this project with other students in the future?

What changes should I make before I do?

What helped you the most?

What was most challenging?

For discussion: How do teachers and others invested in our youth take all the parts - the fluency, comprehension, self-efficacy, identity, and all of the other factors - and use them to move struggling readers to contributing literate members of our communities?

Appendix B: Teacher - Interview Questions

Interview questions prior to study:

Teacher Interviews Script:

*I will ask follow-up questions as needed or ask the teachers to expound on what they say.

Introduction script for all three semi-structured interviews:
Thanks for meeting with me. A couple of administrative things before we begin:

1. This conversation will be audio recorded. Do you have any questions about that?
2. Because it is going to be recorded, please do not mention the names of others (students, colleagues, etc.), but you can mention them by their role (such as "student," "colleague," etc.). If you accidentally mention a student's name, I will scrub it from the recording prior to any data analysis occurring.

If you do not have any (more) questions, let us begin!

1. How many years have you been teaching high school and in what capacity?
2. Tell me briefly about your experience with high school students who have trouble with reading.
3. What is the frequency with which you encounter students who struggle with reading?
4. What are some of the specific needs and/or difficulties students who struggle in your class often have?
5. What are some strategies that you have used over the years?

Interview questions for approximately half-way through the study:

*I will ask follow-up questions as needed or ask the teachers to expound on what they say.

Introduction script for all three semi-structured interviews:
Thanks for meeting with me. A couple of administrative things before we begin:

1. This conversation will be audio recorded. Do you have any questions about that?
2. Because it is going to be recorded, please do not mention the names of others (students, colleagues, etc.), but you can mention them by their role (such as "student," "colleague," etc.). If you accidentally mention a student's name, I will scrub it from the recording prior to any data analysis occurring.

If you do not have any (more) questions, let us begin!

- Let us discuss each student, one-by-one, who is participating in this study. I will type the student's name in the chat box, but will not mention their name aloud and ask that you do the same.
    - How is this student benefitting from this curriculum project, if at all?.

    - What have you noticed about how this student works on this project?
    - What gains/improvements has this student made during this project?
    - Is this student struggling with a particular aspect of the project?
1. Is there anything about this project that is difficult to implement?
2. Is there anything about this project that is easy to implement?

Interview questions for the end of the study:
*I will ask follow-up questions as needed or ask the teachers to expound on what they say.

Introduction script for all three semi-structured interviews:
Thanks for meeting with me. A couple of administrative things before we begin:

1. This conversation will be audio recorded. Do you have any questions about that?
2. Because it's going to be recorded, please do not mention the names of others (students, colleagues, etc.), but you can mention them by their role (such as "student," "colleague," etc.). If you accidentally mention a student's name, I will scrub it from the recording prior to any data analysis occurring.

If you do not have any (more) questions, let us begin!

- Let us discuss each student, one-by-one, who is participating in this study. I will type the student's name in the chat box, but will not mention their name aloud and I ask you to do the same.
    - How is this student benefiting from the curriculum project, if at all?
    - What have you noticed about how this student works on this project?
    - What gains/improvements has this student made during this project?
    - Did this student struggle with this project? If so, in what way and how did he overcome the struggle?

1. What surprised you about the students during this project?
2. How would you change this project for future use?

Appendix C: Lesson Plan for Teachers to Implement

Lesson Plans for K. Kemp's Dissertation Study

Overview:

Your students are creating tutoring modules that can be used with younger students. This may very well be just for this project, but if all goes well, these modules can and most likely will be used at that tutoring program run by NCSU graduate students. **As such, your students are positioned as the <u>experts</u>.** (Use this word with them. Build them up!) Tell them that if they do a good job on this it will help younger students who struggle with reading. Part of my study hinges on not only if your students improve their own skills through this but also if their attitudes of "can do" and knowing they can help someone else assists in their own learning.

For this project, we will use texts that are below the 9th-grade level. Some of these books might still be challenging for your students, and that is okay. Some of the books might be very simple, but again, it puts them in the position of being the expert, so it will hopefully build their confidence levels. Each task is aligned to our standards and will build their skills. I welcome your feedback as we go through this so we can make the needed adjustments.

Below are the 5 main steps followed by a suggested pacing guide for the next five weeks. It is my intention that this adds to your instruction in building their skills and knowledge along with what you do in My Perspectives. Some of this will need to be done during class as they will need guidance and suggestions as well as group time, but I hope much of this can be accomplished during West Success and perhaps asynchronous Wednesday work.

Step	Activity	Standard(s)
<u>Step 1:</u>	Put students in groups of 4-6 (or as needed for reaching maximum student potential). It would be good to have some, perhaps two, of the students in the study together in a group, but it is not necessary. However, they should not all be in the same group.	SL.9-10.1
<u>Step 2:</u>	Annotation activities to show growth -- Your students did one. We will do two more which I will provide the week before they need to be done.	RL/RI.9-10.1 RL/RI.9-10.2 RL/RI.9-10.4
<u>Step 3:</u>	Each group will need to have a theme for the books they will use. It is good to give them some choice, but as not everyone in the	RL/RI.9-10.3 RL/RI.9-10.7

	group will agree, you will have to ultimately facilitate the decisions. ● Note: I already have books on the following topics/themes: **survival** (mostly from the Bear Grylls series), **biographies of famous people** (Stephen Hawking, Neil Armstrong, Anne Frank, Malala Yousafzai, Rosa Parks ---- I can get more as needed), **girls' issues in history** (using historical fiction and non-fiction), **girls' issues** (contemporary fiction), **choose your own adventure** books, and **sports heroes**. What other topics interest your students? ● Each group will use 4-8 books depending on group ability and text complexity.	RL/RI.9-10.10
Step 4:	For **each** book or poem, students will work in groups to complete the following tasks: 1. Write a brief annotated bibliography	
	2. Write Lexile-appropriate fluency texts (on the intended reading level - if the book is 3rd grade, the fluency text should be on a 3rd grade level). These fluency texts are short descriptions/summaries, approximately 100 words, of the book. The purpose of this is for the younger students to have a related introductory text that they can read more easily as they build their fluency skills. Read more about fluency here https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/defining-fluency/ or https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/fluency	W.9-10.2 W.9-10.3 L.9-10.6
	3. Vocabulary - ● Students will choose key vocabulary and determine the best way to teach the words. For example, they may make a Frayer model for the words, make animations of characters acting out the words, create games, make a concept cube, or anything else they think might help younger students. Hopefully, they will have some creative ideas. (Again, this is where, with a little nudging from you, they can be the experts.)	RL.9-10.4 W.9-10.4 L.9-10.4

	● Next, have students construct a short quiz for vocabulary words.	
	4. Have students identify stopping points tutors will use to discuss the reading. ● Have students write thoughtful discussion/comprehension questions for tutors to use with the younger students.	SL.9-10.4 SL.9-10.4 L.9-10.5
Step 5:	Ask students to explore ways to package and display the tutoring module. This is where all the readings (books, poems, etc.) on the common theme will come together. I envision something like a notebook with a table of contents and then a "chapter" for each of the readings (book title, poem, etc.) will include everything for that book. This could be a physical book or a website (such as Weebly or Google Sites). However, students might figure out something better than that.	W.9-10.4 SL.9-10.4 SL.9-10.5 L.9-10.1 L.9-10.2

Schedule: This may be adapted as needed, but this will help with pacing.

Week of:	Activity for class	Outside activities for Kemp
April 19	1. Put students in groups of 4-6. These will be the same groups they will work with for all of the project. 2. Have them choose a theme for the books they will use. It would be great if they use one of the themes I already have listed above in step 3, but I can find more. 3. Give students their first annotation task.	Gather all books and materials Observe class at least once this week
April 26	1. Within the groups, they should work on two of the books/poems/reading selections. (If things are going well, a third selection could be pulled in.)	Provide annotation task for next week Observe class at least once this week Answer questions and provide feedback as needed
May 3	1. Annotation task 2. Within the groups, work on two more of	Mid-project interviews (teachers and students)

	the reading selections. 3. Start thinking about how to "package" the unit for tutors to use with younger students.	Observe class at least once Answer questions and provide feedback as needed
May 10	1. Within the groups, work on two more of the reading selections. 2. Clean up any loose ends. Is there anything that needs more work or is redone?	Provide annotation task for next week Observe class at least once Answer questions and provide feedback as needed
May 17	1. Package the unit. 2. Annotation task	End of project interviews (teachers and students) Observe class at least once this week

Appendix D: Student Work - Directions/Worksheets

Book project - Lexile appropriate fluency text - worksheet

NOTE: This is basically a summary of the book. The Lexile level you write should be similar to the level of the book. According to https://hub.lexile.com/find-a-book/search, the book I used in the example below is 550 Lexile level. According to https://hub.lexile.com/analyzer the text I wrote below is in the range of 410-600 Lexile level.

Example: *Also, the fluency text the students write should be 100-150 words. The text below is 148 words.*

Anne Frank was a girl in Amsterdam. She got a diary for her 13th birthday. She was Jewish which the Nazis thought was bad. She and her family hid in a small building to try to stay safe. Another family stayed in the small building too. They did not have much food so they were hungry. Anne wrote about what they did and what she thought in her diary. One day they were caught and taken to a concentration camp. This is like a prison for people the Nazis did not like such as Jews. They had to work very hard all day. Many people got sick. Anne and her sister got sick with a disease called Typhus and died. Anne's father is the only one out of the two families who survived. He published her diary so we can learn about their life while they were hiding.

Your turn:

Book title:

Write a summary of your book here: (It should be 100-150 words.)

Book Project - Annotated Bibliography - worksheet

1. **Annotated bibliography**

An annotated bibliography gives source information PLUS a brief overview of the book.

Example:

Mara, Wil. *Anne Frank: A Life in Hiding*. Children's Press/Scholastic, 2017.

Mara's book is a brief account of Anne Frank's time in hiding from the Nazis. It explains how she and her family hid in an annex along with another family and what happened to her and to the others once they were caught and taken to concentration camps. Mara explains that we know her story, including her private thoughts, because her father, the only survivor from those who hid in the annex, published her diary which was left behind when they were captured.

Step 1: Use easybib.com to format the source material according to MLA format.

Step 2: Read the book and write a brief (100-150 words) summary and include anything that is noteworthy about the book.

Your turn:

Write the bibliography information here: (If you need help, use easybib.com)

Write your summary and noteworthy information here:

Book project - Vocabulary - worksheet

Go through your book and write down the words that are unfamiliar to you or which you think would be unfamiliar to a younger student reading this book. Put the information here:

book title:

Page #	Unfamiliar word	Meaning of the word

What is the best way to teach these words to a younger student reading this book? Come up with at least one activity and explain it here. Give examples.

Book project - Stopping Points and Questions - Worksheet

Identify several points in the story that would be good places to stop and ask questions for clarification to check for understanding. Write the questions.

book title:

Page # and/or paragraph	Question	Answer
Page 20	*Why didn't Anne ever see her father again?*	*They were separated at the camp when men and women were separated. Anne went with her mother and sister.*

Appendix E: Rubrics for Student Work

Lexile Appropriate Fluency Text Rubric

Directions:

You will write a summary of your book, but it should reflect a similar Lexile level of the book itself. You may check your

3	2	1	0
Summary is clear and concise and covers most noteworthy points of the book; shows clear comprehension of the book	Summary is somewhat clear and covers some noteworthy points of the book; shows some comprehension of the book	Summary lacks clarity and covers few if any noteworthy points of the books; lack of comprehension evident	Summary is not included or is completely off topic/task
Capitalization and punctuation are correct with no errors	Few capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Many capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Summary is missing or there are too many errors to for summary to be understood
Summary is 100-150 words	Summary is 75-100 words	Summary is 25-75 words	Summary is not included or is less than 25 words

Annotated Bibliography Rubric

Directions:

Step 1: Use easybib.com to format the source material according to MLA format.

Step 2: Read the book and write a brief (100-150 words) summary and include anything that is noteworthy about the book.

3	2	1	0
Uses correct source citation in MLA format	Citation contains minor errors	Citation contains major errors	Citation is not included
Summary is clear and concise and covers most noteworthy points of the book; shows clear comprehension of the book	Summary is somewhat clear and covers some noteworthy points of the book; shows some comprehension of the book	Summary lacks clarity and covers few if any noteworthy points of the books; lack of comprehension evident	Summary is not included or is completely off topic/task
Capitalization and punctuation are correct with no errors	Few capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Many capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Summary is missing or there are too many errors to for summary to be understood
Summary is 100-150 words	Summary is 75-100 words	Summary is 25-75 words	Summary is not included or is less than 25 words

Vocabulary Rubric

Step 1: Go through your book and write down the words that are unfamiliar to you or which you think it would be unfamiliar to a younger student reading this book. Put the information [in the table provided].

Step 2: What is the best way to teach these words to a younger student reading this book? Come up with at least one activity and explain it here. Give examples.

3	2	1	0
*Unfamiliar words are identified - Words are appropriate vocabulary level for younger students grades 2-5. Suggested 8 vocabulary words depending on the length and level of the book.	*Unfamiliar words are identified - Words are appropriate vocabulary level for younger students grades 2-5. Suggested 4-7 vocabulary words depending on the length and level of the book.	*Unfamiliar words are identified - Words are appropriate vocabulary level for younger students grades 2-5. Suggested 1-3 vocabulary words depending on the length and level of the book.	No words were identified.
An age/reading level appropriate definition is given. The definition is clear.	Age/reading level appropriate definitions are given but may not be fully correct or clear to a younger student.	Definitions lack overall clarity or correctness and may confuse or mislead a younger student.	No definitions are given.
Suggestion for the best way to teach the vocabulary words to younger students is innovative, interesting, and appropriate.	Suggestion for the best way to teach the vocabulary words to younger students is appropriate but lacks innovation.	Suggestion for teaching the words is not appropriate.	No suggestions are given.
Capitalization and punctuation are correct with no errors	Few capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Many capitalization and/or punctuation errors	—

*Students were reminded in class that although they may know the vocabulary word, they were looking for words that a younger student may not know.

Note: The number of suggested words is not listed in the written directions, but students were told the expected range in class.

Stopping Points and Questions Rubric

Directions: Identify several points in the story that would be good places to stop and ask questions for clarification to check for understanding. Write the questions and answers.

3	2	1	0
Student identified appropriate stopping points (pages) in the book for which to ask questions – *suggested 8 stopping points depending on the length and level of book	Student identified general stopping points (pages) in the book for which to ask questions – fewer than six points identified (suggested 6 depending on the length and level of the book	Student identified general stopping points (pages) in the book for which to ask questions – fewer than four points identified (suggested 4 depending on the length and level of the book	Student did not identify points for stopping or the points (pages) listed are too random to be appropriate
Questions are well-written and thought-provoking, showing depth and clear comprehension; questions are open-ended requiring a thoughtful answer rather than a yes/no response	Questions are generally well-written but don't show depth in thought process and comprehension	Questions show lack of thought and/or only require recall rather than comprehension	No questions included
Suggested answers provided show clear comprehension and deep depth of thought	Suggested answers show evidence of comprehension and some depth of thought	Suggested answers lack evidence of comprehension and depth of thought	No answers are included
Capitalization and punctuation are correct with no errors	Few capitalization and/or punctuation errors	Many capitalization and/or punctuation errors	—

*The stopping points and questions suggested may vary slightly depending on the length and the level of the children's book used.