PREPARING TEACHERS FOR EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES: TWO-YEAR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS IN ONTARIO

by

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RESEARCH EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT QUALITY TEACHER PREPARATION SETS BEGINNINGS TEACHERS ON THE RIGHT TRACK FOR EFFECTIVELY TEACHING LITERACY. GIVEN THAT MOST OF THE RESEARCH HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE UNITED STATES, THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE IMPACT OF TEACHER PREPARATION FOR ELEMENTARY LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN CANADA. SIMILARLY, LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THE EFFECT OF PROGRAM LENGTH AND STRUCTURE ON GRADUATES’ KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS. THIS THESIS CONTAINS TWO STUDIES AIMED AT ADDRESSING THESE GAPS IN THE LITERATURE IN THE ONTARIO CONTEXT. THE MAJORITY OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS IN ONTARIO ARE COMPLETED IN ONE YEAR, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF 2 TWO-YEAR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS. STUDY 1 IS AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION COMPARING THE SURVEY RESPONSES OF 38 GRADUATES FROM TWO-YEAR PROGRAMS WITH THE RESPONSES OF A MATCHED SAMPLE OF GRADUATES FROM ONE-YEAR PROGRAMS ON ITEMS RELATED TO THEIR PREPARATION FOR ELEMENTARY LITERACY INSTRUCTION. PAIRED-SAMPLE T-TESTS REVEALED THAT GRADUATES FROM TWO-YEAR PROGRAMS REPORTED SPENDING SIGNIFICANTLY MORE TIME DISCUSSING LITERACY-RELATED ISSUES, HAD BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF KEY LITERACY TERMS, FELT BETTER PREPARED FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND WERE MORE LIKELY TO INCLUDE EVIDENCE-BASED COMPONENTS AS PART OF THEIR LITERACY PROGRAM. STUDY 2 IS A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF TWO-YEAR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS WITH A FOCUS ON LITERACY INSTRUCTION. THIRTY-EIGHT GRADUATES FROM BOTH TWO-YEAR PROGRAMS IN ONTARIO COMPLETED A SURVEY. TEN OF THESE GRADUATES ALSO COMPLETED AN INTERVIEW. FOLLOWING A MODIFIED GROUNDED THEORY...
approach, Study 2 presents a detailed analysis of two-year programs in Ontario including:
a) the range of content regarding literacy instruction; b) the correspondence between the
content and the evidence-based knowledge of effective literacy instruction; c) graduates’
knowledge base and skills for literacy instruction; and d) their feelings of preparedness.
From a socio-cultural perspective, Study 2 also explored the processes and contexts that
influence graduates’ formation as literacy instructors. The findings served as the basis for
proposing a model for teacher preparation that encompasses the processes and contexts
that mediate pre-service teachers’ development as literacy instructors. The proposed
model outlines the necessary components to effectively prepare prospective teachers,
based on scientific evidence, to ensure that all children learn to read and write.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Learning to read and write is one of the most important skills that children acquire during their early school years. Although there are a host of factors that influence the development of literacy skills, such as family background (Pennington & Olson, 2005), home environment (Chiu & McBride-Change, 2006), and oral language development (Moats, 2001), teaching and classroom instruction play a determinant role in the development of literacy skills (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997). As highlighted by the National Research Council, “the quality of classroom instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades is the single best weapon against reading failure” (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. 343).

Overwhelmingly, the research evidence underscores the importance of teacher knowledge and instructional expertise for student’s learning (Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich & Stanovich, 2004; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Moats, 2004). Given the identified importance of teacher knowledge and classroom instruction for students’ literacy development, teachers and teacher education have been the focus of a wealth of investigations over the last several decades (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005).

Over the last decade, empirical evidence has established a link between quality of teacher preparation for literacy instruction and teaching practices during the first few years of teaching (Harmon et al., 2001; Hoffman, et al., 2005; Maloch et al., 2003). Beginning teachers that graduate from identified “excellent” programs are better prepared than teachers who have been teaching for the same number of years, and comparable, in
their teaching skills, to more experienced teachers (Hoffman et al., 2005). Therefore, the quality of teacher preparation makes a difference in how teachers feel and act during their early teaching years. This line of investigation suggests that pre-service programs play a crucial role in setting beginning teachers on the “right track” for effectively teaching children to read and write.

Thus, pre-service education has a definite influence on beginning teachers’ skills, attitudes, and teaching practices. However, there is considerable variety in the structure and format of the pre-service programs reported in the literature. In addition to quality, the length of the program has also been found to have differential effects on outcomes such as commitment to teaching and the dropout rates in the early teaching years (Andrew, 1990; Andrew & Schwab, 1995; Baker, 1993; Breidenstein, 2002). One of the most common arguments over the last 30 years about teacher preparation has been the proposition of lengthening programs to better equip beginning teachers for the challenging task of teaching (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005). However, as noted by these authors in their review of the literature, there is insufficient empirical research that examines the impact of different program structures.

In addition, the majority of the research on teacher preparation for literacy instruction, as well as the research that examines the various program structures of general teacher preparation, have been conducted in the United States. As such, there is a shortage of knowledge of the impact of teacher education programs in Canada in preparing teachers for literacy instruction; with the exception of a few recent endeavors (Bainbridge & Macy, 2008; Haas-Barota, in preparation; Kosnik & Beck, 2008). Similarly, little is known about the impact of program length and structure in graduates’
knowledge and skills for literacy instruction in Canada. This thesis contains two studies aimed at addressing these gaps in the literature in the Canadian context, specifically, in Ontario.

The first investigation reports on the findings of an exploratory study examining differences between one- and two-year pre-service programs in Ontario, on a variety of outcomes related to teacher candidates’ preparation for literacy instruction. In Ontario, there are three different program structures in teacher preparation: a) consecutive programs that involve one year of studies after the completion of an undergraduate degree; b) concurrent programs that are completed simultaneously during the completion of an undergraduate program; and c) two-year graduate programs, which, in addition to teacher certification, grant student teachers a masters degree. Study 1 explores whether there are differences in the time spent discussing literacy-related topics and issues, in graduates’ knowledge of key literacy terms, in their feelings of preparedness, and what they identify as essential components of a literacy program between graduates from one-year consecutive programs and two-year programs.

The second study involves an in-depth investigation of two-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario, with a specific focus on how they prepare candidates for elementary literacy instruction. There are only two 2-year teacher education programs in Ontario, and little is known about the level of preparation of graduates from these programs. The uniqueness of these programs, in terms of their length and the fact that they are graduate level, provides an interesting opportunity for broadening our understanding of differing program structures on teacher preparation.
Study 2 presents a detailed description of two-year programs in Ontario in terms of: a) the range of content regarding literacy instruction; b) the correspondence between the content covered and the evidence-based knowledge of effective literacy instruction; c) graduates’ knowledge base, skills and understanding of literacy instruction; and d) their feelings of preparedness at the conclusion of their pre-service program. In addition to this detailed description of two-year programs, Study 2 explores, from a socio-cultural perspective, the processes and contexts that influence graduates’ formation as literacy instructors. As such, it attends to the conditions and settings in which teacher candidates learn to teach and how their interpretations of their experiences are embedded in social and cultural contexts. The results from this investigation served as the basis for proposing a model for teacher preparation that encompasses the processes and contexts that mediate pre-service teachers’ development as literacy instructors. The model also describes the anticipated teacher learning outcomes and how these relate to components of the pre-service program. Therefore, the research presented in this thesis responds to the call of researchers, such as Wilson, Floden and Ferrini-Mundy (2001), to explore the conditions and contexts within which teacher education can increase teacher effectiveness.

The underlying assumption guiding the current studies on teacher education is that teacher learning, which includes subject-matter knowledge, a reflective stance towards their practice, and beliefs and attitudes about working with diverse populations, is an important outcome of teacher preparation. As noted by Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005), the focus on teacher learning in research on teacher education seeks to understand “the link between teacher preparation components, organizational structures, and conceptual models, on the one hand, and teachers’ development of knowledge and
rethinking of beliefs and attitudes, on the other” (p. 100). The study of teacher
preparation as a learning problem also includes understanding how teacher candidates
interpret their coursework and fieldwork experiences, and how they develop
professionally over the course of their program. In the review of the literature, I present a
detailed description of frameworks for studying teacher preparation as a learning
problem.

Another perspective that underlies the current investigations is that of evidence-
based practices. Considerable advances have been made regarding the knowledge base
for the effective components of literacy instruction. For example, a comprehensive
summary of this research-based knowledge was presented in a report by The National
Reading Panel (NRP, 2000). However, recent efforts to assess the extent to which such
research-based knowledge has been incorporated into the methods courses of teacher
preparation programs portray a discouraging picture (Joshi et al., 2009; Walsh, Glaser &
Wilcox, 2006). In Canada, Haas-Barota (in preparation) studied the extent to which
evidence-based knowledge of literacy instruction has made its way into teacher
preparation programs in Ontario. Her findings are also discouraging, indicating that many
graduates from pre-service programs across Ontario reported limited exposure to
evidence-based components of effective literacy instruction.

In addition to the body of literature outlining the evidence-based best practices for
literacy instruction, which is presented in the review of the literature, considerable
advances have been made recently in establishing evidence-based components of
effective teacher preparation for literacy instruction (e.g., International Reading
Association [IRA], 2007). This body of research, also detailed in the literature review,
provides guidelines for what should be included in pre-service programs to prepare effective literacy teachers. As such, it serves as the benchmark against which I compared two-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario.

**Literature Review**

The review of the literature is divided into four sections. It begins with an overview of existing theoretical models for understanding teacher learning and development. The models reviewed are based on visions of what teacher development should strive for and the key features of teacher learning (Hammerness et al., 2005; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). They also highlight pre-service education as setting the groundwork for teaching as lifelong learning and development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In addition, one of the reviewed models provides a useful framework for studying teacher learning in specific contexts, and for understanding the processes through which specific contexts influence teacher learning (Grossman, Smagorinsky & Valencia, 1999). These theoretical models serve as the guiding frameworks for the study of teacher education programs.

Given that the investigations focus on teacher preparation for literacy instruction, the second section presents a brief synthesis of the existent evidence-based knowledge of effective literacy instruction in the primary school years. The third section reviews the research on teacher preparation for literacy instruction. This entails both descriptive and evaluative studies of pre-service programs in the United States and Canada and their coverage of literacy instruction. This research is followed by a body of empirical studies that establish a link between teacher preparation for literacy instruction and beginning
teachers’ actual classroom practice. The final section presents the theory and evidence-based design principles of effective pre-service teacher preparation for literacy instruction.

**Teacher learning and development in pre-service education**

*Learning to teach: Frameworks for understanding teacher learning.* Shulman and Shulman (2004) propose a theoretical framework for understanding teacher learning. Their model, developed from their work with pre-service and in-service teachers, incorporates the features they identified as being key to *accomplished teaching*. This framework is based on the understanding of teachers as learners. In their words:

Learners at any level need to develop a vision of the possible understandings and learning they can accomplish, the motivation to initiate and persist in that learning, the understanding to pursue such learning (as both impetus and outcome), and the skill at negotiating the complex participant structures of any serious and organized approach to instruction that are *all* necessary for accomplished learning. The learning proceeds most effectively if it is accompanied by metacognitive awareness and analysis of one’s own learning processes, and is supported by membership in a learning community (p. 267)

This statement reflects the six features of teacher learning and development in Shulman and Shulman’s (2004) model: vision, motivation, understanding, practice, reflection and community. A *vision* for teaching is described as having a goal to guide teacher
development, as well as a standard to evaluate thoughts and behaviours related to teaching. *Motivation* refers to the willingness to change and follow a particular vision of teaching and learning. *Understanding* relates to the pedagogical content knowledge and skills required for teaching (e.g., assessment, classroom management, subject matter knowledge). The fourth feature, *practice*, refers to the ability to enact knowledge in the classroom setting. Teacher *reflection*, in the form of “efforts to become more conscious of their [the teachers’] understandings, performances, and dispositions” (p. 264) is viewed as key to teacher learning and development. Finally, learning to teach develops in the context of a *community* of learners. Thus, Shulman and Shulman’s framework provides a blueprint of the issues to consider in thinking about how teachers, as learners, become *accomplished* in their profession. In this respect, this model proposes a vision for the “ideal” teacher by outlining the features that distinguish *accomplished teachers*.

Another approach to the study of teacher learning and development is that of Feiman-Nemser (2001), who views teacher learning and development as a continuum. In her view, teachers develop through stages and she highlights the “central tasks” of teacher learning at each stage of development, beginning with pre-service teacher preparation. The underlying rationale of this framework is to focus on key issues that should be addressed at each stage, in this case in pre-service programs, to prepare teachers for their first years of teaching. The notion of a continuum implies that teachers’ knowledge and skills will continue to develop as they progress through their teaching careers. Thus, pre-service programs should focus on laying the foundation for a trajectory of life-long learning. This position is in line with that of other researchers that argue
against trying to cover too much in pre-service programs; instead focusing on key features or priorities (e.g., Kosnik & Beck, 2009).

The first task identified by Feiman-Nemser (2001) is the need to analyze beliefs that prospective teachers bring to their pre-service preparation in order to pave the way for forming new visions of teaching. This is based on the understanding that teachers’ prior beliefs and experiences “serve as filters for making sense of the knowledge and experiences they encounter” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1016). The influence of teachers’ prior experiences, in particular their experience as students, on their images of teaching and learning was described by Lortie (1975) as the apprenticeship of observation. There is a considerable amount of research that has documented the role of beliefs in teachers’ learning and practice (Risko et al., 2008; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998). Thus, prospective teachers need to be allowed to examine and become aware of their held beliefs and visions in order for them to be able to adopt the new visions and beliefs of teaching and learning proposed in pre-service programs.

The second central task is to develop the necessary subject matter knowledge for teaching. This includes: a) knowledge of theories, concepts and procedures within a field; b) knowledge of explanatory frameworks to organize ideas; and c) pedagogical knowledge of subject matter, such as knowing what concepts or procedures students might find confusing. Third, prospective teachers also need to develop their understanding of learners and learning, which includes a developmental perspective of how children learn and knowledge of issues related to multiculturalism and diversity. A fourth task for teachers during pre-service education is to develop a beginning repertoire for teaching, which includes becoming familiar with curricular materials, learning general
and subject specific models for teaching, and assessment strategies that promote student understanding. Finally, pre-service education is the stage at which teachers need to begin developing tools to study teaching. This implies that prospective teachers “must come to see that learning is an integral part of teaching and that serious conversations about teaching are a valuable resource in developing and improving practice” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1019). The goal is to develop skills of observation, analysis and interpretation. This can be accomplished through analyzing samples of student work, comparing curricular materials and observing the impact of specific instructional strategies on students’ learning. Thus, Feiman-Nemser provides guidelines to focus the efforts of teacher educators at the pre-service level.

Hammerness and her colleagues (2005) also propose a framework for teacher learning and development based on the vision of teachers as adaptive experts. The notion of adaptive expertise views teachers as lifelong learners; in their words, “Clearly, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for optimal teaching are not something that can be fully developed in pre-service education programs. Instead, teacher education candidates need to be equipped for lifelong learning” (p. 358). Thus, adaptive expertise is considered the “gold standard” (p. 360) of the teaching profession. Expertise consists of two dimensions; on the one hand, it requires efficiency, which involves the ability to perform certain tasks “without having to devote too many attentional resources to achieve them” (p. 360); for example, being able to manage a classroom of students working in groups. On the other hand, expertise also involves innovation, in terms of being willing and able to rethink and change existing practices and routines. Teachers who are adaptive experts manage to balance these two dimensions.
With adaptive expertise as the goal of teacher development, Hammerness and her colleagues (2005) outline learning principles for facilitating teacher development. The first one coincides with Feiman-Nemser (2001) on the importance of addressing student teachers’ preconceptions about teaching and learning. For example, a common belief that student teachers hold about learning, based for the most part on their years of experience as students, is that learning involves the “transfer of information” from teachers to students (Richardson & Placier, 2001). This notion is contrary to current constructivist views of learning. As Hammerness et al. (2005) highlight, “Preconceptions that teaching is only about “transmission” can make it difficult for teacher educators who seek to prepare teachers in ways that are more compatible with what we now know about how people learn” (p. 369). Secondly, Hammerness and her colleagues point out that, in order for teachers to enact what they know, they require a deep foundation of factual and theoretical knowledge; they need to understand facts and ideas in the context of conceptual framework; and they have to organize facts and knowledge in a way that facilitates retrieval. In order to promote enactment in teacher education, teacher candidates need to be provided with opportunities to practice and reflect on teaching; they need “support in interpreting their experiences and expanding their repertoire” (p. 375). Finally, these authors note that metacognition is an important learning principle for teachers in helping them become adaptive experts. If teaching is a profession that requires lifelong learning, then teachers need to be “metacognitive about their work” (p. 376). They need to reflect on what they are doing and on what can be improved. Research suggests that the metacognition required for developing expertise can be developed in teacher education (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Shulman, 2002).
Hammerness and her colleagues (2005) propose a theoretical framework for teacher learning, based on the extant research-base and their view of teachers as adaptive experts. As they describe, their “framework suggests that new teachers learn to teach in a community that enables them to develop a vision for their practice; a set of understandings about teaching, learning and children; dispositions about how to use this knowledge; practices that allow them to act on their intentions and beliefs; and tools that support their efforts” (p. 385). Vision is the central component of their model that integrates the other elements. Similar to that of Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Shulman and Shulman (2004), the concept of vision entails that teachers need to have a sense of where they want their students to be and how they will get them there. This vision guides teachers’ learning and it also used to reflect on and evaluate their teaching. Moreover, developing a vision for teaching is necessary to address teachers’ prior beliefs and the process of enactment.

The other four components of the model (i.e., understanding, practices, tools and dispositions) are interrelated and dependent on one another. Thus, learning to teach requires developing deep knowledge of content, pedagogy, students and their development, and of social contexts. Moreover, to put these understandings into practice, teachers also need to develop tools, both conceptual (e.g., learning theories) and practical (e.g., assessment tools), which allow teachers to enact their intentions in practice. Teachers’ understanding and tools need to be integrated into a set of practices, similar to the beginning repertoire proposed by Feiman-Nemser (2001). In addition to understanding, tools, and practices, teachers need to develop teaching dispositions, such as the disposition to reflect and learn from practice and dispositions towards the children.
they will teach (e.g., the disposition that all children can learn to read and write).
Ultimately, this model also incorporates the notion that teachers develop in the context of learning communities and considers the impact that different settings (i.e., university and school) have on teacher learning.

The three theoretical frameworks discussed generally concur on the important elements to consider in teacher learning. Feiman-Nemser’s proposition of focusing on “central tasks” at each stage of teacher development highlights the issue of breadth versus depth of coverage in pre-service education. The model proposed by Hammerness and her colleagues (2005) is perhaps the most comprehensive, as it incorporates the features highlighted in both Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) and Shulman and Shulman’s (2004) approaches.

Overall, these theorists agree that learning to teach involves developing a vision to guide teaching, knowledge or understanding, practicing and enacting a beginning teaching repertoire, developing the habit of reflection and thinking about teaching, and the fact that learning to teach occurs in contexts that influence teachers’ learning and development. Given that the current study involves the investigation of the process of learning to teach literacy in the specific context of teacher preparation programs, the role of context in learning to teach is discussed in further detail below.

**Incorporating the role of context: A socio-cultural model for studying pre-service education.** From a socio-cultural perspective, Grossman and her colleagues (1999) highlight the need to consider the different settings in which teacher education occurs, primarily the university and school settings, and how these contexts influence teacher development. They propose using an activity theory framework for studying
teacher education. These authors note that, “activity theory…is predicated on the assumption that a person’s frameworks for thinking are developed through problem-solving action carried out in specific settings…Activity theory is useful for understanding the process of learning to teach, particularly in illuminating how teachers choose pedagogical tools to inform and conduct their teaching” (p. 4).

In this framework, the contexts that mediate teacher development are described as activity settings. Pre-service teacher education involves various activity settings, such as university coursework and field placements. Each of these activity settings has its own motives, structures and goals for learning to teach. Grossman et al. (1999) consider that studying teacher development in the context of activity settings can help to elucidate the differing goals and activities that student teachers encounter in various settings. For example, in the setting of university coursework, student teachers are exposed to a set of conceptions and practices related to the teaching of specific subject matter, such as literacy. These, in turn, might be similar or different to those that student teachers encounter in their field placements in schools. In addition, each setting determines distinct roles for teacher candidates. Whereas the university setting reinforces the role of student, the school and classroom settings reinforce the role of teachers. Thus, the influence of each of these settings is further determined by the role of pre-service student teachers in them.

In addition to considering activity settings, an activity theory framework is also concerned with identifying the tools that teachers use to guide their classroom practice. These tools are described as both conceptual and practical. Conceptual tools refer to principles or ideas about teaching and learning, such as broad theories (e.g.,
constructivism) and concepts (e.g., instructional scaffolding). Practical tools have more immediate utility than conceptual tools. They include specific instructional and assessment strategies that teachers can implement in their classroom practice. A central component of activity theory is the concept of appropriation. This refers to “the process through which a person adopts the pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments (e.g., schools, pre-service programs)” (p. 15). Appropriation occurs at different levels ranging from lack of appropriation, appropriating a label, appropriating surface features, appropriating conceptual underpinnings and achieving mastery.

Social context and individual characteristics play an important role in the process of appropriation. For example, the pedagogy of teacher education courses influences student teachers’ appropriation of tools; that is, if teachers experience a pedagogical approach in their role as students, they are more likely to appropriate it as part of their teaching repertoire. Similarly, the level of congruence or contrast between the pedagogical approaches espoused by university coursework and those that student teachers experience in their field placements also impacts teachers’ appropriation. In terms of individual characteristics, a fundamental tenet of the concept of appropriation is that it requires active participation from the individual. As such, the appropriation of tools is also mediated by individual characteristics such as prior beliefs, personal goals and expectations, and the apprenticeship of observation.

In sum, activity theory incorporates the role of context in learning to teach and “provides a framework for attending simultaneously to individuals and the settings in which they learn and develop” (p. 25). Thus, this model is particularly appealing for investigating teacher learning in pre-service education as it allows to consider the
processes involved in negotiating teacher candidates’ differing roles (i.e., as students and
as teachers) and goals in the various contexts in which their initial training and learning
occurs (i.e., coursework and placement settings).

The models on learning to teach reviewed thus far provide the theoretical
framework, features, and processes to consider in studying teacher education. In the
following sections, we turn to the specific subject of literacy instruction and the
preparation of pre-service teachers to become literacy instructors.

Effective Literacy Instruction

Multiple consensus reports agree on what constitutes effective teaching of reading
and writing in the primary grades (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 1999;
Graham & Perin, 2007; Learning First Alliance [LFA], 2000; NRP, 2000; Snow, et al.,
1998). This knowledge base comes from diverse research perspectives and
methodologies, which range from the study of the actual practices of effective literacy
teachers (Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996) to a meta-analysis of the research on reading
and reading instruction (NRP, 2000).

Pressley et al. (1996) conducted a survey with 83 primary teachers nominated as
effective literacy instructors by their supervisors. Teachers were initially asked to list the
practices they considered essential to literacy instruction. Based on these responses, a
second survey asked them to describe the type and frequency of instructional practices
they used in their classrooms. Overall, effective teachers described: classrooms filled
with print; overt modeling of reading comprehension strategies and the writing process;
reading and writing across the curriculum; explicit teaching of spelling, vocabulary, decoding skills and strategies; and fostering students’ motivation for literacy.

In an additional study, Pressley and his colleagues (Wharton-McDonald, Pressley & Hampston, 1998) observed nominated exemplary and typical primary reading teachers in their classrooms. One of the most notable findings from their research was the amount of instructional time that students in the classroom of exemplary teachers were on-task and engaged in literacy related activities. The findings from this study suggest that effective literacy teachers in the primary grades use balanced literacy instruction; described by Pressley and his colleagues (2002) as the integration of holistic, whole language principles and explicit skills-based instruction for reading and writing.

From a different perspective, the committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children of the National Research Council (Snow et al., 1998) reviewed the existing research literature on normal reading development and instructional approaches to prevent reading difficulties. Based on this review, they describe specific guidelines for instruction at each stage of reading development in the primary grades. Overall, the committee’s conclusion is that reading instruction in the primary grades should focus on the development of word recognition and comprehension skills; at the same time fostering the motivation to learn to read. The findings of the committee coincide with what Pressley and his colleagues found to be the practices of effective literacy teachers.

The NRP (2000) conducted an extensive literature review on the major themes related to literacy instruction and development. Based on meta-analyses of the effect of specific types of instruction on students’ reading outcomes, the panel outlined the
scientifically-based best practices in reading instruction. These include: instruction in phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, guided repeated oral reading, direct and indirect vocabulary instruction, and teaching comprehension strategies.

Most of the research on effective literacy instruction has studied the impact of instructional variables separately for reading and writing. Fitzgerald and Shanahan (2000) consider that this approach limits the interpretation of the findings in this body of research. Their argument is based on evidence that reading and writing share certain underlying cognitive processes at different developmental stages (Shanahan & Lomax, 1988). For example, knowledge of phoneme-grapheme associations at the early stages of literacy development influences both word reading and spelling. Therefore, instruction on phonemic awareness and phonics most likely has an impact on reading as well as writing acquisition. Despite the shared knowledge and processes in reading and writing, evidence also reveals distinct and unique cognitive processes related to each skill. Reading and writing have different purposes and starting points and therefore instruction on the specific skills required for the reception and production of written language is also necessary (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000).

In sum, the research evidence converges on the principles and key components of effective literacy instruction which are presented in Table 1. These principles constitute the research-based knowledge that must guide the practice of classroom teachers. They represent the general literacy practices that impact reading and writing simultaneously; as well as those practices that separately promote the specific skills required for writing and reading.
Table 1

*Validated Components of Effective Literacy Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic awareness</td>
<td>Explicit instruction in sound identification, matching, segmentation, and blending.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabetics: Phonics and decoding</td>
<td>Systematic and explicit instruction in letter-sound associations and word identification strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Repeated and guided oral reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Direct instruction of new words, repeated exposure to vocabulary in many contexts; teaching word learning strategies, use of dictionaries and context clues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text comprehension</td>
<td>Explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies such as monitoring comprehension, using graphic and semantic organizers, summarizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling and handwriting</td>
<td>Direct instruction of sound-symbol associations, spelling patterns and letter formation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written expression</td>
<td>Explicit teaching of composition strategies and text structures as well as writing conventions (e.g., punctuation and capitalization).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background knowledge</td>
<td>Activation of prior knowledge to enhance reading comprehension. Exposure to world knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for reading and writing</td>
<td>Providing rich print and reading experiences. Link students’ motivations to reading and writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Constant monitoring of student performance. Use assessment information to plan instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research on teacher preparation for literacy instruction

The teaching of reading and writing is a complex process that requires considerable knowledge and skill. However, the literature suggests that pre-service teacher education programs usually do not allocate enough time in preparing prospective teachers to become effective literacy instructors (AFT, 1999; Snow, et al., 1998). For example, empirical evidence suggests that pre-service and in-service teachers have insufficient knowledge of language structures and their application to teaching (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001; Mather, Bos & Babur, 2001; McCutchen, et al., 2002; Moats, 1994; Moats & Foorman, 2003). Specifically, this body of research reveals that teachers are missing the explicit knowledge of phonology that would allow them to effectively teach phonological awareness (McCutchen, et al., 2002). Furthermore, teachers possess insufficient knowledge of phonics terminology; of the importance of alphabetic knowledge for word recognition; and of the fact that effective readers use multiple strategies for word identification (Mather, et al., 2001). These findings support the contention that many general education teachers are not effectively prepared to explicitly teach these skills (Moats, 1994, 2009). Explicit instruction in many of these skills is particularly important in teaching children who struggle in learning to read and write.

The inconsistency in effective teacher preparation is partly related to the fact that professional standards for certification are not yet widely established; thus, the content of literacy instruction in teacher education programs varies considerably (AFT, 1999; Nolen, McCutchen & Berninger, 1990). Recently, Walsh et al. (2006), commissioned by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), reviewed the course syllabi of 223
required reading courses of a randomly selected, representative sample, of 72 education schools in the United States. Their assessment of course syllabi focused on identifying if the core components of “the science of reading” were covered in reading courses. The science of reading refers to the evidence-based components of effective literacy instruction as highlighted by the findings of the NRP (2000). More specifically, they analyzed each course syllabus to determine the degree to which the five components of good reading instruction were taught (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension).

Their findings are discouraging. Of the 72 institutions they sampled from, only 11 were found to teach all of the five components. This is even more discouraging when one considers that they were only looking for the components to be mentioned in the course syllabi and not the manner in which these topics were covered in courses. Similarly, although 93 of the 223 course syllabi reviewed made reference to a “balanced literacy approach” or covering multiple approaches to reading instruction, only 8 courses devoted lecture time to teaching the science of reading as an approach to reading instruction. Based on their findings, the authors conclude that the majority of courses fail to adequately represent a balanced approach to literacy instruction.

It is interesting to note that the type of institution did not relate in any way to the likelihood of providing research-based literacy instruction components. Thus, factors such as whether the institution was public or private; accreditation status, admission selectivity, and number of teachers that graduate each year, did not differentiate between institutions that covered the science of reading and those that did not.
Another interesting finding of the NCTQ study is that phonics is the most frequently taught of the five components, suggesting that, it is not necessarily an ideological resistance to, as the authors call it “the Phonics camp” (p. 27), or teaching the science of reading. They suggest that it is perhaps more indicative of insufficient knowledge of course instructors on the other key components. Moreover, they found that, in many cases, what was actually being taught were models of reading instruction that are incompatible with research findings, such as viewing reading as something that will develop “naturally,” or suggesting that direct instruction is “outmoded” or in some instances even “hurtful” (p. 30).

From these findings, the authors conclude that education schools need to develop the expertise of their faculty and reading course instructors on the science of reading. On a similar note, Joshi et al. (2009) found that teacher educators, from a sample of colleges and universities in the United States, were not knowledgeable about the steps involved in systematic and explicit synthetic phonics instruction. Walsh et al. (2006) emphasize that teacher preparation “is where future teachers establish an identity connected to the professional requirements of their vocation – an identity that should include a deep knowledge from a scientific base of research that will continually inform their instruction. Teacher educators are responsible for forming this identity.” (p. 46).

In Canada, it is only recently that research in this area has begun. In Ontario, Kosnik and Beck (2008) conducted a qualitative study to explore the effectiveness of literacy courses, in one- and two-year teacher preparation programs, in preparing literacy teachers. Through interviews with ten literacy instructors and 22 graduates from these programs, who were followed into their first three years of teaching, they uncovered
significant discrepancies between what instructors were striving to teach teacher candidates and what the beginning teachers reported having learned from their programs. Beginning teachers also reported on what they felt was missing in their programs to effectively prepare them for their first years of teaching. The interview data revealed three major themes: teacher educators’ areas of expertise, course organization, and preparation for the realities of teaching.

For the most part, beginning teachers were able to identify their course instructor’s area of expertise and expressed appreciation about being taught by experts in the field; however, they also felt there was, at times, too much focus on the instructor’s area of interest and therefore insufficient coverage of other relevant topics. This finding resonates with the concern raised by the NCTQ (2006) over the knowledge and expertise of faculty from teacher education programs in the key features of literacy instruction.

In terms of course organization, instructors, for the most part, expressed the need to address the key components of literacy teaching and organized their course around them. Although most instructors made reference to covering theory and research, the manner in which this was presented was variable and not clearly articulated. Interestingly, most beginning teachers identified the theoretical component of their course as something they valued. In a related study, Beck, Kosnik and Rowsell (2007) reported that beginning teachers, interviewed during their first year of teaching, expressed the need to be provided with greater clarity and depth in the coverage of theory during their literacy-related courses. Graduates described being confused about the meaning of concepts such as balanced literacy and guided reading.
Thus, from the student teachers’ perspective, the information presented in their literacy-related courses was not coherent or integrated. Thus, they were left to figure out how to organize and structure their understanding of literacy instruction without guidance or support. Similarly, Bainbridge and Macy (2008) interviewed student teachers in two universities in Canada right upon completion of their pre-service program. These graduates also reported missing opportunities and time in their programs to reflect upon the information and concepts that were presented, particularly being provided with “large amounts of information without connecting it to practice” (p. 73).

Finally, beginning teachers felt they were not sufficiently prepared to face the realities of teaching, particularly in terms of knowing how to set up a program and manage their instructional time. More specifically, new teachers did not feel prepared to develop a literacy program throughout the year, in terms of identifying teaching goals and making decisions about what topics to emphasize. They also felt that their program provided insufficient coverage of assessment tools and they felt uncertain about how to integrate assessment with instruction (Beck, et al., 2007). Interviewed teachers highlighted four problems related to how assessment was covered in their teacher preparation program. The identified problems include: 1) not understanding the role and nature of assessment; 2) lack of knowledge or training on how to conduct assessment; 3) not knowing how to fit assessment into the busy classroom schedule; and 4) not knowing how to best communicate assessment results to parents and students. Interestingly, Bainbridge and Macy (2008) also report that interviewed graduates from teacher education programs felt inadequately prepared for the assessment of literacy skills and
unfamiliar with the assessment tools they would be expected to use in the classroom setting.

Kosnik and Beck (2008) argue in favor of identifying priorities for pre-service teacher education; they argue for “depth over breadth” so that beginning teachers are helped in the process of integrating the different components they require to begin their teaching practice in the classroom. The authors also propose that teacher educators need to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to bridge the gap between theory and practice during the pre-service preparation program.

Although these studies have begun to address a significant gap in our understanding of teacher preparation for literacy instruction in Canada, the research on this topic is scarce. Moreover, none of these studies focused specifically on investigating whether evidence-based best practices were being covered in teacher preparation programs. Thus, the studies reported in this thesis are timely in broadening our understanding of how adequately teacher education programs in Canada prepare their graduates for effective literacy instruction.

The impact of pre-service education on teachers’ classroom practices in literacy instruction.

The National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction, commissioned by the International Reading Association (IRA), identified eight excellent reading teacher preparation programs in the United States, and then followed graduates from these programs into their first years of teaching (Harmon et al., 2001; Hoffman et al., 2003). Relying on both qualitative and quantitative
methodologies, this series of studies constitute some of the few longitudinal research efforts into the impact of teacher preparation in reading instruction on teaching practices.

The Commission’s longitudinal studies provide evidence for the link between the quality of teacher preparation and teaching practices. More specifically, the Commission found that teachers that graduated from the identified excellent programs were more successful and confident than other beginning teachers in making the transition into teaching. Teachers from these programs consistently expressed confidence in their knowledge and instructional practices, as opposed to less prepared teachers who expressed frustration about the disconnect between their training and the realities of teaching. Similarly, teachers from excellent programs were more effective in creating a rich literacy environment in their classrooms and teaching their students to read, as reflected in higher student achievement in classrooms with teachers from quality programs (Hoffman et al., 2003).

In a qualitative study, Maloch and her colleagues (2003) explored differences in the understandings, beliefs, and decision making of beginning teachers from three types of reading teacher preparation programs. They followed 101 pre-service teachers into their first year of teaching, interviewing them at three points of the school year. They found that teachers from reading specialization and reading embedded programs (from the eight sites identified as having excellent reading programs) were more aware of the impact of their instructional decisions on students’ learning, and reported basing instructional decision on students’ needs and learning, than graduates from general education programs. Similarly, graduates from programs with a specific focus on reading instruction were also better able to negotiate the school culture and norms and were more
likely to report seeking ongoing support for their continued development as teachers. Moreover, teachers that graduated from one of the eight selected excellent programs, reported valuing their teacher preparation and made reference to specific components or aspects of it that they found useful in their first year of teaching, such as learning a particular approach to teaching or an instructional or assessment strategy learned in their program that proved useful in their classroom practice. Maloch et al. (2003) note that, “Frequent and sustained field experiences, modeling of teaching techniques, use of assessment activities and tutoring opportunities, and the pervasive articulation of a philosophy of teaching and learning are most often valued and recalled by beginning teachers.” (p. 451). Thus, these findings provide evidence for a link between the quality of teacher preparation in reading instruction and beginning teachers’ perceptions and understandings of reading instruction.

The participating teachers from programs selected by the Commission were also followed into their second and third years of teaching. Graduates from these programs were compared to teachers from their schools who had been teaching for the same number of years and with an additional group of more senior teachers who were identified by the school principals as being “excellent” reading teachers. The literacy instruction of teachers was examined using an observational instrument designed to assess the classroom literacy environment (Hoffman, 2001). This observational tool includes an assessment of the physical text environment, the uses of text in the environment, and the valuing of texts by both teachers and students. During the second year of data collection, teachers from Commission-selected programs were consistently more successful in creating a rich classroom text environment, high engagement with
texts, and high levels of understanding, than teachers with similar years of experience. Moreover, the performance of beginning teachers from excellent programs was comparable to that of more experienced teachers that had been nominated as “excellent” by their school principals. This pattern of results was also observed during the graduates’ third year of teaching. Thus, this quantitative study provides further evidence of the positive impact of good quality teacher preparation programs on graduates’ teaching practices during the first few years of teaching (Hoffman et al., 2005).

In another longitudinal study, which followed beginning teachers exiting a graduate teacher preparation program into their first two years of teaching, beginning teachers reported that teacher education provided them with a “vision of ideal practice” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 28). Although during their first year of teaching these graduates were unable to fully implement the pedagogical concepts and tools promoted in their pre-service programs, they reflected on this during their second year and talked about this teaching “ideal” informing and guiding their instruction during their second year of teaching, presumably when they felt more confident in the classroom setting. Thus, as Grossman and her colleagues highlight, “pedagogical tools developed during teacher education provided a set of frames through which to view teaching and a technical language to make sense of what the teachers were experiencing” (p. 29). In addition to a vision for teaching, graduates also reported that their pre-service program developed their “ability to reflect on their own teaching” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 29).

In sum, this body of research provides empirical evidence for the impact of pre-service teacher preparation on beginning teachers’ teaching practices (e.g., instructional decision-making), their vision for teaching, their ability to reflect on their teaching, and
their disposition to continue developing as teachers. These findings highlight the importance of studying teacher education programs in Canada and evaluating the impact they have on teacher learning.

**Evidence-based components and characteristics of effective teacher preparation for literacy instruction**

Given the identified impact of pre-service education on beginning teachers’ classroom practices, concerted efforts have been made by groups of experts and commissions to identify and outline the essential qualities of effective teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Shulman, 2005; IRA, 2007; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; NRP, 2000; Snow, Griffin & Burns, 2005). These consensus reports include both general principles for teacher preparation and specific components for literacy instruction. For example, based on several avenues of research commissioned by the IRA, the association published a synthesis of the research outlining the key features for creating and sustaining teacher preparation programs that produce teachers who teach reading well (IRA, 2007).

This section presents the consensus on the evidence-based components of teacher preparation programs that prepare effective literacy teachers. In this respect, they serve as guidelines of what should be included in pre-service programs that prepare effective literacy teachers.

**Content covered in teacher preparation programs.** Multiple consensus reports link expectations for teacher knowledge to the research-based principles on effective reading and writing instruction (e.g., LFA, 2000). The committee on* Preventing Reading*
Difficulties in Young Children (Snow et al., 1998) recommends that teachers have knowledge of pedagogy and instructional practices, as well as the content knowledge that underlies teaching reading. Although this report concentrated on reading instruction, the expectations described can also be applied to the teaching of writing. Early consensus reports outline that literacy teachers should have foundational knowledge of the psychological research that studies the processing factors involved in reading and writing (e.g., language processing and its relation to reading and writing); of the developmental progression of these skills in children; of the best research-based instructional practices; and knowledge of language structures that constitute the primary content of instruction (AFT, 1999; Snow, et al., 1998).

More recently, the IRA (2007) outlined six foundational elements that pre-service teachers require to produce proficient readers. These elements are: a) a foundation in research and theory on language and reading development, as well as knowledge of learning theory and motivation; b) word-level instructional strategies, which include knowledge of phonemic awareness and phonics teaching strategies; c) text-level comprehension strategies, including understanding the importance of fluency and vocabulary development for reading comprehension; d) reading-writing connections, which includes teaching composition strategies and writing conventions; e) the ability to use a variety of instructional approaches and materials, reflectively and flexibly; and f) use of appropriate assessment techniques to respond to students’ learning needs.

Kosnik and Beck (2009) also propose that subject-specific content and pedagogy should be one of the priorities of teacher education. They believe teachers require relevant knowledge of subject matter (i.e., literacy) and knowledge of pedagogical
content knowledge (Shulman, 2004). From their view, teachers need a deep understanding of subject matter in order to teach it well. The depth of understanding allows teachers to be able to apply their knowledge flexibly, such as finding examples and explanations in the spur of the moment. Moreover, teachers need to understand the connections of a subject with other subject matter to be able to integrate across subjects.

In addition to depth of knowledge, Kosnik and Beck (2009) advocate for being selective in subject-specific instruction; that is, focusing on the most relevant or key concepts, principles, and skills within a discipline. They make a particular case of covering the developmental progression of knowledge and skill in specific subject areas, such as the development of literacy skills.

There is generalized agreement on the importance of assessment to determine students’ literacy needs and the need to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge base and skills to assess their students (Shepard et al, 2005). Based on the finding that beginning teachers did not feel adequately prepared for assessment by their pre-service program, Kosnik and Beck (2009) outline a set of principles for the coverage of assessment in teacher education. They propose that assessment should be closely connected to teaching, as this will make its role of informing teaching practices more evident for beginning teachers. In addition, they propose that teachers need to know and use many different types of assessment methods such as observation, self- and peer assessments, tests, written and oral assignments, amongst others. Through this variety of assessment methods, teachers are more likely to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their students’ learning, as well as information that will be useful in designing instruction.
In addition to the specific content that should be presented to pre-service teachers, Darling-Hammond and her colleagues (2005) highlight the importance of organizing the information presented within the context of a conceptual framework. This suggestion is based on research on learning and memory which indicates that students learn best when they have a framework or cognitive schema that allows them to organize information and understand relationships among concepts. As Darling-Hammond and her colleagues explain, “learning ideas within the context of an overarching framework not only helps students understand the ‘big picture’ but also enables them to begin to recognize how all the individual ideas and theories fit together and relate to one another” (p. 397).

**Pedagogy of teacher preparation.** The characteristics of the faculty and teaching approaches used in programs are also of relevance. This includes the knowledge base and pedagogy of the faculty in charge of preparing pre-service teachers. Teacher educators have, more recently, become the focus of study in an attempt to understand the role they play in teacher education. One important issue to consider is the role of modeling by course instructors in pre-service teacher education, given that this constitutes the last formal experience as students that teacher candidates will have. In this respect, teacher educators serve as a significant role model for teacher candidates, particularly in the manner in which they present and organize the content of their courses.

In a recent exploratory study, Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennen (2007), pointed out the lack of focus in the research literature on the modeling of teacher educators. In their view “in order to improve the impact of teacher education…one aspect that we have to look at carefully is the role of the teacher educator and educational practices within teacher education itself” (p. 588). Their view of modeling by teacher
educators involves the intentional display of certain teaching behaviours to promote teacher candidates’ professional learning.

Lunenberg and his colleagues (2007) distinguish four types of modeling: 1) implicit; 2) explicit, which makes the underlying rationale explicit through thinking aloud and the open discussion of motives and intentions; 3) explicit modeling with an additional component to help student teachers translate the experience into their own teaching practices; and 4) connecting modeled behaviour with theory. In a series of case studies with teacher educators in the Netherlands, these researchers found that, although the majority of teacher educators provided some explicit modeling in their coursework, none of them explained the link between practice and theory. As they note, this finding is “remarkable in view of the fact that establishing such links is a key issue in teacher education.” They propose that teacher educators should provide teacher candidates with more explicit modeling that explains the underlying rationale and helps them connect the modeled behaviours with theory.

In an extensive review of the research on reading teacher education over the last 15 years, Risko and her colleagues (2008) also found evidence that knowledge and beliefs are “most strongly affected in the context of methods courses” (p. 276) when course instructors use teaching approaches that include “explicit explanations, use of examples, modeling, focused feedback, practice within the university classroom, and frequent practice with pupils in field settings” (p. 276). They concluded there is a strong relationship between explicitness and the impact of the particular strategy in changing student teachers’ beliefs and pedagogical knowledge.
In addition, in exemplary teacher education programs, faculty members structure the information they present around central concepts or ideas and use a wide range of pedagogical methods (e.g., case studies, multimedia) to develop student teachers’ skills and understanding (IRA, 2007). By modeling the use of diverse strategies and providing opportunities for teacher candidates to practice some of the required skills, while providing feedback and support, faculty embody the very practices that they are trying to instill in their students. Research suggests that when teachers are provided with the opportunities to experience subject matter in the manner in which they expect their students to do, they are more likely to use those practices in their classrooms (Lieberman & Wood, 2003).

In addition to the focus on teacher educators, a considerable body of research, focused on enhancing prospective teachers’ practical knowledge and pedagogy, reveals the effectiveness of certain pedagogical tools or methods used in pre-service programs. Risko and her colleagues (2008) found that many studies in teacher preparation for literacy instruction report changes in beliefs and pedagogical knowledge in student teachers when they engage in tasks closely related to teaching, such as collecting and analyzing pupil data. For example, analyzing pupil data furthers teacher candidates’ understanding of assessment and beliefs about students’ capabilities (Mora & Grisham, 2001). Similarly, the use of case studies has proven useful in increasing engagement with course content and developing candidates’ procedural knowledge (Levin, 1995; Nierstheimer, Hopkins, Dillon & Schmitt, 2000; Roskos & Walker, 1993).

Another effective pedagogy is providing structured teaching formats to prepare teacher candidates for their field placements. For example, research that has examined the
impact of engaging student teachers in tutoring lessons for struggling readers suggests that this experience leads to changes in their beliefs about what struggling readers can achieve, as well as improvement in their procedural knowledge of reading instruction (Massey, 1990; Worthy & Patterson, 2001). Moreover, the obtained knowledge and skills transfer to instruction in the classroom setting during field placements (Massey, 1990). Similarly, the use of performance tasks (e.g., planning and delivering a lesson) and teaching portfolios, as required assignments or assessment strategies in pre-service programs, are effective ways to promote enactment of taught practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

The importance of the pedagogy and structure of coursework in teacher preparation was further highlighted in the review by Risko et al. (2008). In their words, “…we noticed a slight trend favoring deeper learning and changes in beliefs and teaching when the learning was situated within methods courses or methods courses combined with field placements, as compared to situations in which learning occurred only through field placements or student teaching alone” (p. 282). Thus, there appears to be a stronger influence of the content and pedagogy of the methods courses in teacher preparation programs in beginning teachers’ knowledge and skills. For example, Grisham (2000), in her longitudinal study of beginning teachers, found that “Teachers’ theoretical conceptions of reading were changed as a result of the cohesiveness of the program teachings….and these effects appear steady over time. Field experiences during student teaching…did not seem to form a consistent picture as far as changing the beliefs…and/or practice of participants” (p. 166).
In sum, explicit instruction in literacy skills and strategies, modeling and demonstration of desired practices, and extensive opportunities for practice with guidance and feedback are considered the most effective pedagogical strategies to produce effective beginning literacy teachers (Risko et al., 2008). Moreover, given that the context that has been shown to have the greatest impact on student teacher learning is program coursework, these pedagogical strategies should be integrated into literacy-related methods courses.

**Field experiences and practica.** Another important feature in preparing effective literacy instructors is engaging teacher candidates in a variety of field experiences or practica. Fieldwork allows student teachers to apply the skills they are learning in their pre-service program, such as assessing student needs, planning, and implementing a lesson. From this perspective, the purpose of practicum placements is to provide student teachers the opportunity to integrate theory and practice (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman et al., 2005).

Field experiences also provide exposure to models of teaching. A considerable body of research has identified the importance of the compatibility between what graduates are learning in their teacher preparation program and what they are exposed to in their placements. For example, the IRA highlights the responsibility of the teacher preparation program in ensuring that students are placed with mentors who will model what the students are learning in their program (IRA, 2007). The rationale is that teacher candidates are better able to make the connections between theory and practice if they are exposed to classrooms where they can have first-hand experience with the content covered in their courses (NRP, 2000). However, a longitudinal study by Grossman and
her colleagues (2000) questioned this view. In their following of beginning teachers from their graduate program to their first two years of teaching, they found that for some pre-service teachers “a contrasting placement encouraged them to think more deeply about the concepts and strategies they had learned in their coursework” (p. 30). This finding underscores the importance of developing a reflective stance toward teaching.

In addition to the compatibility between the program and the field placement, engaging in the act of teaching is an experientially powerful way to help prospective teachers further their understanding of the concepts they encounter in their coursework, therefore promoting the link between theory and practice. For this reason, Darling-Hammond and her colleagues (2005) emphasize the importance of providing field experiences early and throughout teacher education. The underlying rationale is that engaging teacher candidates in early practicum experiences “actually provides a conceptual structure for them to organize and better understand the theories that are addressed in their academic work” (p. 398).

Thus, there is evidence that both the amount and timing of student teaching impact teachers’ learning. For example, research suggests that more supervised teaching experiences can have positive effects on teacher candidates’ practice and self-confidence (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002). Moreover, the body of research on the pedagogy of reading instruction concludes that “prolonged engagement with pupils in field placements is viewed as the catalyst for reconstructing prior beliefs and refining pedagogical knowledge” (Risko et al, 2008, p. 267).

In addition to amount and timing, the pedagogy and structure of field placements is also important. Empirical evidence has indicated that student teachers get the most out
of their field placements if they are provided with scaffolding, feedback, and are exposed to the overt discussion of mentors’ underlying rationale for instructional strategies or teaching approaches (IRA, 2007). Moreover, having open discussions, with experienced teachers or faculty, about what they implemented or observed in the classroom, allows student teachers to consolidate their understanding of classroom pedagogy and to examine their beliefs and practices (Mallette, Maheady & Harper, 1999).

Beck and Kosnik (2002) investigated student teachers’ perception of the components of good practicum placements. They found that student teachers value elements such as: emotional support from associate teacher; a collegial relationship with the associate teacher; flexibility in teaching content and method; constructive feedback on performance; being exposed to a sound approach to teaching and learning; and a balanced workload. As the authors note, “it is significant that virtually all of the practicum components they mentioned had to do with their relationship with their associate teacher” (p. 96). This research underlines the inherent social nature of student teachers’ training in the classroom setting and emphasizes the role of associate or host teachers in determining teacher candidates’ classroom training experience.

**Diversity and differentiated instruction.** There is also consensus regarding the need to sensitize student teachers to all forms of *diversity* (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; IRA, 2007). Prospective teachers need to be aware of the challenges involved in teaching diverse learners. These challenges require targeting teachers’ attitudes and expectations about diverse learners, as well as the knowledge of assessment and instructional practices for differentiated instruction.
In terms of diversity, student teachers need to be aware of the influences of their own and their students’ cultural background. Faculty from excellent reading preparation programs stress the importance of making connections between the instruction teachers provide in the classroom and students’ home experiences (Clarke & Medina, 2000). This can be accomplished by providing teacher candidates a variety of opportunities to learn about their students and the communities from which they come. Teachers also need to develop the ability to reflect on the impact of their own cultural background, how it might differ from their students’, and to become aware of their attitudes and expectations regarding diverse learners (Banks et al., 2005).

In addition to the considerations of cultural diversity, excellent teacher preparation programs also focus on how to reach struggling readers. Teachers’ beliefs about struggling readers are related to their expectations and teaching approaches with diverse learners (Nierstheimer, et al, 2000). Providing teacher candidates with supportive modeling and direct experience in teaching struggling readers has been found to be a powerful way for them to learn to differentiate instruction (Massey, 2003; Nierstheimer et al., 2000).

Kosnik and Beck (2009) propose that pre-service programs should adopt an “infusion” approach to inclusive education, such that issues of diversity are infused into every aspect of the program instead of being viewed as a separate or “add-on” subject. From their view, adopting this approach provides a model for teachers, at the same time that it communicates the importance of inclusive education. They also advocate for a balanced view of similarities and differences to avoid stereotyping, and allowing student teachers to construct their understanding of inclusive education. This is accomplished by
having discussions on issues of inclusion and exclusion and providing student teachers with field experiences that will expose them to diversity.

In addition, teachers in preparation need to apply their knowledge of assessment to identify students’ learning needs and to tailor instruction to these needs (Grisham, 2000; NRP, 2000). Thus, an essential component for addressing diversity and differentiated instruction is being able to effectively use diagnostic tools to determine students’ strengths and needs. Teachers in preparation need to have opportunities to observe how skilled mentors adjust instruction to meet student needs based on assessment findings (IRA, 2007). Teachers also require knowledge about the nature of learning differences, knowledge of methods and materials suitable for teaching diverse learners, and culturally informed pedagogical knowledge (Banks et al., 2005).

In sum, considerable evidence has been gathered over the last few decades regarding the scientifically-based components of pre-service programs that prepare teachers who can effectively teach all students to read and write. However, just as little is known about how much of the evidence-based components of effective literacy instruction are covered in teacher preparation programs in Canada, there is also insufficient knowledge of how teacher preparation programs in Canada measure up to the evidence-based components of effective teacher education for literacy instruction. Therefore, by examining teacher preparation programs in Ontario from an evidence-based framework, the studies that follow make a significant contribution to broaden our understanding of the current condition of teacher preparation for literacy instruction in Canada.
Chapter 2

Study 1: An exploratory comparative study of one- and two-year teacher preparation programs in literacy instruction

The impact of pre-service teacher education on teacher quality and student outcomes has been the focus of much debate and investigation (Bransford, et al., 2005). However, there is considerable variety in the structure and format of pre-service programs reported in the literature. In a recent review of teacher education programs, Zeichner and Conklin (2005), commissioned by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), identified distinguishing program characteristics such as length, the timing of the program and type of degree awarded (i.e., undergraduate or graduate degree), and whether they are traditional university-based programs or alternative certification programs. The authors note that, "most common arguments about programs made in the teacher education literature over the last 30 years have been either for the lengthening of programs…or for the establishment of alternative routes into teaching” (p. 648).

Zeichner and Conklin (2005) summarize the two main positions in the literature in favor of extending teacher education. The first is the life space argument, which proposes that short programs cannot give adequate attention to all that a teacher needs to know to begin teaching. The professionalization argument supports the view that extending teacher education will enhance the status of teaching in society. In addition, the professionalization argument also endorses the need to establish guidelines of professional practice, based on shared understandings and the evidence-based consensus of what professionals need to know and be able to do (Bransford et al., 2005).
Unfortunately, as Zeichner and Conklin (2005) note, “it is not common for arguments about the efficacy of programs to draw on empirical research that has systematically examined the impact of different program structures” (p. 648).

In their review of the research between 1986 and 2002, comparing teacher education programs of differing lengths in the United States, Zeichner and Conklin (2005) identified only four studies that fulfilled their selection criteria of providing empirical evidence. These studies provided some evidence in favor of five-year extended programs over four-year programs in outcomes such as: percentage of graduates who entered teaching, percentage of graduates who remained in teaching over time, graduates’ self-reports of teaching abilities, and graduates’ perceptions of how well their program prepared them for specific classroom practices (Andrew, 1990; Andrew & Schwab, 1995; Baker, 1993; Breidenstein, 2002). It is interesting that none of the reviewed studies measured outcomes related to graduates’ knowledge and preparedness of specific subject matter instruction.

The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) conducted a review of the research on pre-service teacher education for literacy instruction. Based on their review, the Panel concluded that there is not yet an effective system for ensuring that research-based knowledge about literacy learning is making its way into teacher education programs. Moreover, the Panel raised a series of questions regarding the nature and effectiveness of teacher education programs in preparing teachers for literacy instruction. In particular, the Panel questioned the appropriate length of teacher preparation programs. This study explored this question within teacher education in Ontario.
Context and purpose of study

There are 17 faculties of education in the province of Ontario accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers. Ten of these faculties offer both consecutive and concurrent programs. The remaining seven offer only consecutive programs. In concurrent programs, the education program is taken at the same time that the student is doing an undergraduate degree in another discipline. Consecutive programs are undertaken after completing a post-secondary degree (Ontario College of Teachers, 2010 retrieved from: http://www.oct.ca/become_a_teacher/faculties.aspx?lang=en-CA).

Most consecutive teacher preparation programs in Ontario are completed in one year. There are only two teacher preparation programs in the province that are carried over two years, both offered at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. These programs require students to be enrolled full-time for the two years. They are graduate level teacher preparation programs offered to students with a bachelor’s degree in any discipline. Upon completion, students obtain a masters degree and they are recommended for teacher certification with the Ontario College of Teachers.

Haas-Barota (in preparation) conducted a study examining the impact of teacher preparation programs across Ontario on graduates’ knowledge and ability to teach literacy. For this purpose, she surveyed 210 graduates from 26 elementary accreditation programs from English-speaking faculties of education in Ontario. The survey inquired about topics such as graduates’ understanding of key literacy concepts, their knowledge about literacy programming, their knowledge of assessment and instructional strategies, and their perception of how prepared they feel to teach reading and writing. The results of her study revealed significant variability in graduates’ knowledge and ability to teach
literacy across the teacher preparation programs in Ontario. Similarly, there was considerable variability in graduates’ feelings of preparedness.

The current study followed the work done by Haas-Barota to extend the knowledge about the impact of pre-service programs on graduates’ preparation for literacy instruction in Ontario. The purpose of this exploratory study was to compare one- and two-year consecutive pre-service programs in the province on how they prepare prospective teachers for elementary literacy instruction. Graduates from two-year teacher preparation programs were asked to complete the survey developed by Haas-Barota. By using the same measure, it was possible to compare the data obtained from graduates from one-year pre-service programs in Haas-Barota’s sample to that obtained in the current study with graduates from the two 2-year programs in Ontario. The specific research questions that guided this study were:

1. Is there a difference in the knowledge of literacy concepts and instructional skills between graduates from one-year and two-year pre-service programs?
2. Is there a difference in the time spent in one- and two-year pre-service programs in the coverage of literacy-related topics and literacy difficulties?
3. Is there a difference in how prepared graduates from one- and two-year pre-service programs feel for literacy instruction at the conclusion of their program?
4. Are there differences in what graduates from one- and two-year pre-service programs identify as essential components of an elementary literacy program?
Study 1: Method

As mentioned above, this study involved comparing two samples of pre-service teachers, graduates of one- and two-year programs. These samples were recruited at different points in time. The recruitment procedures for each sample are described below. For the purpose of this study, a matched sub-sample of graduates from one-year programs was selected from the larger sample recruited by Haas-Barota (in preparation). Haas-Barota’s data were obtained during 2001 and 2002. Following the description of the recruitment process, I present the criteria upon which the samples were matched and their demographic characteristics.

Data collection

Recruitment of graduates from one-year programs. The recruitment of graduates from one-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario was done in the spring of 2001 and 2002. Haas-Barota used multiple strategies to recruit participants across faculties in Ontario. These included placing posters and flyers in faculty campuses, posting information about the study on a chat board sponsored by the Ontario College of Teachers’ Professionally Speaking magazine, and posting information about the study on the Jobs in Education website. In order to participate in the study, subjects were required to have recently completed a teacher preparation program in Ontario. Interested participants contacted the researcher via email and were mailed a survey with a return envelope. Graduates who completed a survey received a $25 gift certificate for educational materials.

During data collection, care was taken to obtain a representative proportion of questionnaires from each faculty and program. The proportion of graduates was
determined based on the enrollment numbers of 2001 and 2002 in each program. A total of 210 graduates completed surveys in 2001 and 2002. (See Appendix B for the number of participants from each faculty and program).

**Recruitment of graduates from two-year programs.** I recruited teacher candidates from both two-year teacher education programs in Ontario that were finishing their program in the spring of 2007. I contacted course instructors from both programs and asked for permission to attend one of their classes to invite graduates to participate in the study. Thus, in March 2007, I met with graduates during one of their courses, described the purpose of the study, and invited them to participate in filling out a survey about their program and literacy instruction.

Interested graduates were given a self-addressed envelope with a consent letter explaining the study in further detail and the survey (see Appendix A). Graduates who completed the survey received a $20 gift certificate for educational resources. During this first year of data collection, only 30% of the graduates completed and mailed in a survey. Given the low response rate, the same recruitment procedures were followed in March 2008 with the graduates who were finishing their two-year program that year. A total of 38 teacher candidates completed a survey. Of the completed surveys, 26 were from Program A (68%) and 12 from Program B (32%). These percentages correspond with the proportion of students in each program over the two years.

**Participants**

The participants of the present study included all 38 graduates from two-year programs who completed a survey and a matched sub-sample of participants from one-year teacher education programs. For this comparison, only graduates from consecutive
teacher education programs in Ontario were selected. Matched participants from one-year programs represent nine faculties of teacher preparation in Ontario (See Appendix C for number of students from represented faculties in matched sample). Participants were matched on sex, age, and number of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Table 2 provides the demographic characteristics of both groups.

Table 2

Demographic characteristics of participants in two-year programs and matched participants from one-year programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>One-year programs (n= 38)</th>
<th>Two-year programs (n=38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1 undergraduate degrees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degrees</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research instruments

Survey. The survey was developed to determine the nature and extent of the literacy education component experienced by student teachers in pre-service programs. In addition, the survey inquires about the extent to which the program’s content reflects research-based knowledge about literacy instruction. It involves both close-ended and open-ended responses. The close-ended responses include Likert scales and Yes-No items.

The survey is divided into four sections. The first two sections include general demographic information and educational/background experience. The third section focuses on general characteristics of the students’ program and practicum experience. The fourth section delves into students’ exposure to research-based knowledge on literacy instruction, their understanding of early literacy education, and their perception regarding their program and feelings of preparedness. (See Appendix A for complete survey.)

I selected specific survey questions to compare the two samples. These included both rating scales and open-ended questions. The rating scales were analyzed using quantitative methods and the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively.

The rating scales on the survey were designed to evaluate five dimensions of teacher education programs. These five dimensions involved: 1) exposure to key concepts of early literacy education; 2) exposure to difficulties in literacy development; 3) teacher candidates’ philosophy of literacy teaching; 4) course instructor’s philosophy of literacy teaching; and 5) feelings of preparedness for literacy instruction. The first two
dimensions were assessed based on graduates’ rating of the time spent in their literacy courses discussing topics related to literacy instruction and difficulties in literacy development (rating 1= No time to 5= Great deal of time). For philosophy of literacy teaching, graduates were asked to rate their position, and that of their course instructors, regarding statements that selected either phonics-based instruction or a whole language approach to literacy instruction (rating 1= Strongly disagree to 5= Strongly agree).

Finally, graduates were asked to rate their feelings of preparedness for instruction and assessment of literacy skills (rating 1= Not at all to 5= Completely).

**Interview.** Individual interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of participants from each group. The interview was designed to obtain more detailed information regarding the quantity and quality of the literacy education component in pre-service programs. The semi-structured interview schedule was originally developed by Haas-Barota (in preparation) for her study of pre-service programs across Ontario. I interviewed ten graduates from two-year pre-service programs with an interview schedule adapted from the one developed by Haas-Barota.

The only section of the interview that was used in the comparison of one- and two-year programs required participants to define a list of 20 key literacy concepts (see Appendix D for full interview schedule). For example, graduates were asked to define terms such as phoneme, phonemic awareness, semantics and scaffolding. These definitions were scored based on a rubric developed by Haas-Barota (see Appendix E for definitions and scoring rubric). The definitions of literacy terms were derived from published documents (e.g., *Put Reading First*, a document written by Ambruster, Lehr & Osborne, 2001, and based on the Report of the National Reading Panel). Graduates’
definitions were scored on a scale of 1 (No answer or Completely wrong answer) to 5 (Completely thorough answer). The scores obtained on the definitions of key literacy concepts provide a measure of graduates’ declarative knowledge of literacy instruction. A second rater scored 30% of participants’ definitions. Interrater reliability was acceptable with a Kappa value of 0.78.

**Data analysis**

In order to determine the internal consistency of the survey rating scales, I conducted a reliability analysis, using Cronbach’s alpha, on the five measured constructs. Internal consistency reliability was also conducted on the scores obtained on the definitions of key literacy concepts from interviewed participants in both groups. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis.

**Table 3**

*Internal consistency reliability of scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to key literacy terms</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to difficulties in literacy</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates’ philosophy of teaching</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor’s philosophy of teaching</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of key literacy terms</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 3 reflects, the reliability for four of the scales was above 0.80 reflecting good internal consistency reliability. I computed average composite scores for one-year and two-year teacher education programs on the four scales with acceptable reliabilities. These scores were compared using paired-samples t-tests to determine differences on graduates’ exposure to key literacy terms, exposure to difficulties in literacy development, how prepared they feel for literacy instruction and their knowledge of key literacy terms. Effect sizes were estimated using Cohen’s $d$, which indicates the standardized difference between two means. Cohen (1988) proposed interpretative guidelines for $d$. A $d$ value of 0.20 is considered a small effect size, a value of 0.50 is a medium effect size, and 0.80 is considered a large effect size.

In the case of the two scales that did not meet acceptable internal consistency reliability, that is, Graduates’ philosophy of teaching and Instructor’s philosophy of teaching, I used the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks non-parametric test to compare the questions that addressed these topics. A conservative $p$ value of .01 was used to determine significance to adjust for multiple comparisons.

Finally, qualitative content analysis was used on an open-ended question of the survey that asked graduates to name the essential components of a good elementary literacy program. Through content analysis of graduates’ responses to this question, three categories were identified. The first category corresponded to responses that involved general approaches to literacy instruction (e.g., balanced literacy, modeling, integrated literacy). The second category involved naming specific literacy components (e.g., phonics, fluency, reading comprehension). The third category involved naming specific instructional strategies or activities (e.g., read aloud, guided reading, word walls). Once
these categories were identified, graduates’ responses were organized using a matrix display. This involved developing a matrix display for each group in which participants’ responses were organized based on the identified categories. Cross-case comparisons were made by displaying data by categories (i.e., general approaches, specific components or instructional strategies), tallying responses, and analyzing patterns.

**Study 1: Results**

**Exposure to literacy related terms**

Graduates rated the time spent in their literacy courses discussing topics related to literacy instruction (rating 1= No time to 5= Great deal of time). A paired-samples t-test revealed that graduates from two-year programs rated spending significantly more time devoted to key literacy terms during their courses ($M = 2.80, SD = 0.53, N = 38$) than graduates from one-year programs ($M = 2.30, SD = 0.56, N = 38$), $t (37) = -3.86, p = .000, d = 0.92$. This result suggests that, on average, graduates from two-year programs spent significantly more time discussing terms related to literacy development and instruction (e.g., phonics, inventive spelling, language experience).

In order to provide a more detailed description of the literacy terms included in the composite, and to examine which terms and concepts were not sufficiently covered, Table 4 presents the percentage of graduates from one- and two-year programs that indicated spending “None” or “Very Little” time discussing each of the key literacy terms (i.e., rating of 1 or 2).
### Table 4

*Percentage of graduates in one- and two-year programs that report spending “None” or “Very Little” time on literacy-related terms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>One-year ($n = 38$)</th>
<th>Two-year ($n = 38$)</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Language</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching in context</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic awareness</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset/rime</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapheme</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphthong</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digraph</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthography</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventive spelling</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language experience</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted on Table 4, there is a trend of a greater proportion of graduates from one-year programs who indicated spending none or very little time discussing literacy terms in their courses. Although only one of the comparisons in the table is statistically significant at the <.01 level, 18 out of the 20 comparisons are in the direction showing that the 2-year programs spent more time than the one-year programs on these literacy terms (only one term, “cloze passages” was in the reverse direction with the one-year programs spending more time on it, and one term “semantics” was virtually identical across the one- and two-year programs). Thus, perhaps not surprisingly, being in a longer program allowed teacher candidates more exposure to literacy-related terms and concepts.

In addition to this overall pattern, there are specific differences that are noteworthy such as the difference in the amount of time that graduates report spending on evidence-based literacy components such as phonics and phonemic awareness. It is striking that over 25% of the surveyed participants from one-year programs report spending such little time discussing these terms in their literacy courses. Similarly, there is a noteworthy difference in the amount of time spent on terms related to language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>One-Year</th>
<th>Two-Year</th>
<th>McNemar Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semantics</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloze passages</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyslexia</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscue analysis</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The McNemar Test of Proportions was used to calculate \( p \) values.
structures such as phoneme, grapheme and morpheme; and graduates’ exposure to terms such as dyslexia, modeling and scaffolding.

**Graduates’ declarative knowledge of key literacy concepts.**

Graduates were asked to define key literacy terms and concepts. Their definitions were compared to definitions of published documents and scored based on a rubric that ranged from 1 (No answer or Completely wrong answer) to 5 (Completely thorough answer). In addition to the noted differences in the amount of time spent discussing literacy terms, interviewed graduates’ definitions were also significantly better if they had completed a two-year program ($M = 2.75, SD = .54, N = 10$) than if they completed a one-year program, ($M = 1.93, SD = 0.59, N = 10$), $t (9) = -2.57, p = .03, d = 1.45$.

In order to explore which terms and concepts were not well understood by graduates, Table 5 presents the percentage of teacher candidates from each group that obtained a score of either 1 (No answer or Completely wrong answer) or 2 (Vague or Slightly flawed answer) in their definitions of key literacy terms.

Table 5

*Percentage of interviewed graduates from one- and two-year programs with low scores on the definition of literacy terms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>One year $(n = 10)$</th>
<th>Two year $(n = 10)$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Language</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts of print</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>p value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic awareness</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blends</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset/rime</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapheme</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digraph</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthography</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventive spelling</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schema development</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantics</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloze passages</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading disabilities/Dyslexia</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscue analysis</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The McNemar Test of Proportions was used to calculate p values.*

Although there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in any specific item (p < .01), it is noteworthy that a large proportion of interviewed graduates from one-year programs were unable to correctly define key
literacy terms such as fluency, phonemic awareness and blends. In contrast, a higher proportion of graduates from two-year programs demonstrated at least some understanding of these terms and concepts. Despite these differences, it is also noteworthy that there are a number of terms that graduates from both groups were unable to define correctly, such as terms related to language structures (e.g., grapheme and morpheme), reading disabilities, orthography and schema development.

**Exposure to issues related to reading and writing difficulties.**

Graduates were also asked to rate the amount of time spent in their literacy courses discussing issues related to literacy difficulties (rating 1= No time to 5= Great deal of time). Graduates from two-year programs rated significantly more time spent discussing issues related to reading and writing difficulties ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.84$, $N = 38$) than graduates from one-year programs ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.81$, $N = 38$), $t(37) = -2.84$, $p = .007$, $d = 0.64$.

In order to explore the areas that were insufficiently covered, Table 6 details the percentage of graduates from each group that indicated spending “None” or “Very Little” time (i.e., rating of 1 and 2, respectively) discussing issues related to teaching and assessment of reading and writing difficulties.

**Table 6**

*Percentage of graduates from one- and two-year programs that indicated spending “None” or “Very Little” time discussing literacy difficulties*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>One year ($n = 38$)</th>
<th>Two year ($n = 38$)</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Although there are not statistically significant differences in the comparison of specific items, Table 6 reveals a trend of a higher proportion of graduates from one-year programs that report spending none to very little time discussing these topics in their courses. Despite this overall trend, it is important to note that the topics that have a similarly high proportion of graduates endorsing low levels of discussion include those that involve the assessment of writing difficulties and helping students who struggle with writing. Thus, teacher candidates from both groups report that issues related to writing difficulties were not discussed much in their programs.

**Feelings of preparedness**

Graduates that completed a survey rated, on a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Completely), how prepared they felt they were to teach reading, to teach writing and to assess students’ literacy skills in the following year. The overall composite representing feelings of preparedness for literacy instruction revealed a significant difference between
graduates who completed a one-year program and those who completed a two-year program. A paired-samples t-test indicated that graduates from two-year programs rated feeling significantly better prepared for literacy instruction ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.68$, $N = 38$) than graduates from one-year programs ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.88$, $N = 38$), $t(37) = -2.94$, $p = .006$, $d = 0.62$.

In order to explore the areas in which graduates did not feel adequately prepared, Table 7 details the percentage of graduates from each group that indicated feeling “Not at all” or “A little” prepared (i.e., rating of 1 and 2, respectively) to teach reading, to teach writing and to assess literacy skills.

Table 7

*Percentage of graduates that indicated feeling not or only a little prepared to teach and assess literacy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>One-year ($n=38$)</th>
<th>Two-year ($n=38$)</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepared to teach reading</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared to teach writing</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared to assess literacy</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The McNemar Test of Proportions was used to calculate $p$ values.
Table 7 reveals that a greater proportion of graduates from one-year programs feel insufficiently prepared for literacy instruction after finishing their program. This feeling is consistent in terms of teaching reading, writing and assessment of literacy skills.

**Graduates’ and course instructors’ teaching philosophies**

For philosophy of literacy teaching, graduates were asked to rate their position, and that of their course instructors, regarding statements that selected either phonics-based instruction or a whole language approach to literacy instruction (rating 1= Strongly disagree to 5= Strongly agree). Given that these scales did not meet acceptable internal consistency, it was not possible to obtain a composite score for them. Therefore, I used non-parametric tests to compare the ratings between graduates from one- and two-year programs on each item.

The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was used to compare the matched sample of participants from one- and two-year programs on the rating items aimed at assessing graduates’ literacy teaching philosophy. Table 8 presents the items and the results of these tests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$Z$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading a lot is the best way to overcome reading problems</td>
<td>-2.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading instruction is not necessary after Grade 3</td>
<td>-2.259</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a whole language person</td>
<td>-4.86</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics instruction should not begin until Grade 1</td>
<td>-0.269</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching phonics, word attack and spelling directly is **good** -2.37 .01
Children should guess words using context after trying to decode -2.30 .02
Reading skills can be taught out of context -1.12 .26

It is noteworthy in Table 8 that the only significant difference ($p = < .01$) between the two groups was observed on a question in which graduates rated their level of agreement with respect to their orientation to a whole language approach. More specifically, graduates from one-year programs were more likely to agree with the statement that identified with a whole language approach to literacy instruction. The only other difference that approached significance ($p = .01$) was on an item that indicated that teaching phonics, word attack and spelling directly was good. Graduates from two-year programs were more likely to agree with this statement.

Graduates were also asked to rate their literacy course instructors’ philosophy of literacy instruction on the same items. Table 9 presents the results of the comparisons of graduates’ rating with respect to their instructors’ philosophy of literacy instruction.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading a lot is the <strong>best</strong> way to overcome reading problems</td>
<td>-3.67</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading instruction is <strong>not</strong> necessary after Grade 3</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a whole language person</td>
<td>-4.45</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics instruction should <strong>not</strong> begin until Grade 1</td>
<td>-1.95</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching phonics, word attack and spelling directly is good -1.05 .29
Children should guess words using context after trying to decode -.050 .96
Reading skills can be taught out of context -1.98 .04

Table 9 reveals that there was also a significant difference in graduates’ rating of their course instructors as leaning more towards a whole language approach in one-year programs than in two-year programs. Another significant difference was that graduates from one-year programs rated their instructors as more agreeable with the statement that reading a lot is the best way to overcome reading problems. This finding is interesting as this difference was not observed in graduates’ ratings of their own beliefs in this regard.

Overall, graduates from both one- and two-year programs rated their beliefs about literacy instruction as similar to those of their course instructors.

**Essential components of an elementary literacy program.**

I used qualitative content analysis on an open-ended question of the survey that asked graduates to name the essential components of a good elementary literacy program. In reviewing graduates’ responses to this question, I identified that graduates’ responses could be organized into three categories. The first category corresponded to responses that involved general approaches to literacy instruction (e.g., balanced literacy, modeling, integrated literacy). The second category involved naming specific literacy components (e.g., phonics, fluency, reading comprehension). The third category involved naming specific instructional strategies or activities (e.g., read aloud, guided reading, word walls). Once these categories were identified, I separated graduates’ responses by
category and tallied the number of graduates from each group that included responses from each category.

**General approaches to literacy instruction.** Table 10 presents the five most commonly mentioned general approaches to literacy instruction. These were both specific to literacy (e.g., balanced literacy) as well as more general pedagogical tools (e.g., modeling).

Table 10

*Percentage of Graduates from One- and Two-Year Programs that Named General Approaches to Literacy Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional approach</th>
<th>One year (n=38)</th>
<th>Two year (n=38)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balanced literacy</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated literacy</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The McNemar Test of Proportions was used to calculate p values.

As noted on Table 10, there were no statistically significant differences in the proportion of graduates from one- and two-year programs that mentioned general approaches to literacy instruction.

**Specific literacy components.** Graduates from both one- and two-year programs listed a wide range of specific literacy components they considered as essential to a
literacy program. Overall, graduates from two-year programs were more likely to mention specific literacy components than graduates from one-year programs. Table 11 presents the percentage of graduates in each group that named specific literacy components.

Table 11

*Percentage of Graduates from One- and Two-Year Programs that Named Specific Components of Literacy Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Component</th>
<th>One Year (n= 38)</th>
<th>Two Year (n= 38)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic Awareness</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight words</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter formation/print</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions/editing</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition strategies</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral language development</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language rich</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genres (e.g. Fiction)</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials (e.g. comics)</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concepts about print</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schema development</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The McNemar Test of Proportions was used to calculate p values.*

The most commonly mentioned component by both groups was the importance of motivating students to engage in literacy learning. In addition to the specific mention of motivation for literacy, other responses included in this category involved the consideration of student’s interests, making literacy “meaningful,” and promoting positive attitudes towards reading.

It is noteworthy that graduates from two-year programs were more likely to mention literacy components that the research literature on reading and writing instruction has identified as key to literacy learning, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, reading comprehension, fluency and vocabulary development. Although there was a similar trend in components related to writing, the differences between the two groups were not as salient. In contrast, environmental elements, such as having a variety of reading materials, were equally mentioned by graduates from both groups.
Instructional strategies. Graduates from both groups also mentioned specific teaching strategies they considered as essential to literacy instruction. Table 12 presents a list of the most commonly mentioned strategies.

Table 12

*Percentage of Graduates from One- and Two-Year Programs that Named Specific Instructional Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Strategy</th>
<th>One Year</th>
<th>Two Year</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read aloud</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent reading</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word wall</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided reading</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature circles</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared reading</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveled books</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading buddies</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choral reading</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel study</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The McNemar Test of Proportions was used to calculate \( p \) values.

Overall, as Table 12 reflects, a similar proportion of graduates from both groups mentioned the listed strategies. It is noteworthy that, for the most part, the strategies
included were all related to reading instruction with little or no mention of strategies for writing instruction.

In sum, in the survey question designed to assess what graduates identified as the essential components for an elementary literacy program, the first noted difference between graduates from one- and two-year programs is that the former tended to include either general approaches to instruction (e.g., modeling) or specific instructional strategies (e.g., read aloud). In contrast, graduates who completed two years of teacher preparation tended to include specific evidence-based components to literacy instruction (e.g., phonemic awareness), in addition to general approaches and specific instructional strategies. In this sense, graduates from two-year programs provided more comprehensive responses.

**Study 1: Discussion**

This exploratory study was designed to compare the preparation for literacy instruction of graduates from one- and two-year pre-service programs in Ontario. The comparison revealed consistent and significant differences between these two groups in terms of their exposure to terms related to literacy instruction, their understanding of these terms, the programs’ coverage of literacy difficulties, and graduates’ feelings of preparedness for literacy instruction. Overall, graduates from two-year programs reported spending more time covering literacy terms, had a better understanding of these terms and felt better prepared for literacy instruction. In addition, there were also differences in what graduates from both groups reported as essential components of a literacy program. Graduates from two-year programs were more likely to include specific, evidence-based
literacy components (e.g., phonemic awareness). In contrast, graduates from one-year programs were more likely to name general approaches (e.g., modeling) and instructional strategies (e.g., read aloud). This suggests that graduates from two-year programs had more knowledge of specific subject matter than graduates from one-year programs.

The findings of this exploratory study indicate that graduates from two-year programs reported greater *breadth* of coverage in their program, as reflected in their higher ratings of time spent discussing literacy-related terms and issues related to assessment and literacy difficulties in their coursework. Similarly, graduates from two-year programs also appear to have greater *depth* of knowledge and understanding of literacy instruction, as reflected in their declarative knowledge of key literacy terms and their knowledge of specific literacy components. In addition to the greater breadth and depth of knowledge, graduates from two-year programs were also more likely to include evidence-based components in their literacy program and demonstrated a better understanding of these components.

In terms of graduates’ philosophy of literacy instruction and their rating of their course instructors’ philosophy, the results were mixed. Although there was no pattern of significant differences, one consistent difference was that graduates from one-year programs rated themselves and their course instructors as being more inclined toward a Whole Language philosophy. This is consistent with the finding that graduates from one-year programs were less likely to include evidence-based components in their description of a literacy program and were less knowledgeable of terms related to Phonics such as phonemic awareness, phoneme and onset/rime. This trend suggests that the longstanding debate between Phonics and Whole Language continues to influence some one-year
teacher preparation programs, despite the accumulated empirical evidence of the benefits of phonics instruction and a balanced approach to literacy instruction.

One of the limitations of this exploratory study is that a considerable time elapsed between the data collection of the one-year programs (2001-2002) and that of two-year programs (2007-2008). This time lapse might be of relevance in terms of the differences noted in the graduates’ awareness and understanding of evidence-based literacy components. For example, the data collection for one-year programs occurred shortly after the publication of the consensus reports that established the evidence-based components of effective literacy instruction (e.g., NRP, 2000; Snow et al., 1999). Thus, it could be argued that the evidence-based components of effective literacy instruction had not yet “made their way” into teacher preparation programs by the time one-year graduates were surveyed. Contrary to this argument, however, much of the evidence reviewed in these reports was not new in 2000. A decade earlier, findings from a comprehensive review involving hundreds of studies had demonstrated the key role of phonemic awareness and systematic phonics instruction in the early stages of literacy acquisition. These results were summarized in a landmark book, *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print* (Adams, 1990). Moreover, the more recent survey results reported by Walsh et al. in 2006 also demonstrated a similar pattern of insufficient coverage of evidence-based components of literacy instruction in a sample of teacher preparation programs in the United States.

As it has been stated, the purpose of this exploratory study was to explore the possibility of existing differences on graduates’ exposure, knowledge, and feelings of preparedness for literacy instruction depending on whether they completed a one-year
pre-service program or a two-year program. The findings from this study suggest that there are consistent differences. Nevertheless, possible mechanisms that account for these differences were not investigated. One could speculate that the length of the program could contribute to the identified differences, particularly in terms of graduates’ reports of the time devoted in their programs to discuss literacy terms and issues related to assessment and literacy difficulties. However, there are a range of other possible variables that could account for these differences. For example, it is quite possible that there is considerable variability in the admission requirements of one- and two-year programs that could partly explain the differences between both groups. Thus, it is impossible to ascertain if the identified differences between graduates from one- and two-year programs are related to what Zeichner and Conklin (2005) refer to as enrollment effects, that is, the effects of student characteristics, or learning effects, that is, the characteristics of the programs.

In addition to the difference in program length, the fact that the two-year programs are structured as graduate level programs could also explain the identified differences. It is likely that, given that both two-year programs are sponsored in a university setting with a strong research orientation, the faculty would be particularly inclined to include evidence-based knowledge and practices in their courses.

Nevertheless, the pattern of consistent differences between these two groups raises interesting questions for teacher preparation. Given that graduates from two-year programs feel better prepared and, objectively, in some respects, appear to be in fact better prepared to teach literacy to elementary students, it is important to understand the characteristics, processes, and contexts of two-year pre-service programs that influence
pre-service teachers’ formation as literacy instructors. This question is addressed in the detailed study of two-year teacher preparation programs for literacy instruction presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Study 2: Preparing teachers for effective literacy instruction: The study of two-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario

Following on the findings in Study 1 with regards to two-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario, this investigation focused on obtaining an in-depth understanding of the literacy instruction component of these programs. There are only two teacher preparation programs in Ontario that are carried over two years, both offered at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. These programs require students to be enrolled full-time for the two years. They are graduate level teacher preparation programs offered to students with a bachelor’s degree in any discipline. Upon completion, students obtain a masters degree and they are recommended for teacher certification with the Ontario College of Teachers. One of the programs, Program A, certifies teachers for elementary education and teachers candidates might choose to a focus in special education or early childhood education. The other, Program B, offers three levels of focus: Primary/Junior, Junior/Intermediate and Intermediate/Senior.

The programs are similar in terms of the number of required courses (16 half courses including teaching practica). The faculty of both programs includes researchers in education and child development. The programs highlight their research focus, both in the program’s content and in the opportunities offered to students to participate in education research. Despite the similarities, there are also differences in terms of how the coursework and practicum placements are organized throughout the two years of the program and the proportion of required and elective courses.
In Program A, teacher candidates are enrolled in three required, year-long courses and two elective half-courses during the first year. In addition, there is a practicum course that includes four six-week blocks of practice teaching placements. In the second year of the program, there is an internship term and an academic term. During the internship term, candidates complete a full-time teaching internship. In the academic term, teacher candidates complete three required half-courses and two electives. Half of the enrolled students complete their internship during the first semester of the second year, while the other half completes the academic courses. The practice teaching placements are arranged across a variety of settings and grade levels. In addition, Program A has a laboratory school in which candidates will have at least one of their practicum placements.

In Program B, students enroll in a total of four practice teaching blocks, two each year. Each teaching block is between four and five weeks in duration and it is interspersed with coursework (i.e., five weeks of coursework followed by five weeks of practice teaching). During the first year, students are enrolled in six half-courses, and in the second year, they complete an additional five required half-courses. In addition, students are required to complete one elective course in the first or second year. The program faculty arranges students’ practicum placements with selected partner schools.

In terms of the offered courses, during the first year, candidates from Program A are required to complete three required year-long courses (Child Study, Childhood Education Seminar, and Introduction to Curriculum I: Core Areas – comprised of Early Years, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Science). They also select two elective courses, one each term of the first year. The list of elective courses includes a broad range of options, with concentrations of courses in the areas of early childhood and special
education. The second-year required courses consist of three curriculum courses, one in language and literacy, one in mathematics and one in special areas. Teacher candidates also select 2 elective courses during the second year. During their internship term, graduates are also enrolled in a Childhood Education Seminar (Retrieved from: http://hdap.oise.utoronto.ca/Degrees/(CSE)MA.html.)

In Program B, pre-service students complete the three curriculum courses, one in literacy, one in mathematics, and a final one in science and social studies, during the first year of the program. In addition, they are required to complete the following courses: Authentic Assessment, Child and Adolescent Development and Reflective Teaching and Inquiry into Research in Education. In the second year, the required courses include: Educational Professionalism, Ethics and the Law; Introduction to Special Education and Adaptive Instruction, Anti-Discriminatory Education, Issues in Numeracy and Literacy and Arts in Education. Candidates also select an elective course, from any of the graduate courses offered at the university, in the second year. (Retrieved from: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/mt/Prospective_Students>About/index.html).

**Purpose of study**

The purpose of this study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the processes and contexts through which graduates from two-year teacher preparation programs develop skills in literacy instruction. In addition, the study assessed the correspondence between graduates’ knowledge of literacy instruction in the elementary grades and the research-based consensus on effective literacy instruction. More specifically, the research questions that guided this study were:
1. What is the range of content of elementary literacy education being covered in two-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario?

2. What is the degree of correspondence between what is being taught about literacy instruction in two-year programs and evidence-based knowledge of effective literacy instruction?

3. What is graduates’ understanding of key literacy components and instructional strategies at the completion of their program?

4. How prepared do graduates of two-year programs feel to teach literacy?

5. What are the characteristics, processes, and contexts that influence prospective teachers’ development as literacy instructors in two-year programs? How do these relate to the research-based knowledge on teacher education and teacher development?

**Study 2: Method**

**Overview of methodology**

The current study of literacy instruction in two-year teacher preparation programs was based on the scientific paradigm of post-positivism. As Patton (2002) notes, “While modest in asserting what can be known with any certainty, postpositivists do assert that it is possible, using empirical evidence, to distinguish between more and less plausible claims, to test and choose between rival hypotheses, and to distinguish between belief and valid belief” (p. 92).

In order to address the stated purposes of this study, I relied primarily on qualitative methodology. In line with a post-positivist framework, I was concerned with the accuracy and objectivity of the findings. According to Patton (2002), the “aim is to
use qualitative methods to describe and explain phenomena as accurately and completely as possible so that the descriptions and explanations correspond as closely as possible to the way the world is and actually operates “ (p. 546). To accomplish this, I followed published guidelines of suggested procedures to minimize investigator bias and enhance validity in qualitative and mixed-methods research (e.g., Creswell, 2003; Elliot, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Morrow, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005).

As Patton (2002) notes, “Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation. Guidance, yes. But no recipe. Direction can and will be offered, but the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when – and if – arrived at.” (p. 432). Thus, in this chapter, I describe the path that I traveled in transforming data into findings, the “guidance and direction” I followed to arrive at the “final destination” of understanding the experience and knowledge base in literacy instruction of teacher candidates in two-year programs.

Data collection

Recruitment process. I invited teacher candidates from both two-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario to participate in two phases of the study. For the first phase of the study, which involved collecting the survey data, I recruited teacher candidates that were finishing their program in the spring of 2007. I contacted course instructors from both programs and asked for permission to attend one of their classes to invite graduates to participate in the study. Thus, in March 2007, I met with graduates during one of their courses, described the purpose of the study, and invited them to participate in filling out a survey about their program and literacy instruction. I provided interested graduates a self-addressed envelope with a consent letter explaining the study...
in further detail and the survey (see Appendix A). Graduates who completed the survey received a $20 gift certificate for educational resources. During this first year of data collection, only 30% of the graduates completed and mailed in a survey. Given the low response rate, the same recruitment procedures were followed in March 2008 with the graduates who were finishing their two-year program that year.

For the second phase of the study, which involved an in-depth interview, I presented teacher candidates, who completed their program in 2007, the possibility of participating in the interview once they completed the survey. I based the recruitment of interviewed participants on two criteria. First, participants had to have completed a survey and mailed it at any point from April to August 2007. Given that the focus of the study was on early literacy instruction, the second criterion for recruiting participants for an interview was that they indicated Primary/Junior as their area of specialization in the survey. I contacted all participants that met these criteria via e-mail to participate in the interview. Graduates who participated in the interview received an additional $20 gift certificate for educational resources.

**Participants**

**Survey group.** During the first wave of data collection, from April to August 2007, a total of 23 graduates completed the survey on literacy instruction. This represented a 30% response rate of the total pool of graduates from both programs in that year (n= 68). Of the completed surveys, 15 were from Program A (65%) and 8 from Program B (35%). These percentages correspond with the proportion of students in each program during that year, 42 in Program A (63%) and 24 in Program B (38%). During the second wave of data collection, from April to September 2008, 15 additional
graduates completed the survey, with similar proportions; 11 from Program A (74%) and 4 from Program B (26%). Thus, a total of 38 teacher candidates completed a survey.

Table 13 presents the demographic characteristics of survey participants.

Table 13

*Demographic characteristics of survey participants by two-year program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Program A (n=26)</th>
<th>Program B (n=12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23 (88%)</td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>15 (58%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1 undergraduate degree</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>3 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Interview group.* Of the 23 graduates that completed the survey in the summer of 2007, four indicated Junior/Intermediate as their area of specialization and were therefore not contacted to participate in the interview. Of the remaining 19 graduates, 10 agreed to
participate in a face-to-face interview. The proportion of graduates from each program was similar to that of the survey group, with seven interview participants being graduates from Program A. All 10 interview participants were female and had completed an undergraduate degree in the Humanities (e.g., Sociology, Psychology, and English). Table 14 presents the demographic characteristics of interview participants.

Table 14

**Demographic characteristics of interview participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Program A (n = 7)</th>
<th>Program B (n = 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research instruments**

**Survey.** The survey is similar in content to one used in a previous study examining the literacy component of pre-service programs across Ontario (Hass-Barota, in preparation). She developed the survey to determine the nature and extent of the literacy education component experienced by student teachers in pre-service programs. The purpose of the survey was to obtain a general understanding of graduates’ experience
in their faculty program. More specifically, the survey inquired about the extent to which the program’s content reflects research-based knowledge about literacy instruction. It involved both close-ended and open-ended responses. The close-ended responses included Likert scales and Yes-No items.

The survey was divided into four sections. The first two sections included general demographic information and educational/background experience. The third section focused on general characteristics of the students’ program and practicum experience. The fourth section delved into students’ exposure to research-based knowledge on literacy instruction, their understanding of early literacy education, and their perception regarding their program and feelings of preparedness. In addition to completing the survey, I asked participant to provide course outlines, class topic schedules, and prescribed reading material of any literacy-related course in their program. (See Appendix A for complete survey.)

**Interview.** I conducted individual, face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule adapted from Hass-Barota’s study (in preparation). The interview questions addressed detailed information regarding the quantity and quality of the literacy education component in two-year pre-service programs; student teachers’ perceptions of its usefulness; and their perceptions of their preparedness to teach reading and writing in the classroom. In addition to their consent to participate in the face-to-face interview, I obtained graduates’ consent to audiotape the interview. I transcribed interviews verbatim in order to maintain accuracy of the information.

The interview schedule involved predetermined questions asked in a specific order, in line with what Patton (2002) describes as a standardized open-ended interview.
Thus, during the process of interviewing each graduate, I followed the interview schedule so that all participants were asked the same questions. This interview strategy is consistent with the aims of this study to understand the content and structure of the literacy component of two-year programs. It also ensured that all participants covered similar topics and had the same opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge base and skills.

As Patton (2002) notes, “the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their [emphasis added] terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their [emphasis added] individual perceptions and experiences” (p. 348). Given that the interview was open-ended, participants also had the opportunity to elaborate on their responses and provide additional information that enriched their descriptions. In this way, each participant was able to convey their own experience in the program. Similarly, I asked follow-up questions or probed for further description when needed. Thus, although the interview schedule determined the topics that graduates covered, they were able to express their experience as graduate students on the path of becoming literacy teachers.

The interview schedule was divided into six sections. The first section inquired about participants’ general demographic information. The second section involved the faculty program’s literacy component, the content of literacy courses, and the pedagogy of course instructors. The third section explored the students’ practice teaching experience. In section four, I asked graduates to reflect on their preparedness to teach literacy in the elementary grades. The fifth section, devoted to planning, explores the application of literacy related knowledge in particular instructional contexts. Finally,
section six focuses on the knowledge of key literacy concepts and their application in teaching Primary and Junior students. Thus, whereas the first four sections of the interview are concerned with obtaining graduates’ description of different aspects of the literacy courses, their overall program and their practicum experiences; the last two sections are aimed at obtaining an understanding of graduates’ applied knowledge base and skills in early literacy education. (See Appendix D for interview schedule.)

**Data management and analysis**

Analyzing qualitative data involves the process of organizing the data and interpreting the data (Tesch, 1990). Although these two processes are typically intertwined in qualitative data analysis, Tesch (1990) suggests that “one way of thinking about the distinction is to see data organizing as the preparation for data interpretation” (p. 114). In order to organize the data, I followed the steps outlined by Bogdan and Bilken (1997). After transcribing all interviews to ensure that I captured graduates’ responses verbatim, I read an electronic copy of each interview and formatted it for printing. I printed two copies of each interview and left one untouched as a master copy. Once printed, each interview was color-coded, with a color assigned to each participant, so that I could easily identify which participant each unit of data came from. I then read each printed copy of the interview to get an overall picture of the data (Tesch, 1990).

I read all of the interviews twice with the purpose of identifying topics that I noticed during this reading and made notes of these. Through this initial reading, I decided that the questions in Section 6 of the interview, which included questions aiming to assess graduates’ applied knowledge of literacy instruction (e.g., Tell me some ways to
improve reading comprehension), would be analyzed separately using a matrix display (see below) and were therefore not included in the coding process.

The initial reading of the interviews produced a preliminary list of possible coding categories. I reviewed this list and grouped these coding categories into broader topics (e.g., codes that pertained to graduates’ experience in their practicum placements were clustered together). I then went back to each interview and tried to assign the codes to units of data. Through this process, categories were modified, refined, and added to include all relevant data. A new list, which included 56 coding categories, emerged from this first attempt to organize the interview data (See Appendix F for preliminary list of coding categories with counts). Following Bogdan and Bilken’s (2007) recommendation to limit to a maximum of 50 codes, I reviewed the lists of codes to reduce and eliminate overlapping categories. For example, the code “Figure Things Out” covered two other codes (i.e., “Learn by Doing” and “Talk to Other Teachers”), which also described the manner in which teacher candidates planned to address gaps in their knowledge. Through this process, the number of codes was reduced to a total of 37. A list was created and a number was assigned to each code. I then assigned these 37 codes to sections 1-5 of the interview transcripts (see Appendix G for list of codes). After all 10 interviews were coded, I made two sets of copies and saved the original as an untouched master copy.

I used the cut-up-and-put-in folders approach to separate and organize the interview data (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). Following this approach, I had a manila folder for each one of the categories. I cut each coded data unit from each interview and pasted it in the corresponding folder. This involved doing what Tesch (1990) calls de-contextualizing the data, or separating portions of data for their context and then
assembling all the data that belongs to one category in one place, or re-contextualizing. At the end of this process, I had 37 manila folders, which constituted the new context, each one containing the units of data that pertained to each code or category.

Once I had a manila folder for each category, I conducted a preliminary analysis by reading each one of the manila folders, identifying and summarizing the content for each category. The purpose of this preliminary analysis, as outlined by Tesch (1990), was to “look specifically for a) commonalities in content, b) uniqueness in content, c) confusions and contradictions in content, and d) missing information with regard to [the] research question” (p. 145). At this point of the analysis, I wrote up a description of the findings. From this preliminary analysis, it became evident that some categories overlapped and others could be combined under a unifying category. For example, in the original coding scheme, Assessment Tools, Assessment Process and Assessing Reading Level were each a coding category. In reviewing the content of each of these categories, it became evident that there was overlap between them and that they could all be better captured under a category titled Purpose and Methods of Assessment. Thus, conducting this preliminary analysis allowed me to further refine the coding scheme. This analysis led to a final list of 27 codes. An abbreviation was assigned to each code and these were used for the subsequent analyses (see Appendix H for final codebook). The codes were assigned to the data, and the data were sorted and organized by code.

The process of organizing the data that I have described thus far involves an inductive approach, in which the categories and patterns emerged from reading the interview data. Nevertheless, once data were segmented and organized, it became evident that the patterns that emerged from the data were related to the interview topics or
questions. Thus, the interview topics also served to further organize the data, by clustering the categories that coincided with the interview topics. In this sense, there were three broad categories that further organized the data: data pertaining to the literacy-related courses, data pertaining to graduates’ practicum experience, data pertaining to the impact or outcomes of teacher candidates.

Once the data were reduced and organized, the next step of interpreting the data was conducted using a modified grounded theory approach, as outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008). I selected the grounded theory approach as it “offers researchers a set of clear guidelines from which to build explanatory frameworks that specify relationships among concepts” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 125). Moreover, according to Patton (2002), grounded theory is fundamentally realist and objectivist in orientation as it provides a set of analytic tools and procedures to provide some standardization to the analytical process. In this sense, relying on this approach to interpret the data was consistent with the post-positivist scientific paradigm and purpose of this study. Patton (2002) summarizes the process of grounded theory as follows:

“Grounded theory begins with basic description, moves to conceptual ordering (organizing data into discrete categories according to their properties and dimensions and then using description to elucidate those categories), and then theorizing (conceiving or intuited ideas-concepts- then also formulating them into a logical, systematic, and explanatory scheme)” (p. 490).
The first step in interpreting the data involved analyzing each coded interview or case. Thus, I read through each interview with the purpose of understanding each graduate’s experience and recognizing relationships between the identified categories or codes within cases. I thus summarized the content and outlined relationships between categories for each participant. Consequently, the initial focus was on achieving an understanding of each individual graduate’s experience with respect to the literacy component of their program. Focusing on individual cases helps to ensure that emergent categories are grounded in specific cases and their context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). After each case was summarized, I conducted cross-case analyses in search of patterns and themes that cut across individual experiences.

In conducting within-case and cross-case analyses, I used the analytic tools outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008) such as asking questions (e.g., sensitizing questions and theoretical questions), constant comparisons, and theoretical comparisons. The purpose of these analytic tools is to uncover properties and dimensions of each code or category. For example, it was particularly useful to reflect on my experience as a graduate student in a professional program, which involves both course work and practicum placements, as a theoretical comparison. This sensitized me to properties and dimensions of the processes in each of these contexts for teacher candidates.

Throughout this process of within and cross-case analysis, I wrote analytic memos and made diagrams following the guidelines outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008) (e.g., date memos and diagrams, create a heading for each memo, and include short quotes or phrases from raw data). Moreover, memos and diagrams served to further explore the data, identify and develop the properties and dimensions of categories, and elaborate on
the relationships between concepts and categories. Through writing memos, my immersion and iteration with the data became more abstract and concept-oriented. In this process, I was engaging in the interactive process of open and axial coding as described by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Thus, after conducting within and cross-case analysis, I had a wealth of analytic memos. These were then organized and clustered by topic. Not surprisingly, the data clustered into the topics that were covered by the interview (i.e., course, practicum, graduates’ knowledge and experience). Once the memos were sorted by topic, they served as an outline for organizing the results.

Another important analytic tool was the use of matrices to organize and interpret data. This analytic tool was used for the data obtained from Section 6 of the interview schedule and for the open-ended questions from the survey. For example, following guidelines by Miles and Huberman (1994), I created a conceptually clustered matrix that allowed a visual display of the patterns and relationships between the literacy content participants described having covered in their program and their knowledge of essential literacy components and assessment. In this way, the relationship between the content covered and graduates’ demonstrated knowledge and skills was displayed (See Appendix I for example of matrix display).

Thus, matrices were used both for organizing data and for illustrating conceptual relationships. Matrices evidenced patterns from programs and participants. Within-case and cross-case comparisons were achieved by displaying data in matrices, tallying responses to items, and analyzing patterns.
In the process of writing memos, drawing diagrams and creating and analyzing matrices, the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data were refined and defined. These themes and sub-themes are presented in the following section.

The final stage of the analysis involved theorizing or developing a model or framework to explain the data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define theory as “a set of well-developed categories (themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some phenomenon” (p. 55). Thus, it is necessary to integrate categories in order to arrive at an explanatory theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This was done by linking categories, and “refining and trimming the resulting theoretical construction” (p. 263). This was achieved through writing integrative memos, which summarized the categories and relationships outlined in the analytical memos. Through this process, the relationships between categories became clear and these were used to propose a model of teacher preparation for literacy instruction.

**Methodological safeguards**

In recent years, there has been considerable work published on evolving criteria to evaluate the trustworthiness or credibility of qualitative research. For example, Elliot, et al., (1999), provide a set of guidelines to assess the quality of qualitative research. Similarly, Morrow (2005) examines the range of standards of quality, from a variety of disciplines, of qualitative research. Ultimately, the standards to evaluate the quality of a given research study are closely tied to the paradigmatic underpinnings on which the study is based (Morrow, 2005). Thus, a post-positivist qualitative study, such as this one, is attached to what Patton (2002) terms “traditional scientific research criteria” (p. 544).
Lincoln and Guba (2000) describe three benchmarks – credibility, transferability and dependability – that are considered parallel criteria to the conventional criteria in quantitative research.

Credibility, a parallel to internal validity, is concerned with the rigor of the research process. In order to strengthen the credibility of the findings, I followed several procedures recommended by the literature on qualitative methods to minimize investigator bias. One example was the use of an independent coder to establish validity and reliability of the pattern analysis (Patton, 2002). Thus, a graduate student was asked to code three of the ten transcribed interviews, using the coding system I developed. The purpose of this was twofold. On the one hand, the second coder acted as a peer reviewer in terms of assessing whether the developed coding system effectively captured all of the topics and patterns in the interviews. In this respect, although the properties and dimensions of the categories were further refined through this process of peer review, the identified codes were deemed as effectively capturing the patterns in the data set. On the other hand, the second rater also provided a measure of reliability in the coding process by assessing the level of agreement in terms of the data units identified within each code. For this purpose, I followed the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) for intercoder reliability. There was 82% intercoder agreement in the three interviews that were double-coded. The instances of disagreement, for the most part, pertained to data units that could be coded in two categories. For example, a data unit that described an assignment that developed graduates’ knowledge of literacy components or strategies, could be coded both in the category “Course Assignments” and “Literacy Components
and Teaching Strategies.” The discussion of these disagreements served to further refine the categories.

Although member checking, that is verifying the summary of findings with participants, is considered the ideal mean to verify the accuracy of findings, it was not possible for this study given that several of the interviewed graduates had moved to another province or city, in some instances another country, to begin their teaching careers shortly after the interviews were completed. Nevertheless, peer review and peer debriefing were done at further stages in the analysis process to verify the accuracy of the patterns derived from the data. For this purpose, throughout the analytic process, I debriefed with a recent graduate from one of the two-year programs studied. Although the graduate was not in the cohort of those interviewed, her experience in a two-year program helped to explore the accuracy of findings and to further refine the analysis process at various stages. For example, once I had the preliminary findings, in the form of topics and themes that emerged from the analysis, I discussed these with the recent graduate.

Another strategy I used in order to minimize investigator bias was to provide frequency tallies for the different topics and themes that emerged from the analysis. Thus, in providing the number of graduates who discuss or mention certain topics, the reader is able to assess how representative a topic is for the sample. As Haverkamp and Young (2007) suggest, providing counts of participants who report or select topics is in line with a post-positivistic paradigm in its pursuit of looking for accuracy and representing reality as much as possible.
Furthermore, negative case analysis also provided a means of minimizing bias and strengthening the credibility of findings. During the analysis, it became evident that some of the graduates’ descriptions were discrepant with the overall patterns that were emerging, representing negative cases that apparently disconfirmed the emerging patterns. One example of this was finding certain differences in the patterns that emerged from the two programs. Although the initial design of this study aimed to understand and describe two-year teacher education programs in general, it became evident, through the analysis, that the differences in graduates’ descriptions were related to the program they had completed. Thus, in following up on what appeared to be contradictory information, the findings were further refined in distinguishing the experiential and content differences in both programs. There were other instances in which contradictory findings or cases that did not fit the identified patterns were analyzed. These particular instances will be described in the discussion of findings.

Triangulation is also an important concept in adding to credibility and strengthening confidence in the findings and conclusions of qualitative research. As Patton (2002) states, “Triangulation, in whatever form, increases credibility and quality by countering concern that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (p. 563).

Patton (2002) describes different types of triangulation. The first kind, *methods triangulation*, involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods; in other words a mixed methods approach. This type of triangulation was used in the current study by collecting and analyzing both quantitative (e.g., survey rating scales) and qualitative (e.g., interviews) data. Green, Caracelli and Graham (1989) suggest that one
rationale for using mixed methods is complementarity, that is, that quantitative and qualitative methods are combined to use results from one method to elaborate on results from another method. Patton (2002), on the other hand, sees the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data as a form of comparative analysis. In this study, mixed methods were used both for complementarity as well as for comparative purposes. Thus, although the primary data collection and analysis method was qualitative, quantitative analysis was used to further elaborate the understanding of two-year teacher education programs. Thus, the information obtained through the in-depth interviews provided a context and a rich description to complement the findings from the survey rating scales. In terms of comparative analysis, for example, graduates’ descriptions regarding their level of preparedness were contrasted with a quantitative measure of their knowledge of key literacy terms. In this sense, the use of both methods not only provides a variety of perspectives to understand a phenomenon, it also minimizes the biases inherent in each one.

Another form of triangulation I used was the triangulation of qualitative data sources. Patton (2002) describes this form of triangulation as comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived from different sources. For this purpose, I compared the data obtained from interviews, the data obtained from surveys and program documents. For example, I was able to corroborate the information graduates provided regarding the content of their literacy courses and their assignments with their course outlines. Furthermore, I was able to compare some of the patterns that emerged from the interviews with the larger sample of participants that completed the surveys.
In terms of *transferability*, a parallel to generalizability, Lincoln and Guba (2000) advocate for the importance of providing information about the time and the context in which the findings hold true. These authors suggest providing *thick description*, that is, sufficient detailed description and direct quotations, so that someone interested in making the transfer can judge whether the transfer is possible. Therefore, I have provided thick descriptions about the research context, the programs of study, the research process and the small, purposeful sample of participants. Providing this level of detail will enable the reader to understand not only the findings but also the basis for interpretation (Patton, 2002). Ultimately, the purpose of a qualitative study such as this is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the particular case of literacy instruction in two-year teacher education programs. Although the transferability of the findings is “a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124), the concept of *extrapolation* suggests the possibility of making speculations on the applicability of findings to other situations, under similar conditions (Cronbach and Associates, 1980).

Finally, *dependability*, a parallel to reliability, implies that “the process through which findings are derived should be explicit and repeatable as much as possible” (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). In order to accomplish this, through the process of data collection, management, analysis and interpretation I kept an *audit trail* in which I carefully tracked the emerging research design. This involved keeping track of research activities such as the procedure used for transcribing and handling interview data; as well as the research processes, such as documenting the evolving coding scheme. Moreover, through the continuous writing of analytic memos, I documented and tracked my thoughts and interpretations throughout the analytic process. Examples of these records
include raw data, quantitative and qualitative summaries, and the development of categories and themes. The audit trail was used to provide the detailed descriptions of several parts of the process, such as the data management and data analysis, described in previous sections.
Study 2: Results and Discussion

The findings presented in this chapter represent graduates’ descriptions of the processes, contexts, and outcomes of their experience in two-year teacher preparation programs as they relate to literacy instruction. Through the interpretive analysis described in the previous section, seven themes emerged. These themes are summarized in Figure 1. The first four themes present the characteristics, processes and contexts that graduates experienced during their two years in the program. The remaining three themes reflect the outcomes reported by graduates.
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<th>Theme 3: Graduates' experience in practicum placements</th>
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<th>Theme 5: Graduates' pedagogical knowledge and skill</th>
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<th>Theme 6: Feeling of preparedness to teach literacy</th>
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<td>• Graduates' cautious feeling of preparedness</td>
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<td>• Graduates' vision of literacy instruction</td>
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*Figure 1. Overview of Results*
Theme 1 – Graduates as students: Structure and pedagogy of literacy courses

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Theme 1 includes the data relevant to the literacy-related courses in both two-year teacher preparation programs. These data were derived both from the descriptions of interviewed participants, as well as from a review of the course outlines that graduates provided for each of their literacy-related courses.

Literacy instruction is covered in two courses in both two-year teacher preparation programs. According to course outlines, Program A had 18 hours of instruction devoted to literacy during the first year. These hours were included in a year-long course devoted to various strands of the curriculum. During the second year, students were enrolled in a 36-hour course focused on language and literacy instruction. Thus, there was a total of 54 hours of literacy-related instruction in Program A.

In Program B, students are offered a 36-hour course on language and literacy instruction throughout the first year of the program; interspersed with field placements. During the second year, there is a 36-hour course that spanned throughout the academic year, which covered education issues related to both literacy and numeracy. It is difficult to ascertain the amount of time that was actually devoted to literacy in this course. It was characterized by having both students and guests present on a wide range of topics such as inclusive education, technology’s impact on instruction, assessment, and home/school/community connections, amongst other topics. A review of the topics
covered in each one of the 12 sessions on the course outline reveals that there is a specific mention of literacy on three of them.

The following sections present graduates’ perceptions regarding their literacy-related courses. This includes the pedagogy of their course instructors and the identified useful and non-useful components of their courses.

**Inconsistency between the two literacy courses offered.** Graduates of both two-year programs contrasted the two courses that covered literacy in terms of format and content. Six of the ten interviewees reported that one of the courses they were offered was more useful and informative than the other. In both programs, the 36-hour course devoted to language and literacy was the one graduates felt was more relevant in teaching them about literacy instruction. Of the remaining four interviewees, two of them described in detail only one of the courses when asked to talk about the literacy content of their courses.

One of the characteristics that differentiated the two courses offered was a lack of clear goal or organization in one of the courses. For example, two graduates from Program A contrasted the two courses offered in her program:

In our first year we covered various strategies. There wasn’t necessarily a specific framework that was obvious to us, which was part of what made it confusing. In the second year we were given a framework…. So that framework would have been really helpful in first year, instead what we were given were bits and pieces, and lots of information, lots of information but it didn’t make sense to me. It just seemed like activities, things you could do to help students develop certain areas.
She focused quite a bit on comprehension, which was good, but the instructor was a sessional and she didn’t at all match…I’m sure in her mind there were connections, but to us it wasn’t a consistent language that was used. (P3)

She played a lot of games… a lot of us struggled with that course we felt we were taught like Grade 2s, instead of like students who want to teach Grade 2. It was disorganized, so we felt that we didn’t have a good literacy instruction in that first year. (P10)

Another characteristic that graduates contrasted in the two courses they were offered was the content that was covered, finding one of the courses more useful than the other in this respect.

The second year course wasn’t very good; we had a guest speaker every week, so it was people from the Ministry or from different agencies for one hour. Then there would be a presentation by one of us on any topic, not necessarily related to the issue that the guest speaker had presented. There wasn’t any content coming to us from the professor. It was a lot of policy stuff, a lot of Ministry stuff. And although it is helpful to understand the other side, at the same time I didn’t get very much from that course, nothing that hadn’t been covered in other courses. (P8)
For graduates in Program A, finding the course not useful was particularly relevant as the first year course was the only exposure they had to literacy-related content they could rely on for the practicum placements they had during the first year, “In the first year we had four placements and we felt we weren’t getting enough to actually use in our placement. In second year I felt that we got all that.” (P10)

Overall, as one participant expressed, graduates didn’t “remember a whole lot of details about” one of their two literacy-related courses. Therefore, the majority of the themes and information gathered through the interviews about the course structure and content was mostly describing one of the two courses; that is the first year 36-hour course for Program B and the second year 36-hour course for Program A.

**Pedagogy of literacy courses.** Graduates from both programs expressed their feelings and attitudes regarding the manner in which their literacy courses were delivered. This discussion included issues such as how the time was spent in their literacy courses, that is, the amount of time devoted to lecturing, presentations by students, and demonstration of teaching strategies by the instructor. In addition, graduates were specifically asked whether or not their course instructors modeled the instructional approach they endorsed or taught in the course. Overall, graduates describe a sort of tension between what they expected from the course, or how they were being taught to teach, and what they were themselves experiencing in the course as students. Graduates’ descriptions alluded to issues such as student-centered versus teacher-centered; and direct instruction versus inquiry-based instruction.

There were some interesting differences noted in the description of their literacy courses between graduates from Program A and graduates from Program B. The first
group described that their 36-hour literacy course, during the second year of the program, typically involved covering a specific topic each lesson, which involved lecturing from the instructor and a demonstration of teaching strategies associated with the topic of discussion. There were weekly assigned readings and an assignment tied to these readings. The structure of the course seemed to be aimed at developing both conceptual understanding through the reading and information transmitted by the instructor and practical knowledge of teaching strategies. Although graduates from Program B also described covering different topics each class, their description of how the time was spent in their course suggests that a considerable amount of time was spent participating in the instructor’s demonstration of teaching strategies.

One issue noted by four of the graduates from Program A was that the pedagogical approach used in their literacy course contrasted with what they expected from a graduate-level course, based on their experience in other courses. More specifically, graduates felt that they lacked a more open-ended discussion of the topics that were covered, the course readings, and research in the area.

In other courses we would debate about a topic and hash out our own understanding whereas this didn’t happen in the literacy course. It was more this is the way it should be done, an outline of what needs to be included. And this percentage needs to be included at this age…and we didn’t talk about the way we thought it should be, it wasn’t in question as much…I would have liked to have seen us create our own understanding of things more often… There wasn’t as much discussion as in my other courses. (P2)
I would have liked more discussion about the readings and topics. I didn’t like reading just to regurgitate on paper, I thought that goes against what we were taught that we should be teaching in the classroom, I mean that’s not really showing comprehension…well it’s showing comprehension in a way but I just thought at the level…compared to the other classes that we have had in the program… It was just, here is the research and tell me what it says, instead of us taking ownership and juggling the research. (P1)

Although there was a sense of discontent about not being provided with the opportunity to “build their own knowledge” (P9), there was also an acknowledgement that the literacy course effectively communicated the information they need to know to become literacy instructors.

I expected it to be more like the other courses, with a lot of discussion. You are left with a lot of uncertainty about what is right and where to focus your energy, whereas this one laid things out a little bit more. Setting out this is the way it goes, this is where you need to start…well a little less clear about assessment in that way, but it showed where you can start building your program. It was clearer than I expected it to be. (P2)

Similarly, graduates from Program A felt that the literacy course “wasn’t personalized and there was no room to expand my personal interests.” (P1) Moreover,
there was a sense that graduates’ prior knowledge was not taken into account in the instructional approach; “…the instructional strategies promoted were to be really aware of where the child is and then ensuring that you as a teacher fill in that gap that they have. Where as I didn’t find the instructors really sought to figure out how much we understood and then sought to fill in those gaps.” (P3) These comments suggest graduates felt there was a insufficient focus on them as students, in a way, failing to model student-centered teaching.

Thus, graduates in Program A experienced a more teacher-centered, direct instruction approach in their literacy course. Although this contrasted with their expectation based on some of their other courses in the program, it also left them with a clear understanding of literacy instruction. This suggests a tension between the goal of developing graduates’ knowledge and teaching skills, and their expectation of building their own knowledge.

In contrast, graduates from Program B describe a more experiential instructional approach in the 36-hour literacy course. Throughout the course, the instructor would model a variety of activities they could use in their own teaching and graduates were asked to participate in the activities as if they were elementary students. In this sense, their assignments, assessments and the material covered in class was set up so that it mirrored what they would be doing as teachers.

In the first year course absolutely, she tried to make sure we did all the same activities that she would expect us to do. There were times where she…she
always talked about classroom behaviour and making sure that everyone was on-task and focused, and if she talked on for too long we tended to lose focus. (P6)

Often times she would model exactly what we were to do in the classroom, so for example she would show us how to introduce a novel by setting up a scene of the novel and encourage children to write. So you would come in and you write what you see in the scene. So it was like a picnic so she had glasses, blankets and a basket. So we had to write what we saw and then we got into the novel. Or sometimes we did a novel in an hour, a novel in a week and so a couple of groups got a chapter and then you could tell the class about it through music or through drama or through any means. So she modeled a lot and we actually participated in a lot of it, so we actually had to do a literacy circle. (P8)

Despite expressing appreciation for the modeling of activities by the course instructor, graduates from Program B were not entirely satisfied with their experience as students in the literacy course. As one participant commented, they “expected a little more specific instruction on how to teach literacy…I feel very nervous that I won’t be able to teach the basics because we weren’t necessarily given the nitty gritty of how to teach it” (P6).

Similarly, for one of the interviewed graduates from Program B, the instructors’ philosophy regarding literacy instruction was unclear. In her own words, “I feel like it is difficult to see what my program instructor’s philosophy is about literacy. Maybe that’s just how she presented it, like I have a real clear understanding of what my host teachers’
philosophy was, but the program instructor not so much. Like I can tell you some of the things she would use or she believed in, but it’s mostly strategies” (P7).

Overall, graduates’ experience as students is characterized by a search for a balance between: 1) the time spent in class modeling instructional activities; 2) direct instruction of literacy components; and 3) the opportunity to reflect and discuss research in the area.

**Graduates’ evaluations of course components: Useful and non-useful**

*Components of literacy courses*. Throughout graduates’ descriptions of their literacy-related courses, it was evident that they found some components or aspects of these courses particularly useful. The usefulness of these components was judged on the basis of how it related to their experience as teachers. So, for example, graduates who already had a teaching position for the following school year, and were in the process of planning or thinking about their literacy program, clearly identified the elements from their courses that they felt prepared them for their upcoming teaching experience. Similarly, anything that teacher candidates were able to rely on during their practicum placements was also deemed useful.

*Assignments tied to the realities of teaching.* Graduates found course assignments useful when they were closely related to either a task they will actually have to do as teachers or they furthered their understanding of teaching. It is noteworthy that the assignments that graduates from both programs mentioned as useful were assignments from the literacy course they described as the most meaningful.

There was one assignment that five graduates from Program A identified as being a particularly useful learning experience. For this assignment, graduates were required to
work with a partner to select one particular stage of literacy development and develop a detailed literacy program for one week of instruction. Although most participants described this as a cumbersome task, they reflected that it made them think through all the elements they need to consider in developing a literacy program for a particular grade level.

The assignment on planning your own curriculum was very useful. It just gave you a sense of confidence that you could do this; that you know where things can be slotted in. You planned a year of language and literacy in a specific classroom, specific grade level, and even a specific time of the year and you map out from that moment on what the language and literacy program includes, what sources you are working from, what programs you are using. You gave [an] explanation of why you included what you did and what the logic is behind it. (P2)

We had to make an entire literacy plan for a grade, just the literacy component of it. So I did JK, so it was early stage 0, so a JK program for literacy for that grade which was really helpful because then you knew...and it was on a specific book; I think we did ours with Four Blocks. So that was good because it actually made you plan and think where you would go with your literacy program; that was really helpful... The final assignment I found really helpful, it was really big, it was really detailed and there was much more flexibility in what you could do with that and what you could bring into it. So we ended up doing a 55 page
assignment. We pulled in lots of Jolly Phonics, pulled in lots of activities and it’s more tangible that way. (P10)

For this particular assignment, it was the experience of “thinking through” what they would include in their program that graduates valued most. Having gone through this process gave them a sense of confidence that they could do this for whatever grade level they would be teaching.

Another assignment that graduates found useful required them to write a review of the research on a teaching or assessment strategy. Through their review of the research, graduates deepened their understanding of a specific strategy that they can use in teaching.

We also had to look at journal articles and write a summary on one topic or teaching strategy. We could do it on anything related to reading. I did it on wordless picture books, so I looked at journal articles that talked about this and how they helped students become more creative and they can write their own stories and that helps them develop imagination for their stories. (P6)

**A framework to guide literacy instruction.** Graduates from Program A made reference to being provided with a developmental framework, based on Chall’s (1996) stages of literacy development, which guided their understanding of literacy instruction and of what they observed in their practicum placements. The usefulness of the framework was noted in contrasting the two literacy-related courses in the program: “In
the second year we were given a framework, starting with stage 0 and moving up to stage 3…. So that framework would have been really helpful in first year” (P5). Having this guiding framework gave graduates a sense of confidence about their ability to understand and communicate about literacy instruction.

I find it’s helpful I can think, well why would I want a cohesive writing program, and the justification is in place. You can have a great growth in the children’s abilities if you do understand the stages that they move through; so that was developed from our program…I think it’s actually good that I have the why understood and then the how can be put on top of that. And it also helps you know when you’re talking with a parent or with the principal or to the other teacher, the why helps to justify a program and helps communicate with families and administrators both. Why that [literacy] time is important and can’t be taken away from something else. (P3)

Thus, having a framework allows graduates to organize their understanding about literacy instruction. More specifically, the developmental framework presented in the literacy course in Program A structured graduates’ knowledge base of literacy instruction across grade levels in the sense that they need to target specific skills in each grade level, as one participant stated, “what needs to be more emphasized at a certain grade” (P2).

**Modeling and demonstrations.** All ten graduates described that there was sufficient and consistent modeling of what they were being taught in their courses. This modeling was, for the most part, the demonstration of various teaching strategies or
programs such as literature circles, Reader’s Theatre and Jolly Phonics, as well as assessment procedures such as the use of rubrics.

There was a lot of modeling of what we were being taught in terms of the methods that they used to teach us. There was a lot of having us pretend we were kids or teaching us like we were kids. They were consistent in the methods that they used and they tried to use some of the same assessment, so they tried to use rubrics for assessment (P4)

The modeling and demonstration of teaching and assessment strategies was viewed as useful in terms of “linking course materials to classroom experience” (P3). In this sense, graduates perceived that the theoretical or conceptual information that was covered in their course was brought down to how it could be implemented in the classroom with demonstration of specific activities or resources. Thus, the link between theory and practice was made evident.

The instructor did a great job of actually running through the activities with us; she talked to us as though we were students learning the information. There was this real knowledge building at the beginning, where it was ‘I’m giving you information’, and then the discussion happened after we could talk about what knowledge we were just given. So that was excellent! (P3)
In literacy she modeled everything. Just teaching and modeling at the same time. For each strategy, I remember her starting the activity in that way, we would do what she wanted us to learn, like in the literature circles we had to actually read a book and each of us got to have a role and then come back after the winter break and discuss. And just modeling even the way of being a good teacher. (P7)

As with the assignments tied to the realities of teaching, graduates found the demonstration of teaching activities particularly useful if they were able to use them in their practicum placements.

Although the modeling and demonstration of strategies was viewed as useful by all participants, five of them also felt that, for these demonstrations to remain useful, they should be brief. That is, there was a sense that spending too much time on the demonstrations or in participating in these activities as if they were elementary students themselves was a “waste of time” (P10).

In the first year, in the course that didn’t go so well, we spent too much time trying out strategies; a ridiculous amount of time. (P5).

Graduates from Program B described the modeling of assessment strategies such as the use of rubrics and self evaluations in their experience as students as useful. The course instructor either provided detailed rubrics or asked graduates to participate in establishing criteria for evaluating their assignments. Having experienced this as students gave graduates an understanding of the purpose and benefit of using these strategies.
We were also given a rubric and often times we were actually asked to help develop the rubric for our own project so that everything was reasonable. I thought that stood out amazingly because then we all knew that everything was up to par with what we were expected to do and what we could do…So I thought that was amazing that we were able to help create our own rubric and I would use that in my own classroom probably. In terms of self-evaluation, whenever we handed something we had to evaluate it ourselves and she would look over that and see if she compared her own evaluation to ours and whether we were too hard on ourselves or too easy on ourselves. Because of that we learned how to evaluate students’ work with a critical eye. (P6)

**Required readings and follow-up activities.** Graduates from both programs were required to complete readings on a weekly basis regarding the topic covered in class. In both cases, the readings were accompanied by a follow-up activity such as writing a review of the reading or answering questions about the material read.

For graduates from both programs, the required readings were viewed as useful resources that they can use as references for the future. Moreover, there was also the recognition and appreciation for the role the readings play in furthering their understanding and knowledge with respect to literacy instruction; specifically in terms of providing evidence-based knowledge. For example, one participant from Program A stated, “…a lot of articles we read were based on research…seeing that research has shown that kids need at least 20 hours of phonics instruction gives you a sense.” (P1)
Similarly, graduates valued readings that covered instructional practices or teaching activities as they could see the application of the information from these readings to the classroom setting. Some of the reading material mentioned by participants included *Classrooms that Work: They Can All Read and Write* (Cunningham & Allington, 2006); *Guided Reading* (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996); *Spotlight on Comprehension* (Hoyt, 2004); *The Four Blocks* (Cunningham, Hall & Sigmon, 2000) and *Creating a Dynamic Classroom* (Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2002). These materials were viewed as useful resources in that they were tied to the realities of teaching. As one participant noted, “…the book she used was also really good, ‘Creating a dynamic classroom,’ it has a whole chapter on setting up a balanced literacy program and it actually goes through step-by-step what you need to do.” (P8)

There was a notable difference between graduates in Program A and Program B with respect to their perception about the activities tied to the required readings. Five of the seven interviewees from Program A expressed a negative opinion regarding the follow-up activity for the required reading. The follow up activity required them to answer questions, in group, about the readings. Graduates found these questions were not “reflective work” (P3) as they could just “regurgitate” (P1) the material read to answer the questions.

It was a lot of reading and we had to answer questions every week. And the questions were not deep thought questions they were basically ‘Did you read this?’ Which to me is a waste of my time to do that; if I want to make notes on something I make notes on something, but it’s a graduate level course, your
expectation is that if you have a reading you’ll do it. If you want, something to start thinking about new ideas is one thing, but a lot of the questions were more right out of the book. You could copy them right out of the book and to me that’s useless… There was no real discussion on the readings. (P9)

…we had questions to answer which were basically testing whether we did the reading or not, they weren’t taking more out of you. So it was reasonable but I think the objective wasn’t as reasonable. (P10)

In contrast, graduates from Program B were required to write reading responses to articles or reading material that they found useful or meaningful. Although there was a required number of reading responses that each graduate had to complete, these were not on a weekly basis. Overall, the three graduates interviewed from Program B viewed this activity as an exercise of “reflection” (P6), as well as an opportunity to practice a teaching strategy that they could use with a student, as one participant stated, “…so every time she gave us an article to read we had to write a response to it in a way that we would have a student respond, so like the three Rs.” (P8)

Thus, graduates’ attitude towards the required readings was influenced by the perceived value of the follow-up activity or the perceived purpose of completing the readings. In this sense, graduates from Program A, who felt that the purpose of completing the readings was only to fulfill a requirement that they felt was not relevant to their learning experience, reported reading only for the purpose of answering the question and targeting the reading material that was pertinent to their question.
I could have read more but I didn’t. I only read what I had to answer the questions, about a fourth of the readings. A lot of the articles were connected because they were on the same topic. The workload was reasonable, I wouldn’t have minded reading more if we were actually going to discuss it. (P1)

In contrast, there was a graduate from Program A who viewed the purpose of the readings as furthering her understanding of literacy instruction. For this graduate, the required readings had a value for her learning experience in and of themselves, regardless of the follow up activity.

We had weekly assignments to synthesize the information we were reading for class. All of the articles that we read were excellent; a lot of research articles and teacher magazine articles that were really informative. I read every single thing but one. I found it reasonable, I mean it was busy, but everything that we read was relevant, absolutely, 100%. And it was usually pretty strongly connected with the class that we were going into. (P5)

Overall, whether or not graduates completed the required readings and their attitudes towards these were determined by their perception of the purpose of completing the reading and the accompanying activity. If the activity or readings were viewed as useful to furthering their learning and understanding, then they were completed and valued. In contrast, if the readings and the follow up activity were seen as a “mini-test of
have you read it” (P3), then the approach was to read the minimum amount to fulfill the requirement.

**Theme 2 – Content of literacy courses**

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Theme 2 includes graduates’ descriptions of the theories, instructional approaches, literacy components and concepts covered in their literacy-related courses. The information presented in this theme was obtained both from the descriptions of interviewed participants, as well as from a review of the course outlines that graduates provided for each of their literacy-related courses. The first section describes the commonalities observed in the literacy-related content of both programs. In addition, graduates’ descriptions of their courses’ content revealed differences in the material and skills covered across programs. Therefore, after reviewing the common elements, I present the specific literacy content for each one of the programs.

**Commonalities across programs.** One of the common characteristics in both programs was the importance given to evidence-based practice. Seven participants from both programs made reference to the fact that the content of their literacy-related courses was based on research. For example one participant noted, “…we looked at the research of how kindergarteners learn language and literacy and how their spelling develops” (P4). In fact, the course outline for one of the literacy-related courses in Program A describes
the purpose of the course as: “…to provide a foundation of understanding of literacy acquisition based on current theory and research and to show how the theory can be translated into practice” (course outline, 2005-2006 cycle).

The research focus was evident in the material presented in their courses, both in terms of theory and the instructional strategies covered.

The instructor would always say that is the difference with our program that they try to infuse research into everything. So if you did a portfolio entry, we had to find a research study or something… everything we did we had to incorporate research. (P8)

It taught me the reasons behind why I need to teach phonics and spelling specifically; there are statistics and international research that showed consistently that children learn through real writing activities and the things that are important to them. (P1)

Similarly, there was the expectation that graduates’ assignments had to be supported by research findings. The course outline for one of the literacy courses in Program B describes an assignment in which graduates were expected to write a research paper about a specific literacy or assessment strategy by reviewing “at least four journal articles, research studies, and/or chapters from professional books...”; the outline further notes that graduates should “ensure that at least two of [their] sources are research-based” (course outline, 2005-2006 cycle).
It was interesting to note that four of the interviewed participants specifically mentioned having reviewed research articles about the debate between Phonics and Whole Language.

We talked about the phonics versus whole language debate. We talked about why they have moved back to phonics now because students don’t necessarily grab a lot from whole language. (P6)

There was a little bit at the beginning of the second year course where it just talked about the history of whole language and phonics and how those developed and why they developed and sort of the battles that took place amongst those. (P10)

Another common topic mentioned by interviewed participants when describing the content of their literacy-related courses was balanced literacy. More specifically, six graduates consistently described that their courses highlighted the importance of having a balanced literacy program. It is noteworthy that the course outline for a literacy-related course in Program B (2005-2006 cycle) indicates that one of the course objectives is for teacher candidates to “identify components of a balanced literacy program using the Strands of Language Arts 1) writing, 2) reading, and 3) oral and visual communication.” Thus, in this sense, the concept of balanced literacy was regarded as an overarching concept in thinking about planning a literacy program.
Because of my instruction, it always goes back to a balanced literacy program, where you are doing phonics and whole language. You are doing small group and large group [instruction]. You are doing lots of oral language, written language, [and] reading. You are doing a lot of rhyming activities, especially in the younger grades. You are doing read-alouds. You do a lot of repetition, so maybe read the same book many times. You are also trying to attack all the different components of literacy such as blending, decoding, syntax, spelling and you want to build these all in a way that makes sense. So you have your word wall up, you are using that. You have word families as well. You have different sections on that. You are also doing printing, which is really important in a literacy program and eventually cursive. You also need to have a good selection of material, non-fiction and fiction around your classroom. (P10)

Program A: Content of literacy-related courses

Stages of literacy development. Graduates from Program A describe having covered the stages of literacy development as described by Jeanne Chall (1996). The course outline indicates that this developmental framework was covered during the first two classes of the second year course devoted to language and literacy (2005-2006 cycle). In addition, required readings in both the first and second year courses discuss children’s development of reading skills through predictable stages. As noted by a graduate from this program, “we spent a great deal of time initially talking about the stages of literacy and the different needs for a student say in stage 0 versus in stage 3.”(P5)
In addition, the stages of literacy development were used to guide the presentation of specific literacy components and teaching strategies. In this sense, the content of the course constantly referred back to the developmental stages in organizing and presenting new information.

In the second year we had a full course, we started with some theory looking at Chall’s stages. And then we just sort of moved through the stages, so I think each stage, early and late, was given its own class. So it was quite comprehensive. (P3)

**Planning a literacy program.** Graduates also described having covered the planning of a literacy program through their second year course. More specifically, upon direct questioning of whether their literacy courses had covered program development, five of the seven interviewees from Program A stated that their second year course had covered this “quite extensively” (P3). For the most part, graduates made reference to their final assignment in which they were asked to plan one week of literacy instruction for a specific grade level. Nevertheless, in addition to the assignment, there were also reports that literacy programming was covered during class instruction. For one of the participants, “most of the course was about designing a literacy program” (P2). This is, in fact, reflected in the course description contained in the course outline, which highlights that “teachers successfully completing the course will be prepared to develop and implement theoretically-based, practical and motivating classroom literacy programs for the primary and junior grades” (2005-2006 cycle).
We talked about too, depending on the grade and the level of the readers, how much time would be spent on teaching phonics, how much time would be spent on reading, how much time should be spent on writing. … That was really helpful, because we have no experience, so thinking about how much time should I spend in Grade 2 on word walls or how much time do I need to spend on phonics in Grade 5, which is not very much…. And it’s good too when we are thinking of planning our own classroom say you have 100 minutes of literacy, well how do I break those 100 minutes down, well then I go back to the resources. (P1)

A review of the rubric used for the assessment of graduates’ assignment in planning a literacy program highlights the areas that teacher candidates were expected to cover in their written assignment and presentation. These include the age/stage appropriateness of their proposed program, classroom organization such as room setup and time management, complete coverage of literacy components and teaching strategies, inclusion of literacy assessment, accommodations for special needs and creativity. Although most graduates from Program A found the final assignment useful and meaningful, two of them also expressed concern about not having covered the “big picture” (P5) as much, in terms of more long term planning of the literacy program.

The problem that I found with the final assignment is that we had to create a one week snapshot of the program and the nice thing is, in order to do one you really have to understand the whole, but that wasn’t focused on quite as much. So this one week snapshot, although it’s a good exercise to go through it might even be
better to do less in-depth but whole year kind of idea. Because that’s what I’m facing now, because I need to plan it, so one week exercise is ok for the details, but the overall picture of what to cover throughout the year… our program doesn’t really focus on long-term planning all that much. You’re lucky if you get it from your host teacher instead of from the program. (P3)

In general, I feel about the program, I have all of my puzzle pieces, and I feel that I have everything I need to know, and if I forget I know where to go to find it. But putting together that big picture is something that I know I’m going to have to figure out. (P5)

Specific literacy components and instructional strategies. A review of the course outline (2005-2006 cycle) revealed the topics covered by class, which include: 1) overview of The Great Debate, stages of literacy development, the literacy diet; 2) concepts about print, motivation for literacy; 3) phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, sight words, spelling; 4) language development, English as a Second Language; 5) vocabulary, fluency, book selection; 6) real reading (shared/guided/independent reading, genres, comprehension strategies); 7) real writing (conventions, handwriting, text structure and composition strategies); 8) schema development, background knowledge, concept-oriented instruction; 9) classroom organization, time management; 10) special education assessment and programming. The last two classes were devoted to student presentations of the final assignment on developing a literacy program.
In addition to the stages of literacy development and planning a literacy program, graduates from Program A described that their second year course covered “ten different aspects of literacy” (P2). Five of the seven interviewees from Program A described specific literacy components as part of the content of their second year course. The remaining two participants mentioned only teaching strategies when describing their course content.

The most commonly mentioned literacy component covered in Program A was phonics, mentioned by four graduates. Other commonly mentioned components included phonemic awareness, spelling, and comprehension strategies, each mentioned by three graduates from Program A. In addition, vocabulary, concepts of print, fluency, schema development and real reading and writing were mentioned by at least one participant.

We started off focusing on early years literacy and concept of prints. We spent a lot of time talking about phonemic awareness and different activities for blending, segmenting, deletion, phoneme deletion…A lot of underlying approaches that generally you want to do authentic reading and writing. The instructor brought a lot of different resources according to the different topics covered in class, for example if the topic was schema development, she brought resources to illustrate that. [She brought resources to illustrate], composition strategies, how to build vocabulary, [and] how to build a word wall. (P5)
Graduates also described a wide range of teaching strategies covered in their literacy course. In some instances, graduates elaborated on their responses by relating a teaching strategy to a literacy component:

Teaching students to read and reread in context using picture cues, looking at title, asking questions, sound out, predicting like the main reading strategies that you would use …comprehension strategies. I feel like we spent a lot of time doing that kind of stuff. …We learned quite a bit on spelling, like with word walls, high frequency words and stuff like that, and that also goes with phonics. Then also theme word charts, how to practice spelling with that, and vocabulary, increasing vocabulary through reading. And we learned about leveled reading, and guided reading, independent reading, shared reading and shared writing. (P1)

The most commonly mentioned instructional strategy was Reader’s Theatre, reported by four graduates from Program A. Word walls were referenced by three participants, and guided reading and writing, as well as shared reading and writing were mentioned by two participants. Other strategies that were mentioned as covered in their literacy course included leveled reading, CORI, read-aloud and literature circles. In addition, skills associated with phonics, such as blending and decoding, were also included in graduates’ descriptions of their course content.

We had things like lit circles, read-aloud, small groups, rhyming, we did Four Blocks [and] we did Jolly Phonics. Lots of rhyming, there was a big focus on
rhyming and the importance of rhyming for developing phonemic awareness. We talked a lot about blends and decoding words. (P10)

**Literacy assessment.** Three graduates from Program A expressed that assessment was not sufficiently covered in their literacy course. As noted by a graduate, “the program did not cover assessment as much as I would have liked. So we talked about how to teach, but less about how to assess” (P2). Another participant noted, “[in the literacy course] we talked a lot about the need for assessment but I think the discussion of different ways to assess was too brief” (P9). The course outline for the 36-hour literacy course indicates that one of the twelve classes was devoted to assessment.

The most commonly mentioned assessment strategy covered in the literacy course was running records, reported by four participants. Other assessment strategies that were mentioned included the DRA, CASI, reading and writing exemplars, as well as considering different aspects of writing assessment such as evaluating conventions, ideas, vocabulary and spelling.

In addition, one participant commented, “the one thing we didn’t get enough of in any of these [courses] is special education with literacy and assessment, specifically for children who are struggling in literacy” (P10). Similarly, a graduate who was beginning to plan for teaching the following school year, expressed the desire that “formative assessments could have been covered more; where to start” (P2).

Although graduates in Program A had a course devoted exclusively to assessment, they felt that they were missing knowledge of specific assessment tools and strategies for
literacy. The assessment course was described as “[it] covered all different kinds of assessment; from standardized assessments to informal observation” (P2).

References, programs and resources. A review of the course outline for both literacy-related courses in Program A revealed the following texts as required readings: *Classrooms that Work: They can all Read and Write* (Cunningham & Allington, 2006), *Spotlight on Comprehension* (Hoyt, 2004), *Early Reading Strategy: The Report of the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario* (2003), *The Literacy Map: Guiding Children to Where they Need to be* (Gentry, 2002) and *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* (Ambruster, Lehr & Osborn, 2001). In addition, there were weekly assigned readings from research journals and teacher magazines such as *The Reading Teacher*.

Interviewed graduates also mentioned being exposed through their literacy courses to specific literacy programs such as *Jolly Phonics, The Four Blocks, Star Strategy, Reading Recovery* and *The Balanced Literacy Diet*.

Program B: Content of literacy-related courses

General approaches to literacy instruction. Graduates’ descriptions of the content of their literacy-related courses included topics such as multiple literacies, integrating literacy throughout the curriculum, and setting up a “language rich environment” (P7).

We talked about having a journal for a math lesson, so that you have to write in proper English, with proper grammar and using that within your math lesson. So
we talked a lot about multiple literacy; about how a student might learn to write and read better when they talk it through out loud, as opposed to doing it on paper right away the way we expect them to sit down and write down all their thoughts. So that’s how we learned how to set it up, to integrate into as many fields as you possibly can so that students have multiple access to writing and reading. (P8)

Two of the interviewed participants from Program B noted that they felt that the literacy courses did not sufficiently cover how to teach a child to read and write, “we didn’t learn how to teach children to decode words, we did a lot of literacy in terms of reading them books and reading poetry…but not the nitty gritty basics, which I personally would have liked more.” (P6)

The description of the course outline for the 36-hour literacy course indicated that the topics covered would include: components of a balanced literacy program, stages of development, process of reading and cueing systems, process approach to writing, forms of writing, picture books, novels, poetry, reading response, critical literacy, instructional strategies for reading, writing and oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, spelling, grammar, media literacy, literacy assessment and evaluation, integration of literacy across the curriculum, the role of technology in literacy instruction, planning and classroom organization. Although these topics were included in the overall course description, the course schedule outlined the following topics covered by class: 1) writing process, picture books – author/illustrator awareness; 2) read aloud, reading response, reading comprehension; 3) effective reading instruction, reading process, cueing systems; 4) balance literacy, literacy instructional strategies; 5)shared reading, guided reading,
writing forms; 6) critical literacy; 7) oral language, reading and reading exemplars, independent reading: novel studies/literature circles; 8) assessing reading – running records; 9) hooking reluctant readers and writers, independent reading; 10) English as a second language; 11) drama; 12) phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, spelling and grammar; 13) classroom organization for literacy (course outline, 2005-2006 cycle).

**Instructional strategies.** Graduates from Program B describe having reviewed a variety of instructional strategies in their literacy course. The strategies mentioned included guided reading, literature circles, read aloud, shared reading and the three R’s. Graduates were made active participants in the demonstrations of instructional strategies. For example, one of the course assignments required them to read a novel and participate in a literature circle during class time.

We did once in class something with different ways of responding, so not just writing but also drama, drawing, musical type of responses. Then I know we covered the different types of reading that you are supposed to do, like read aloud, shared reading, guided reading. Then she mentioned the classroom setup. There were also guest speakers that talked about literacy through drama, teaching ESL and poetry. Have centres in the classroom, like writer’s centre. (P7)

**Literacy assessment.** Graduates from this program describe a broad range of assessment strategies covered in their courses. They also made specific reference to having an assessment course, taught by the same instructor as the 36-hour literacy course, and on the same day as the literacy course. In this sense, there seems to have been some
continuity between what was covered in the literacy course and the content of the assessment course.

The professor who taught literacy also taught assessment, on the same day. In the literacy course we did some stuff, like the writing rubric we had to read articles on it. We came back from our first practicum we had to collect different types of assessment or children’s writing samples, so we had to include assessment in our lesson plan. (P8)

We had a full assessment course that was taught by the same professor, so sometimes those got blended. We didn’t touch on it strongly. We had three textbooks. (P6)

The assessment tools and methods covered in their courses ranged from standardized assessment tools such as the DRA to making anecdotal notes throughout students’ participation in literacy activities. Graduates also mentioned running records, portfolios, anecdotal notes, rubrics, checklist and conferencing. It is noteworthy that graduates were also exposed to these assessment methods in their experience as students; that is, some of these methods, such as rubrics, were used in evaluating their assignments in the literacy course.

We had observation, note taking, the instructor had a session on CASI, we did DRA like running records. So we actually had to listen to tapes and do it. We
talked about evaluation, so like report cards, conferencing with students, having them do portfolios to show growth, checklists. (P8)

Anecdotal notes to constantly assess. A big focus was on portfolios. Graphic organizers was another type of assessment, children’s responses, rubrics and checklist and setting criteria in order to assess and evaluate students. Setting criteria together with the students so they know what they have to focus on, why different things should have different meanings. (P7)

The assessment course covered not only a repertoire of tools and methods, but also discussed different purposes of assessment, and how each tool or method suits each purpose, “one [textbook] covered the different types of assessment, diagnostic, formative…and I forget what the third one is” (P6.) The course outline describes that one of the course objectives is for teacher candidates to “explain different types of classroom assessment methods and their purposes” (cycle 2005-2006).

Varying your assessment, observing them especially at a young age, doing diagnostic assessments so you know where they are and what they need to learn. Having conferences with them so we can talk about their writing because often you might not be getting the whole picture. (P8)

**References, programs and resources.** Graduates from Program B made reference to one textbook in their literacy course, *Creating the Dynamic Classroom: A Handbook*
for Teachers (Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2005). The course outline also indicates that graduates reviewed a “variety of Ontario Ministry of Education documents related to literacy and language learning” (cycle 2005-2006). In addition, the course outline includes a long list of suggested textbooks, which include, among many others, *Classrooms that Work: They can all Read and Write* (Cunningham & Allington, 2003) and *Guiding readers and writers, Grades 3-6: Teaching comprehension, genre and content literacy* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000). Graduates did not make any reference to being exposed to specific programs through their literacy courses.

**Theme 3 – Graduates’ experience in practicum placements**

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Graduates from both two-year teacher preparation programs were required to complete several practicum placements throughout the two years of their program. Overall, the number of hours of practice teaching in both programs ranged from 600-630 hours. Program A requires graduates to complete four half-day placements for six weeks during the first year. These placements are interspersed throughout the year with their coursework. In the second year of the program, graduates complete a 14 week full-time internship in an elementary classroom. The internship is completed either in the fall or winter term. Program B requires graduates to complete a four-week and a five-week full-
time placement in their first and second years. These placements are interspersed throughout the year with their coursework.

**Context of practicum placements.** There was considerable variety in the contexts and communities in which graduates completed their field placements. Thus, graduates were exposed to both public and private settings and a wide of grade levels (JK to Grade 6). The variety in contexts and settings also allowed them to be exposed to diverse communities that included students with English as a Second Language, a wide range of socio-economic levels, and students with special needs. In addition, two graduates had placements in special education settings such as a self-contained classroom for students with learning disabilities and a classroom in a hospital for children with developmental and physical disabilities. Thus, nine participants had at least one placement in a community with a high proportion of students with a native language different from English. Similarly, seven graduates had at least one placement in a classroom in which there was at least one student with a learning disability or special needs (e.g., a student diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). The following is one graduate’s description of her multiple placements:

[My practicum] in kindergarten it was a diverse population, a range of cultures and a range of different educational needs. The children with difficulties were not yet identified but it was clear that they struggled. At least 15% had ESL. In Grade 2, it was a private school, mostly white middle-upper class. The Grade 3/4 split was a LD [learning disabilities] segregated class also in a private school with only
six students in the class, upper class. In Grade 4 it was a public school, mostly middle-upper class, predominantly white. (P9)

Thus, having multiple placements throughout the two years of the program provided graduates with the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of grade levels, student ability levels, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural and linguistic diversity. Similarly, this variety influenced their exposure to a range of host teachers and opportunities to connect theory with practice. These two characteristics are explored in further detail.

Graduates’ exposure and participation in literacy instruction: The role of host teachers. In graduates’ descriptions of their multiple practicum placements, it became apparent that there was significant variability in the experiences they were exposed to and the degree in which they were allowed to participate in the literacy instruction of the classroom settings in which they completed their placements. Similarly, the quality of the literacy instruction they were exposed to varied. In this sense, the role of the host teacher came through as a significant determinant in the type and quality of experience that graduates had.

Host teachers as gatekeepers. Five of the interviewed participants reported that, in at least one of their practicum placements, they were not able to practice literacy instruction. For example, one graduate noted “In the Grade 3, she actually didn’t show me how to teach literacy at all, I did only math and science” (P8). Thus, host teachers were the gatekeepers to the exposure of graduates to literacy instruction and to their degree of participation and opportunity to practice teaching literacy.
In some cases, there was the sense that host teachers “assigned math more often than they assigned literacy” (P3). There was also the belief that “a lot of us [teacher candidates] were given math because they [host teachers] can take a section and say, ‘here, do data management’, whereas literacy tends to not have so much units like that” (P10). In other cases, the impression was that “the teachers wanted to teach their own literacy” (P7).

Another way in which host teachers functioned as gatekeepers was in how much they allowed graduates to plan and implement their own activities or lessons in the classroom. As one graduate noted, there was the impression that literacy is something teachers are “very set on, they have a specific structure to their literacy [instruction]” (P2). Of the ten interviewed participants, three of them reported that they did not have free reign to plan and implement a literacy activity in any of their practicum placements. Of the remaining seven, four were only allowed this opportunity in one of their multiple placements.

In [the] JK/SK [classroom] I didn’t plan any literacy activities. In Grade 1, I planned some but I didn’t have a lot of free reign, she had a structure for how she wanted it to go. In the Grade 4 placement, I had a lot of freedom but not enough time to finish what I started, the practicum ended before I could finish. The host teacher didn’t check what I was doing which is part of the reason why I didn’t finish. In the Grade 2 placement, I didn’t do much literacy; she had an idea of how she wanted literacy to go. In Grade 3, I had a lot of free reign. There were the consistent literacy related things that would happen, in which I didn’t have free
reign that she [the host teacher] ran, but there was also my literacy unit where I did have free reign. This was for the last two weeks. (P4)

Therefore, host teachers were gatekeepers in terms of the amount of time graduates were exposed to literacy instruction and the opportunity to practice literacy instruction in the classroom setting. Moreover, graduates from both programs had few opportunities to develop skills such as thinking through, planning, and implementing a lesson.

Host teachers as role models. Host teachers’ behaviours, attitudes, and teaching approaches are regarded by graduates as positive and negative examples of what they would like to be and do as teachers. Observing teachers with students in the classroom setting provides a unique opportunity for graduates to see the interaction between teacher and student behaviours. Seeing a wide range of teaching styles, instructional strategies, classroom management approaches, and attitudes in host teachers provided graduates with a repertoire of experiences that influenced their understanding of teaching in general and of the specifics of literacy instruction. As one graduate described:

So, I was exposed to a very, very teacher directed SK classroom where I saw really high literacy achievement. It could have been a combination of the students’ ability and the teacher’s teaching. But it was a very teacher directed, very planned, very busy, lots of Jolly Phonics, lots of repetition, big word walls. It was a very literacy infused classroom; every centre we did had a literacy focus in
it. Even in math we tried to incorporate rhyming or anything like that. So it was very literacy infused and the kids did really well. (P10)

Thus, as exemplified in the previous comment, host teachers viewed as positive role models were those whose teaching approach and literacy program had a positive impact on students’ learning. Moreover, observing teachers carry out activities in which students were engaged and successful helped reinforce learned concepts and form a mental image of teaching.

…well it was interesting, I saw literacy much more as a teacher directed, very planned and very organized and I saw really good effects on that. I also saw how it’s almost mathematical in its approach, like it’s a very structured approach from both the teacher and how the students need to take it in. And it’s given out in bits and built upon, and that’s what I saw in those two programs. (P10)

And the Grade 2 teacher and the Grade 3/4 teacher were really great role models. The Grade 3/4 [teacher] was running literacy groups with kids at the level of novel that they could discuss and there was a role for each child. Most of the groups were pretty good and they could run themselves with periodic teacher input… It just really reinforced that children need to be interested in order to be motivated to learn about literacy. (P9)
These reflections from graduates reveal how their field experiences provide an opportunity to question, reflect on, and/or reinforce their understanding of the key features of literacy instruction. Moreover, they suggest that being exposed to a variety of methods and styles, and seeing the impact of these on students’ behaviour and learning, influences graduates’ formation as literacy instructors.

Host teachers also serve as role models in the “kinds of reference and research” (P4) that they rely on for teaching literacy. In this sense, graduates were exposed to additional resources and references that involved consideration of different teaching approaches. Moreover, getting a glimpse into how teachers set up a literacy program, or as a graduate stated, “Seeing how other teachers decide to teach it” (P4) also influenced their understanding of literacy instruction.

Similarly, even in the situations where the host teacher might have been “set” in the manner in which the classroom literacy program was conducted, graduates still referenced having positive learning experiences in observing the teacher conduct a well-designed and effective literacy program, and in gaining mastery in implementing instructional strategies through this modeling.

In Grade 5, that teacher was a very strong teacher, a strong literacy teacher, because she was the literacy coordinator. So she had her own way of doing things and so it was good and I learned a lot from her. Even just read alouds, she would say ask them more questions. Then after that practicum when I did read alouds everyone was like, ‘Oh, wow!’ (P8)
Unfortunately, not all host teachers were perceived to have a strong program or to match what graduates were taught regarding literacy instruction.

The first placement I did was with a new teacher who was her first year teacher. She came from a one year program so what I was going in with was really different to how I think she was taught. [It was different in that] it was very teacher-centered, worksheets, handouts. A lot of independent work, the children didn’t work in groups, no consultation with the teacher or with peers. (P1)

In these cases, graduates viewed these experiences as examples of what they did not want to do in their own teaching. The following excerpt exemplifies the manner in which graduates compared and contrasted their host teachers’ teaching approaches, relating them to what they were taught through the program and ultimately defining what they might adopt for their own practice.

…the teacher asked me to teach a guided reading unit on a book on pioneers. It was a horrible book for students because the language was so much from the 1800s that none of these students would use these words. All the activities were, they had to read a chapter at home, we would read that chapter together in class and then we would work on the questions. There were vocabulary words, so we had to write the definitions for the vocabulary words and then answer the questions. It was ridiculous that they were learning those vocabulary words because they would never show up in anything. The kids did not relate to the book
so they were not interested in it. The second placement was amazing. The Grade 4 teacher was very tuned in on the students’ needs. So for his guided reading, he gave different books to different groups. And he grouped them according to who would be more interested in what sort of books. He also let them choose the books that they wanted to read and if he felt the level was too low for a student he suggested he move to another one. All the students interacted well, they brainstormed on chart paper and they loved and they acted it out and it was great! In terms of writing, they had to learn how to write narrative, that was really good. We went through all the steps, step-by-step on how to write a narrative, what to include and we did examples. So I really learned how to teach for an older grade, I felt very comfortable teaching literacy for an older grade after that placement.

(P6)

Thus, graduates’ evaluation of positive and negative role models in their practicum placements was influenced by the observed impact on student learning and the degree of correspondence between what they were taught as best practices in their literacy courses and what host teachers are actually doing in the classroom. It is interesting to note that the perception of the degree of correspondence between their course content and practicum experience appears to shift as they progress through the program. In their initial placements, most graduates report that they “didn’t know what was going on” (P2). However, as they advanced through the program and gained more knowledge about literacy instruction and teaching in general, they developed a standard for comparisons.
**Host teachers as mentors: coaching, feedback and support.** Host teachers can be very influential if they allow graduates to try out and develop their teaching skills with guidance and supervision. Examples of this role involve teachers allowing graduates to develop a lesson plan, coaching them before they actually implement it, providing support during the implementation and feedback afterwards.

My host teachers were very open. I mean, I would always discuss things with them but they were very keen to just let me try and it worked out well…I would give the draft lesson plan to the teacher and she would give me comments. (P9)

So the host teacher chose the novel and I said I have some ideas and I created some activities and then she gave feedback and then I implemented them and I talked to her about the outcome. (P3)

Under these circumstances, graduates get the opportunity to “try out some of the techniques and strategies…adapt some of the things talked about in class” (P1). Unfortunately, for the majority of the graduates interviewed, it was only in one or two of their placements that they encountered a host teacher who provided this kind of supervision and coaching. In other cases, as one graduate described, the host teacher gave “a lot of freedom,” so much freedom that she was unable to successfully complete the lesson she planned because the host teacher “didn’t check what I was doing” (P4). Thus, this graduate missed the necessary supervision to plan the lesson in accordance with the time she actually had in the practicum placement to complete it.
It is also noteworthy that graduates distinguish between being provided guidance and coaching from host teachers, as opposed to feeling evaluated. For example, a graduate from Program B described that one of her host teachers would give her a lesson the host teacher had planned to teach. She found this experience “difficult because she expects you to do everything the way she does and you don’t know what she is going to do” (P8). This host teacher was described as having a “strong literacy program,” and this graduate felt a “lot of pressure” from this host teacher.

Graduates also expressed the desire that there would be more communication with their host teachers with respect to the motives or underlying rationale for the host teachers’ literacy program and the target of specific activities or teaching strategies. However, as one graduate described “overall host teachers didn’t really talk much about their language program” (P3). This was particularly relevant in their initial placements in which they lacked the necessary background knowledge to understand what they were observing in the classroom.

I didn’t get much out of her [host teacher] in terms of why we were doing shared reading, what I was supposed to be targeting in shared reading. So in general, I was doing a lot of things and not really knowing all of the things the kids were getting out of it… In terms of reading, I knew how to do what I was supposed to do, but I don’t know if I got too much direction from her of why we were doing the things we were doing or the philosophical ties. (P5)
Thus, there is the sense that graduates’ understanding of what they observe in their practicum placements is primarily informed by the knowledge obtained through their courses as host teachers rarely provide this information. However, when graduates did have the opportunity to discuss literacy with their host teachers, they valued this as an important source of knowledge, or as one graduate stated “I got to talk to them and hear their experience. It was amazing!” (P1)

In sum, graduates’ experiences in their practicum placements are greatly influenced by the attitudes and behaviours of host teachers, both toward literacy instruction as well as toward student teachers. As stated by one of the graduates:

A program can’t necessarily dictate what happens in our placement, even though they could send a strong message, the message should be that we do have a comprehensive overall experience. Every teacher has their own idea of what our position in their classroom should be and that’s just the way it is. I think that’s a larger systemic problem of the student-teacher/teacher relationship. (P3)

The function of classroom placements: Connecting theory and practice.

Graduates’ descriptions about their experience in their various practicum placements revealed how they perceived the practica affected their understanding of literacy instruction.

Observing and implementing instructional strategies. Practicum placements provide the opportunity to observe the instructional strategies graduates covered in their literacy courses within the context of a real classroom setting. In addition to observing
host teachers implement strategies, graduates also use the classroom setting to “try out,” and “adapt” (P1) the strategies they were exposed to through their courses.

In Grade 1, I had a really good example of balanced literacy curriculum and got to try out all of the different components like shared reading, shared writing, [and] we did a modified guided reading. (P5)

In addition, graduates also broaden their repertoire of pedagogical skills in their field experience as they get exposed to additional programs and instructional strategies than those learned through their courses. This broadening of their repertoire includes both learning new instructional and assessment strategies as well as different ways to implement familiar strategies.

SK was really good because I got really involved in different things, they did the spelling through phonics program and I got to teach that. I got to look at different assessments from Marie Clay…I also got to do tests with some of the kids on alphabet recognition and retrieval. So, [it] definitely gave me a lot of different ideas about assessment. In terms of programming, there were some really great models in the SK as well, in terms of our daily message, sight words, we had a word wall with sight words on it and every day kids would come in and count the sight words, and they would say one and we would go over them. (P5)
Whereas the literacy course gave us an all around feel, I took specific activities from the practicum. (P2)

**Observing students.** Graduates’ experience in the classroom setting also contributes to developing their knowledge of the learner. Observing students doing “exactly what the research said they would do” (P1) reinforces their knowledge of literacy development.

It matched what we were learning, what she was doing matched what was expected of teachers who were teaching Grade 3, like really bringing the children from learning to read and write to learning through reading and writing. So the kids were learning to research and to use their abilities to find more information. (P2)

Graduates also describe observing differences in students’ responses to a specific instructional strategy and the variation in ability levels. This experience makes evident the need for differentiated instruction, and more importantly, provides a reality check in that the classroom setting is not composed of the average student. For example, a graduate described an activity she designed and implemented in one of her practicum placements.

It wasn’t a great assignment that I did with the kids, it was ok, but it was a learning experience for me. Some kids they can write a lot more, some kids need
a lot more prompts. Even within a small group of four, it might need to be a bit
different for each of them. (P3)

Graduates also reflected on the opportunity to observe the positive impact of
motivating and engaging students in literacy learning. In this sense, graduates witnessed
firsthand the effect of “making it real for the kids” (P9). For one graduate, this experience
was particularly meaningful as it was in a classroom with students with behaviour
difficulties, “it just really reinforced that children need to be interested in order to be
motivated to learn about literacy…seeing how kids respond to that kind of creative
literacy instruction” (P9). Thus, it was observing students’ response to an instructional
approach that influenced this participant’s understanding of what is important in literacy
instruction.

Another important aspect of observing students is being able to witness the
developmental aspect of literacy. As one graduate stated “I think the practicum, because
there are so many ages, shows how literacy changes as you teach it to students” (P4).
Another graduate expressed:

They set up the practicum nicely in that you see literacy at all different levels and
like in SK how it can start, how you teach kids how to read and write and varying
up to Grade 4… Seeing different activities at different levels. (P2)

*Facing the reality of the classroom setting.* A few graduates also reported on the
manner in which the reality of the classroom setting allowed them to reflect on their
understanding about concepts and their beliefs about “good teaching” (P3). Thus, for some graduates, it became apparent that their preconceived ideas about teaching and learning did not necessarily match the reality of the classroom. For example, graduates’ beliefs and understandings of concepts such as child-centered and the role of direct instruction changed through their exposure to the classroom setting.

But then as I grow as a teacher, I think that people demonstrate in different ways, so child-centeredness for some people might require a lot more strict control over the child’s choices because that is what that child needs. So it’s very difficult for me at this point in my life to be able to say ‘that teacher is child-centered’ I’m starting to realize that more and more. At the beginning it was more kind of clear-cut, I thought, but that was kind of based on what I believed a good teacher would look like. So that belief has changed, which is a good thing, I hope it will always transform. But the problem is of course it’s always reflecting what would I do in that situation and it’s not always the right thing I think. That’s why I like this profession, because it’s not easy and it’s not clear-cut what everyone should do. (P3)

Thus, graduates recognized that the distinctions about concepts such as direct instruction versus indirect instruction; and teacher-centered versus child-centered, are not as clear-cut in the classroom setting as they sound in theory. Moreover, they also became aware that contextual factors are as influential in the decisions made in teaching as concepts and beliefs.
With the Grade 3/4 LD it was just a different world. It was very specialized, very focused. It had a specific reading program with textbooks and workbooks…very different. It was direct instruction, focused. I tried to find a balance in that. The kids need a lot of direct instruction because of their LD but they also responded well to having time to explore a theme and write things about it, rather than ‘we just read an article about da-da-da’.

I think there was enough of a balance in their literacy instruction as well but based on what I know from the teacher there wasn’t a lot of flexibility in what she was expected to teach. (P9)

…it’s hard because they say ‘child-centered, child-centered it’s really good, it’s really good’ but then you have all these things you need to do and your children aren’t going to ask you ‘oh can we do Jolly Phonics today’ so you have to plan…so, it’s a bit of both, they would tell us child-centered is good but to get all this in, you need to do all of this in literacy, I don’t know, maybe it’s a mixed message. (P10)

Theme 4- Integrating coursework and practicum placements

Theme 4: Integrating coursework and practica
• Timing of coursework and practicum placement
• Interaction of course content and practicum experience
Graduates from both programs were asked to reflect about the differences and similarities between the content covered in their literacy courses and their placement experiences. Graduates’ reflections on the similarities and differences provided insight into their understanding of literacy instruction and how each of these settings informed this understanding. In addition, graduates were also asked about specific opportunities in their program to integrate the theoretical component of their courses and their experience in the practicum settings.

Through graduates’ descriptions, one notable characteristic that influenced the integration of course-content and field experiences related to the timing of practicum placements in relation to the coursework, in particular the literacy-related courses, in the two years of the program. In addition to timing, graduates’ descriptions revealed the manner in which what they learned through their courses interacted with what they observe in their practicum placements.

**The timing of coursework and practicum placements.** Graduates were asked whether what they learned in their literacy course was relevant to their practicum experience and if they had the opportunity to discuss their experiences in practicum placements in the context of their courses. More specifically, the interview schedule inquired whether graduates were provided with the opportunity to reflect on and integrate what they were observing and doing in their practicum placements with the theory and research reviewed in their coursework. Only five graduates described that they were provided with specific opportunities to reflect on their practicum experience, although not necessarily in the literacy courses.
The opportunity to reflect about their practicum experience in their coursework was partly determined by the timing of coursework and placements throughout the two years of the teacher preparation program. For example, specifically for graduates in Program A, the literacy course they found most useful was undertaken in a separate term than their four-month internship. Although, upon direct questioning, graduates expressed that the different timing did not allow for much discussion or integration of their course with the practicum placement, there was nevertheless the sense that they did in fact reflect on what they observed and related this to the knowledge they gained through their literacy courses.

We did discuss our placements in the literacy course, but it was not integrated because it was at different times. It was useful to discuss what we had seen before in our literacy class. (P2)

I think if I had taken my literacy course first I would have had such a better idea of why I was doing it, what I was doing and where I was going. And because my only literacy instruction before going into my internship was in first year, and it was frustrating and kind of piecemeal, I don’t think I had a good metacognition of what I was doing and why I was doing it. I knew what the pieces were, because that is what my teacher was doing, but I don’t think I did a very good job of differentiating instruction for literacy in Grade 1 and I don’t think I did a very good job at assessing literacy in Grade 1. I wish I had the literacy course first.
Our instructor really encouraged us to reflect and make connections, so I feel like I had a good opportunity to look back. There were a lot of “oh” moments. (P5)

When the placements were interspersed with coursework, as was the case of the first year of Program A and both years of Program B, graduates described different approaches to integrating their practicum placements with their coursework, even though these might not have occurred in the context of a literacy related course. Thus, for example, graduates described conducting case studies with students in their placements and developing specific assessment strategies in their coursework that they later implemented in their placement.

In our assessment course there was an assignment where we had to write up the report card for a student. We spent six weeks looking at a student and observing. In each one of our six-week placements it was one of our expectations. We observed a specific student and we had to assess them and adapt their program, but it was not specific to literacy. (P2)

Another thing we had to do for the assessment course was a portfolio of things you did in your practicum, so you would describe something that happened in your practicum and you would also include what the research says about it. (P8)

Graduates also described having courses tied to their practicum placements in which they had the opportunity to discuss teaching strategies and other issues they
observed in their placements. These courses were not specific to literacy and were described as addressing topics such as behaviour management, teaching strategies, assessment, interaction with parents and working with students with special needs.

In one class in particular we had the chance to talk about what we were doing in the classroom and then we would brainstorm as a class or we would relate it to the reading that we had done. Everything from behaviour management, to teaching strategies….Another class, during the second year, that ran along with our four-month placement, we talked more in depth about special needs, parents and stuff like that. (P1)

**Interaction of course content and practicum experience.** Graduates were asked to compare the content and teaching philosophy of their literacy course with the teaching strategies and philosophy of their host teachers in the practicum placements. Although their experiences were varied across practicum settings, six graduates reported finding at least some similarities between the two settings.

In the four-month internship, the teacher covered a lot of the things that we covered in our literacy course. It matched what we were learning; what she was doing matched what was expected of teachers who were teaching Grade 3, like really bringing the children from learning to read and write to learning through reading and writing. So the kids were learning to research and to use their abilities to find more information. (P2)
For the most part, graduates described that the course content allowed them to understand the underlying rationale for the teaching strategies they observed in the classroom placements. Thus, for example, having an understanding of reading development allowed them to make sense of the purpose of a teaching strategy. This was particularly evident in graduates from Program A who made reference to the developmental framework covered in their literacy course in interpreting what they observed in the practicum placement. In this sense, the framework gave meaning to what they observed in the classroom, allowing the connection between theory and practice to be made.

I don’t think my Grade 2 teacher was as interested in authentic reading and writing experiences. My teacher for SK seemed to be aligned in terms of a very rich environment for early literacy, covering a lot of basis in terms of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness stuff. My SK teacher wasn’t as interested in individual reading time or concepts of print, which I know my instructor would be shocked at. (P5)

Despite the reported congruity between graduates’ coursework and what they observed in some of the practicum placements, four graduates made specific reference to notable differences between what they were being taught and what they observed in the practicum placement.
I don’t think we were necessarily placed with excellent teachers, with outstanding teachers, amazing teachers who would be the people who would be demonstrating what we are learning. I think that they were moderate teachers in some cases and good teachers in some cases. The good not necessarily because they demonstrate theoretical…that they don’t necessarily show child-centeredness all the time, or comprehensive centres or a strong literacy program, but perhaps because they showed a really caring attitude to the children….I would say it’s a great challenge that our practicum coordinator faces to find us amazing and excellent teaches that are demonstrating what we learn about. (P3)

It is interesting to note that, even in the placements in which what graduates observed was not congruent with what they learned in their coursework, contrasting these experiences allowed graduates to reflect on what they had been taught and appeared to further their understanding of literacy instruction. This suggests that even negative role models provided graduates with the opportunity to reflect on what they learned through their program.

**Theme 5 – Graduates’ pedagogical knowledge and skills for literacy instruction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 5: Graduates’ pedagogical knowledge and skill</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge base for literacy instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Knowledge base for literacy assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Differentiated instruction for diverse learners</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Graduates’ knowledge of literacy content and instructional skills was explored through various interview and survey questions. More specifically, the interview schedule and the survey included direct questions regarding what graduates’ considered were the essential components of literacy instruction and the time spent during their literacy-related courses reviewing certain concepts. In addition, the knowledge base of interviewed participants was also gauged by asking them to define literacy-related concepts, as well as through questions that aimed to assess their application of literacy-related knowledge. For example, graduates were asked to list instructional strategies to develop certain literacy skills such as reading comprehension. Graduates’ responses revealed their knowledge base and skills in three areas: literacy instruction, literacy assessment and differentiated instruction for diverse learners. A description of each of these topics follows.

Graduates’ knowledge base of literacy instruction. In order to explore graduates’ knowledge base in elementary literacy instruction, they were asked to describe the essential components of an elementary literacy program. This open-ended question was asked both of interviewed participants and those who completed the survey. Graduates’ responses to this question, both in the survey and during the interview, were organized into three categories: 1) general approaches to instruction; 2) specific literacy components; and 3) specific instructional strategies. Once I organized graduates’ responses based on these identified categories, I quantified their responses by displaying them in a table and tallying. These results follow.

General approaches to literacy instruction. Graduates from both programs describe a range of general teaching approaches they consider essential in an elementary
literacy program. Table 15 presents the most commonly noted approaches to literacy instruction by graduates from each program. It includes the responses provided by graduates during the interview and in the survey.

Table 15

*General Approaches to Literacy Instruction Mentioned by Percentage of Graduates of Two-Year Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional approach</th>
<th>Program A (n=26)</th>
<th>Program B (n=12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balanced literacy</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated literacy</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Balanced literacy was the most commonly mentioned general approach. Interviewed participants described balanced literacy as including reading, writing and in some cases oral language in their programming. Integrating literacy throughout the entire curriculum was also commonly mentioned as was the importance of modeling both for reading and writing instruction.

*Specific literacy components*. Graduates also mentioned specific literacy components to include in their program. Table 16 provides a summary of the percentage of graduates from each program that mentioned each component.
Table 16

Specific Components of Literacy Instruction Mentioned by Percentage of Graduates of Two-Year Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Component</th>
<th>Program A (n= 26)</th>
<th>Program B (n= 12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for literacy</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic Awareness</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight words</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter formation/print</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions/editing</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition strategies</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral language development</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language rich</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genres (e.g., Fiction)</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety materials (e.g.,</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, both through the interview and in the surveys, graduates considered a wide range of elements to include in their literacy programming. It is interesting to note that the most mentioned component was motivation for literacy. This was expressed either directly as motivation or in making literacy interesting and meaningful for students. Of note, seven of the ten interviewed graduates included this element as essential to their literacy program.

Although there are notable differences between the proportions of students from each program that mentioned specific components, given the small sample of participants, in particular from Program B, these differences should be interpreted with caution. There are, nevertheless, differences in the proportion of students that mention research-based components such as phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction. For example, combining the responses that graduates provided in both the survey and interviews, it is striking that 21 graduates from Program A (80.7%) mentioned phonics as opposed to only 2 graduates from Program B (16.7%). In contrast, graduates from Program B mentioned proportionately more environmental components such as providing a language rich environment as well as a variety of reading materials and genres (e.g., fiction and non-fiction). It is interesting to
note that only a small proportion of graduates from both programs mentioned assessment as an essential component of a good literacy program. This is particularly noteworthy given that interviewed graduates, in particular those from Program A, reported that assessment was not sufficiently covered in their program. This topic is further discussed in a subsequent section.

**Instructional strategies for literacy.** Graduates also included specific instructional strategies in their descriptions of the essential components of an elementary literacy program. Table 17 presents the most commonly mentioned teaching strategies by graduates from each program.

Table 17

*Instructional Strategies Mentioned as Essential to Literacy Program by Percentage of Graduates of Two-Year Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Strategy</th>
<th>Program A (n= 26)</th>
<th>Program B (n= 12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read aloud</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent reading</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word wall</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided reading</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature circles</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared reading</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveled books</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, graduates from Program B tended to include more instructional strategies in their description of a good literacy program. Interestingly, one of the most mentioned teaching strategies in a literacy program was read aloud, with one third of the graduates from both programs mentioning this strategy. Independent reading was also mentioned by close to one third of survey participants, followed by word walls, guided reading and literature circles.

In addition to these instructional strategies mentioned spontaneously by graduates that completed surveys, interviewed graduates were asked more specific questions targeting their knowledge of instructional strategies to address specific literacy components. Thus, the 10 interviewed graduates were asked to describe ways to improve students’ reading fluency, reading comprehension and vocabulary.

In terms of reading fluency, the most common response, mentioned by six of the interviewees, was to provide students with opportunities to practice reading. Apart from this general response, four graduates indicated read aloud as a strategy to improve reading fluency. Modeling and repeated reading were mentioned by three teacher candidates. Less common responses included shared reading and improving students’ sight word recognition, both mentioned by two graduates. Finally, reader’s theatre and guided reading were each mentioned by one graduate.

The most mentioned strategies to improve reading comprehension, mentioned by four graduates, were to model thinking aloud and promoting self-monitoring by asking questions. Three graduates specified the importance of working on students’ word reading and decoding skills as a first step to achieving reading comprehension. Other mentioned strategies included summarizing or paraphrasing read information and
developing students’ vocabulary knowledge to enhance comprehension, each mentioned by two of the interviewed graduates.

Finally, in order to improve students’ vocabulary, seven graduates indicated that reading and exposure to a wide variety of texts were important; with three of them adding that it was necessary to instruct on strategies to decipher word meanings while reading (e.g., use of context, word within words). Similarly, seven interviewees mentioned the use of word walls as a vocabulary development strategy. Three graduates mentioned the use or development of dictionaries and thesaurus to improve students’ word knowledge.

Another question, aimed at assessing graduates’ applied knowledge of literacy instruction, asked them to describe the strategies they would suggest a child who is struggling to read a word use and in what order. Overwhelmingly, nine of the ten interviewed graduates indicated that the first strategy they would suggest is that the student attempt sounding out either the entire word or part of the word. Other frequently mentioned strategies included using context clues, looking for a known word within the word, and referring to the word wall; however, graduates would suggest these strategies only after a student has attempted to decode the unknown word.

Graduates’ knowledge of literacy assessment. Graduates’ knowledge of literacy assessment was primarily explored through the interview. Graduates’ responses included both recognizing a variety of purposes for assessment and identifying a wide range of assessment tools.

Purpose of assessment. The most common type of assessment identified by graduates was diagnostic assessment. This type of assessment was understood as determining the reading and writing level of students. Diagnostic assessment was viewed
as particularly relevant at the beginning of the school year, in order to identify students’
level and obtain a baseline for tracking progress. As one graduate noted, “So, in the
beginning of the year, I would do a lot of diagnostic assessment, so I could get a feel of
what their general level is in reading and writing; and based on that, I would evaluate
them throughout the year.” (P6)

Moreover, graduates revealed different standards they would consider in
determining a child’s reading or writing level. The most commonly mentioned methods
were comparing a child’s performance to the Ministry standards, as outlined in the
curriculum expectations, and the use of standardized tests. It is noteworthy that three
interviewed graduates felt they would not know how to determine this. For example, one
graduate noted, “[It] would have to come from your assessments…you would have to
assess them in order to figure that [their level] out and so that would be based mostly on
the assessments I would be doing, that’s the big gap” (P10). Another participant qualified
her response stating, “In the first year [of teaching] you just don’t know” (P9).
Participants also mentioned relying on leveled books, benchmarks and writing exemplars
to determine whether or not a student is struggling.

Based on the assessment that I used, it would tell me where they fall. I would base
the assessment on the Ontario curriculum expectations. For example, the
expectation by the end of Grade 1 is that they know a period goes at the end of a
sentence. So, if they are consistently not putting a period, even after going
through the lessons like the rest of the class, I would assume they were below
level in that particular expectation. [It] doesn’t mean they would be below level in everything, but just in that expectation.” (P1)

Another purpose for assessment, noted by graduates, was to monitor and track students’ progress. In addition, assessment was also considered important to provide formative feedback to further students’ learning.

I think assessment has to be really important from day one in terms of being able to keep track of where kids are, know what they need more work on, and also just to celebrate their own accomplishments; if you are using a portfolio system. For the older ones, assessment [is] for feedback for them. (P5)

Assessment tools. Graduates described a wide range of assessment methods and tools they would use for literacy. These ranged from standardized assessment tools such as the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to making anecdotal notes throughout students’ participation in literacy related activities. It was noteworthy that nine graduates talked about using different tools for formative assessment focused on evaluating students’ understanding and improving the learning process.

I would use anecdotal notes and observations, self- assessments…so give them the chance to reflect and tell me how they feel about their work. I would use things like checklists in their reading, like are they reading a book end to end or are they reading half-way through the book and then changing. (P1)
The most common assessment tools mentioned by graduates were standardized assessments such as the DRA and the CASI; mentioned by seven participants. Another commonly mentioned method, reported by six participants, was the use of anecdotal notes based on observations of student’s reading and writing skills. Other common methods reported were: rubrics (four participants), checklists of reading behaviours (three participants), self-assessments of interests (three participants), assessing letter-sound correspondence (three), journal writing (two) and benchmarks (one).

**Feeling uncertain about assessment.** Although participants from both programs provided similar responses to the questions that addressed their knowledge of assessment tools and methods, four interviewed graduates, from Program A, stated that they felt unsure about what assessment tools they would use or about some particular aspect of assessment (e.g., assessing older students). Moreover, participants related this feeling of uncertainty to insufficient coverage of assessment in their literacy courses. As noted by a graduate from Program A, “Again going back to the lack of discussion of assessment, for me this is an ongoing area of inquiry because I don’t feel that, besides their writing samples and portfolios, that this is adequate to assess” (P9). These four participants also felt uncertain about how they would determine if a child was below level in literacy.

In addition, one participant from Program B also stated, “I am scared of assessment because I have never done it…I’m just afraid that I won’t be able to keep organized and to keep track of everybody in a very good way” (P7). Moreover, 24% of the surveyed participants rated as very little the amount of time discussing how to assess reading difficulties in the literacy courses. Similarly, 32% and 42% of surveyed graduates
indicated that they spent very little time in their courses on how to recognize when a child is not reading and writing at grade level, respectively.

In sum, despite being able to list a variety of assessment tools and methods, teacher candidates felt they had much less practice and coverage of assessment, both in their courses and in the practicum placement. This left several of them with a feeling of uncertainty about their ability to assess literacy skills.

**Differentiated instruction for diverse learners.** Graduates’ knowledge of differentiated instruction and diverse learners was also reflected in various interview questions. In order to explore graduates’ understanding and attribution of the difficulties a child might face in literacy development, they were asked to name possible reasons why a student might struggle with reading or writing. It was interesting to note that the most common factor related to a child’s difficulty with literacy, identified by nine of the ten graduates, was the lack of exposure to literacy in the home environment. The second and third most commonly named factors were learning disabilities and English as a second language, named by eight and seven participants respectively. Lack of interest or motivation was noted by five participants. Only four graduates identified inappropriate instruction as related to literacy difficulties. Other mentioned factors included vision or hearing problems, difficulties with motor coordination and attention or socio-emotional problems. Thus, for the most part, graduates attributed students’ difficulties in learning to read or write to either the students’ background (i.e., home environment or ESL) or intrinsic child characteristics (e.g., learning disability).

To assess graduates’ knowledge of differentiated instruction, interviewed participants were asked how they would adapt their literacy instruction to address the
needs of diverse learners in their classroom. All ten participants were able to provide at least general accommodations that they would implement in their classroom instruction. Overall, graduates responses revealed an understanding that modifications need to be made in both how information is presented to diverse learners, or the input; and allowing variation in the learner’s output. Thus, graduates considered general accommodations such as providing visual cues (input) and scribing or oral tests (output).

It is noteworthy that six graduates specifically reflected on the need to develop their knowledge of the learner, that is, to consider the specific learning profile of students in order to address specific needs. Thus, in addition to relying on general accommodations, graduates acknowledged the importance of considering the specific needs of the learner in planning how to adapt their program.

Meeting the needs of individual students would depend on my classroom and depend on the students. I would change my program as necessary for each student. So bring things to each student’s level, so that they are building on their own knowledge and they are not just lost in the mix of things. If I had to, I would have some students doing phonics instruction and others reading for research. I expect to be doing that in my classroom next year. Some kids will be still learning how to read, whereas others will be needing to read for their own understanding. Just differentiating instruction from the extremes; from one level to the other. (P2)

In terms of knowledge of the learner, two graduates also highlighted the importance of constant monitoring and assessment given that students’ needs change.
[For] special needs, you are going to have to do a ton of assessment. Whether that’s just assessing their understanding of phonics, [or] assessing their understanding of their reading and their spelling. So, you are going to have to be testing them, especially the students that you are concerned about. (P10)

Moreover, graduates made distinctions between students who might have a learning disability and considering the specific profile to adapt instruction accordingly. Similarly, graduates listed another set of considerations and accommodations for English language learners.

So, for ESL, you [would] be doing lots of read-aloud. You would have to have your class broken into reading groups so you could meet the needs of those students. You would likely want to tape yourself reading books and have those in the reading centres so students could read it again… For special needs, if you have take home books you are going to have to level your books and make sure that those kids are reading books that they can read, as well as your high students have books that are challenging for them. The final thing for special needs is that you would be doing everything in as many different ways as possible, so you would be reading, as well as having it written on the board, as well as having pictures for them in order to support their understanding. So, just in your daily instruction for both ESL and special needs your classroom has to be sort of a literacy zoo…kind of a universal design way to support your students. (P10)
In addition to considering differentiated instruction for students with special needs (e.g., learning disabilities) and English language learners, there was also awareness in graduates’ responses of normal variation in students’ ability levels and how they considered this in the overall planning of their literacy program. This awareness was evident both in their consideration of specific instructional strategies for diverse learners, as well as in their recognition that variation in students’ learning is part of the day-to-day reality of the classroom. This was reflected in graduates’ contemplation of diversity in thinking about classroom organization and time management. That is, thinking how they will organize their classroom instruction recognizing the different ability levels within the classroom.

It’s something that I’m really thinking about. Just the idea of having a couple different programs running at the same time so that the children that are starting at mid-level can continue to move upward, but the kids that are really not there yet have a little more remediation or a little bit more basic knowledge in place. And my guess is that I’ll end up spending more time with those kids in the beginning, to get them to that middle level, where they can then become much more autonomous. (P3)

In addition, three graduates made mention of the importance of having inclusive classrooms by considering activities that can be adapted to different levels so that all students can participate.
But making it inclusive, I really steer away from a program that is like, ‘ok, here is what everyone is doing and here is what you’re doing’. I think that you can adapt a lot of your core activities to ensure that everyone is included. Because as soon as those kids see that someone is getting a different version of the work they are doing then they know, and they start with ‘oh, he’s stupid.’ Kids are smart and mean, so just thinking about it from the get-go I think is important and obviously adapting as you see they are struggling or it’s too easy for them. (P9)

**Theme 6- Graduates’ feelings of preparedness to teach literacy**

**Theme 6: Feeling of preparedness to teach literacy**

- Factors associated with feeling confident to teach
- Graduates' cautious feeling of preparedness

Interviewed teacher candidates were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very) if they felt they were well prepared to teach literacy. Of the 10 interviewees, 30% stated that they felt very well prepared (rating of 5); 50% felt fairly well prepared (rating of 4); 10% felt somewhat well prepared (rating of 3) and the remaining 10% felt only a little prepared (rating of 2). Thus, of the interviewed participants, 80% felt they were at least fairly well prepared to teach literacy to elementary students.

In order to complement the data obtained through the interview, graduates’ feelings of preparedness were also derived from the broader sample that completed the survey. The 38 surveyed participants from both programs also rated on a scale from 1
(not at all) to 5 (completely) how prepared they felt to teach reading, to teach writing and to assess students’ literacy skills. In terms of teaching reading, 13% felt completely prepared (rating of 5), 50% felt well prepared (rating of 4), 26% felt adequately prepared (rating of 3) and 11% of surveyed graduates’ reported feeling a little prepared (rating of 2). For teaching writing, 8% felt completely prepared, 45% felt well prepared, 39% felt adequately prepared and 8% felt only a little prepared.

**Factors graduates associated with feeling confident to teach literacy.** In describing their feelings of preparedness to teach reading and writing to students, graduates highlighted several factors that contributed to whether or not they felt confident as literacy instructors.

Graduates’ confidence as literacy instructors related to their perception about the manner in which their literacy courses built their knowledge and understanding of how students learn to read and write. Thus, graduates who thought their program provided them with a comprehensive knowledge base of literacy development and literacy instruction, felt confident about being able to effectively teach students to read and write (80% of the interviewed graduates).

It gave me a basis for everything. Without any actual instruction I don’t think you would be able to teach literacy. I mean, I know how to read, but I didn’t know how to teach children those skills. So it was really broken down, from right from the beginning like learning phonics up to the Grade 6 level of increasing vocabulary and comprehension. (P1)
I had no idea at the start, and as much as it was lecture style, I have so much information now and so many resources to go back to. It was just really helpful that way. In terms of starting from nothing and learning what needs to be included, what needs to be more emphasized at a certain grade. I started with nothing before the course. That is the course I feel it left me the most confident, I felt ready to teach after that course. (P2)

Graduates were interviewed right before the recruitment process within the public education boards for the following academic year. Nevertheless, of the 10 interviewees, five of them already had a job for the following year, usually in private schools or teaching abroad. Another four graduates had applied for positions in the public boards and only one was not intending to teach the following year. Graduates who already had a job for the following school year (50% of interviewed participants) or who had started thinking about teaching the following year, were particularly reflective on how prepared they felt to teach literacy and on identifying the gaps in their knowledge. This ability to identify the gaps in their knowledge also related with their level of confidence in their ability to teach students to read and write.

I’m fairly prepared, obviously I still have a lot to learn, but I feel like I have the base of knowledge that I need to plan for my program. I’ve already started planning my program for next year. I know what I want to include and I feel confident about understanding the ability of my students at the Grade 2 level; I understand where they are at. They are sort of moving from that point of learning
to read to reading to learn and how to bring my kids from one to the other. I would know, once I assess my kids, I would know what to bring into the program to develop their skills. I feel that it is mostly from my course, than from the practicum. (P2)

In contrast, three graduates described feeling uncertain about their ability to teach students to read and write, particularly in the early grades, and related this to a failure of their literacy courses in providing them with the necessary knowledge to teach these skills.

I expected a little more specific instruction on how to teach literacy. I know some of my classmates got a lot out of it; I felt there could have been more that I could’ve gotten out of it. I didn’t feel so confident, and I still don’t feel confident in teaching reading and writing to young kids. So, although I want to teach younger grades, because I feel more comfortable with that age group, at the same time I feel very nervous that I won’t be able to teach them the basics because we weren’t necessarily given the nitty gritty of how to teach it. (P6)

And I came with a Master of Education degree, and I still felt like I didn’t understand how to teach. I understand the theory of educating and the notions of how our language can affect how children’s thoughts develop, but how to teach it [literacy], wasn’t really always made clear to us. Some of us just don’t know what to do when you are in a situation where you have to teach art, for example, and
it’s not your specialty. Well for me language is not my area of specialization. So, it’s assumed that we have a certain level of language competency, whereas it is not the case. I grew up in a whole language environment in elementary school in B.C. So talking about parts of language would have been really helpful, because I am going to have to teach that, those kinds of things. It’s just assumed that we understand that, and I think that a little more work could be done in the beginning of the course to kind of get caught up in language theories. It was a bit too fast, it was a bit rushed. (P3)

It is interesting to note from these accounts that some teacher candidates also reflected on their own early school experience as children learning to read and write, and the manner in which that prior experience affected their understanding of what was being taught in the literacy courses. Specifically, graduates who remembered being instructed in a whole language approach felt that they had insufficient knowledge of language structures. Although the perceived impact of this prior experience varied, from feeling at a disadvantage to the simple acknowledgement that they lacked this knowledge, it was clear graduates’ prior experience interacted with the manner in which they perceived their program prepared them for literacy instruction.

Basically, all of my understanding came from this program. I did a business degree so I had no background in this [literacy] whatsoever. So I learned everything from it. I didn’t realize that language was actually broken down into such small pieces, how instructionally it actually needs to be dissected to children.
How each little part, each sound of each letter is so imperative to them actually being able to understand a word; and therefore hopefully understand its meaning and syntax; and therefore being able to put a sentence together… I was taught in a whole language program I believe, I don’t remember any phonics when I was a kid. (P10)

Another factor that graduates associated with their feeling of preparedness to teach literacy was the amount and variety of resources they were provided with in their program. Thus, although eight of the ten interviewed graduates specifically identified gaps in their knowledge, they felt they would be able to fill in those gaps by reviewing the material and resources covered in their literacy courses.

We had amazing resources from the professors we had, even if the courses themselves went off track or weren’t as good as we expected them to be, the professors were unbelievable. So we have a lot of resources and I can always refer back to them if I need to. (P6)

Thus, even when graduates acknowledged gaps in their knowledge base or skills base for teaching literacy, there was sense of self-agency that they would be able to “figure it out,” either by reviewing the “resources” covered in their courses, relying on their own skills, or consulting with colleagues.
I feel competent to talk to other teachers about the language program, so that’s excellent. I may not know the specifics of the language program, but I know enough about what’s happening in teaching language and literacy, so reading and writing, to be able to sort of figure it out. Perhaps still a bit confused, obviously, because I haven’t done it in the same way that I will by this time next year, I will have done it, so I will have learned a lot from that. (P3)

Graduates’ cautious feeling of preparedness to teach literacy. Although graduates, for the most part, expressed feeling at least fairly well prepared to teach literacy, they also conveyed a sort of tension or ambivalence about their preparedness. Graduates reflected on the fact that despite having spent “a lot of time on it [literacy]” (P1), and feeling like they “have a good basis to start” (P1), they admitted that they might not feel so prepared to face the realities of the classroom setting. As one graduate mentioned, “The pre-service gets you thinking about it, but it’s in the doing of it I think that you really grow and understand.” (P3)

One of the realities of the classrooms that graduates were concerned about was their preparedness to address the needs of students at varying levels of literacy development. More specifically, six graduates expressed apprehension about being able to adequately identify and address the needs of all students.

I know there will be a wide ranging group of students, in terms of their ability to read, and how to adapt my program to that, differentiate instruction. I don’t feel as
prepared for that, getting good enough resources for these kids and making sure that everyone is getting something they need at their level. (P2)

The part that I’m worried about is if a child is way below grade level. And I know there is support in the school but, you know when there is a specific problem, say they skip words, ok, so we have lists of reading strategies. You can reread, you can…but I guess I’m mostly worried about that, specific reading or writing issues. (P8)

My biggest concern would be letting the children down in not delivering or not being able to support them in their needs. So first of all, not being able to recognize them in what needs they have, and the second part, would be not being able to support them once I know what they need. (P1)

Graduates’ apprehension in this respect highlights a sense of the responsibility involved in teaching children to read and write. As one graduate expressed, “Literacy for me is something that permeates across the curriculum, and children in order to succeed need to read math problems or science, you need those basic skills. So to teach it and foster it is so important, especially in the early ages” (P9).

Another reality of the classroom that six graduates were concerned about was classroom and time management. This included issues such as setting up classroom routines and knowing how to deal with difficult behaviour in the classroom. As noted by one teacher candidate, “I have some jitters about establishing rules and routines the first
couple of weeks of school. And if I have some children that are just plain out defiant that will be tricky to negotiate” (P5). Similarly, graduates worried about how they would manage their instructional time in order to cover their literacy programming as well as other subject areas. In this respect, graduates’ experience in practicum settings highlighted both the reality of how busy a classroom can be and the importance of planning and assigning a set time for literacy instruction.

…the big thing that came out, more so in discussion with other students, was finding the time to do all these great literacy activities. It came up as a concern because there are lots of things that you can do, but you also need to give math a time and other things. My fellow students were curious about how best to manage trying to make literacy an important part of a child’s day while still ensuring that they can have science and math. (P9)

So that’s what is becoming more obvious to me, that in my early planning for my next year I have to secure that time for writing and for reading. Otherwise it gets filled with other things. (P3)

In addition, no matter how well prepared graduates felt to teach literacy, there was a clear sense that they would have to devote considerable time and effort in planning their literacy program once they had a teaching assignment. This awareness was evident both in graduates who already had a teaching position and those who did not, as stated by one of the teacher candidates, “…but I think that whatever I sit down to teach and whatever
grade I do it in, it is going to take a lot of work for me, in terms of finding the resources and the theories that I want to follow that I haven’t done” (P4). On the other hand, there is also the acknowledgement that as literacy teachers they “still have a lot to learn” (P5) and that teaching involves “ongoing learning” (P9).

Overall, the awareness of the responsibility involved in teaching students to read and write makes graduates feel apprehensive about their ability to be successful in such a daunting task. Although, for the most part, graduates feel the program instilled in them the necessary knowledge and skills to face this challenge, the magnitude of the task, as well as the realities of the classroom setting they have witnessed through their practicum placements, create a certain ambivalence about how prepared they feel to teach literacy to students. Therefore, there is a cautious feeling of preparedness in which graduates recognize that their learning as literacy teachers is not complete.

Theme 7 – Developing a vision of literacy instruction

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In their experience as teacher candidates, graduates’ thoughts, attitudes and beliefs about teaching literacy are formed and transformed into a vision of teaching. This vision of teaching involves their understanding of their role as literacy instructors and how they envision their students’ learning. Thus, it involves the interaction between teacher and students; between teaching and learning.
Graduates’ vision of literacy instruction.

Making literacy motivating and meaningful. Graduates expressed awareness of the primary role that literacy plays in children’s learning and education. Given the importance of learning to read and write, nine interviewed participants highlighted the role that motivation plays in developing students’ literacy skills. The ability to engage students in the learning process was viewed as key to any effort to teach literacy. As one graduate stated, “Instilling a love for reading and writing is the goal of any program” (P2). Graduates’ vision included the notion of making literacy instruction meaningful by relating it to students’ life.

I understand [literacy] is very important and I could say that everything has to do with relating real life to the literacy program, or the literacy program to the children’s real life… I think it’s important to model a lot for everything, like writing and reading so you motivate them and help them understand that reading is part of life. (P7)

And you think you are wasting a lot of the effort with the bulk of these kids if they are not motivated. If you are findings things to hang on the literacy instruction, to make it interesting for them, then they will get excited about it, and they’ll want to learn how do [sic] they make that “c”; how they make that sound. But if they are not interested, and a lot of your literacy program is self-selected reading for Kindergarten, and they just flip through the books and they’re getting nothing out of it, then they are not going to go very far. (P9)
Thus, graduates highlighted the importance of engaging students in the learning process as part of their vision of teaching literacy. Moreover, they recognized specific strategies or ways in which they can motivate and engage students. Thus, graduates were able to make connections between this aspect of their vision of teaching and specific behaviours or teaching practices to enact those ideals. In this way, graduates’ vision influences their attitudes towards teaching, learning and ultimately their teaching practices.

Motivation for literacy I think is important in any age group. That comes into play when you are choosing activities, materials, and books for kids to read; that they are interested in reading. I agree that kids should have authentic purposes for reading and writing, there should be a reason why they are doing it, it should be something interesting, engaging it should come out of their own schema development; even for little guys. (P5)

**Balance between direct instruction and inquiry.** Graduates were asked to select one of two statements designed to capture their philosophy regarding literacy instruction. More specifically, one of the statements advocated a primary role to direct instruction in student learning, whereas the other statement supported student discovery and inquiry (see last question of interview schedule in Appendix D for actual statements). For the most part, graduates hesitated in affirming their position one way or the other. Overall, seven graduates indicated that they believed in a combination of direct instruction and
discovery. For example one graduate stated, “I believe children should experience, but I think they need a lot of literacy instruction at the primary level to make them successful in their reading” (P 10). In addition, graduates articulated the role that each one of these approaches has in developing students’ literacy skills.

You’ve got to have a combination [of direct and indirect instruction]. You have to be teaching students things directly, but you also have to have them discovering things on their own. Give them the opportunities and the manipulatives; the things they need to discover things on their own. I feel a lot of school is about discovery and learning through discovery and less about direct instruction, but I feel there are some things you just need to teach directly. In spelling, you can find trends, they can try to sound it out as best they can, but why not directly show them how to spell. Where [sic] at some point, there is nothing wrong with directly showing them how to spell [a] word and linking it with other words and getting them to find the trends that way. Like punctuation, they can read a lot of books and discover punctuation, but they can also be taught how to use punctuation correctly. They may not ever notice it unless you point it out. (P2)

Graduates also elaborated on the limitations of each one of these approaches if followed exclusively in teaching literacy. Thus, for the most part, graduates expressed the belief that it is in the balance of direct instruction and discovery that children best learn to read and write.
They [students] need to learn how to do things outside of a box. I don’t think it’s great to just teach kids this is how you write, this is how you read. However, at the same time, you want them to be spelling correctly, and you want them to have proper sentence structure, and you want them to know how to articulate themselves in writing and reading, and explaining themselves vocally. So, I would say discovery, but with a strong emphasis on that you do teach them what is right. You can’t just let them discover totally on their own, because that is sort of like the whole language approach and I don’t really agree with that. But also let them have fun with it, let them have the inventive spelling, and the nonsense words, but keep them in track and make sure that they do know what is right. (P6)

Three graduates also made specific statements about the fact that children will not develop literacy skills “naturally” or without direct instruction. Thus, for these three graduates, direct instruction was viewed as the foundation of their vision of literacy instruction.

I think that there are a lot of good strategies for helping kids out and I don’t think they should just be left to figure it out on their own around reading, spelling and writing. Because they aren’t activities that come naturally; they are ones that we have created as people and it [literacy] varies, it changes over time, and they need to be initiated into how to do it. (P3)
I’m more of a supporter of phonics. I think there are a lot of elements of literacy that aren’t self-evident, that you wouldn’t necessarily pick up as you go along. I wouldn’t only do explicit instruction, but I think the application is really important in terms of their experience with print and that it’s authentic and [it] gives them the ability to practice. I think that it really helps to have some tricks to fall back on, in terms of like, to spell a word, to break it down into the syllables, so that you have a way of attacking it. It’s hard to spell! And word families and stuff like that. I think it gives kids confidence and it definitely helps those that are struggling more and need the explicit help. (P5)

**Graduates’ conceptualizations of teaching.** Another aspect of graduates’ vision of literacy instruction involved their conceptualizations of teaching. One of the notions that graduates developed through their experience as teacher candidates was realizing the responsibility they hold in teaching ALL students to read and write. As noted before, one of the central concerns expressed by graduates was failing to identify a struggling student or being unable to address the needs of a wide range of students. Thus, graduates were cognizant of the reality of diverse learners and acknowledged their responsibility in teaching all students. For example, on candidate identified “Guiding the students and working with each student individually as often as possible on their specific needs” (P2) as one of the key elements of her literacy program.

I think with all teaching, especially literacy, it’s an ongoing learning for the teacher. Literacy for me is something that permeates across the curriculum, and
children, in order to succeed, need to read math problems or science, you need those basic skills. So to teach it and foster it is so important especially in the early ages. (P9)

It is noteworthy that in their vision of teaching, graduates attributed the failure or success of their students, at least in part, to their effectiveness as literacy teachers. With this assumption, there was also the conceptualization of teaching as busy and challenging.

My biggest concern would be letting the children down in not delivering or not being able to support them in their needs. So first of all not being able to recognize them in what needs they have, and the second part would be not being able to support them once I know what they need. (P1)

Teaching was also viewed as a collaborative task. Graduates made reference to relying or consulting with colleagues in developing their literacy program, to extend their knowledge about students and instructional strategies, and to obtain support in areas of difficulty or need. In this sense, there is the vision that they will not be alone in teaching, that they will have a community or network of support to rely on for the busy and challenging task of teaching.

I’m really hoping that I am in a community where I can work with other staff members and see what they are doing. I think those collegial relationships will help me a lot in setting up my classroom and getting ideas and some advice. I
suppose I have some jitters about establishing rules and routines the first couple of weeks of school, and if I have some children that are just plain out defiant that will be tricky to negotiate. I’m hoping I have adequate information from previous teachers, I’m really really hoping I don’t have a child who is really struggling that nobody has ever gotten any data on. (P5)

Teaching was also conceptualized as requiring ongoing learning. Throughout graduates’ descriptions of experience in teacher preparation and in their anticipation of beginning their teaching career shortly after the interviews were conducted, there was a sense that the program was the initial step in a path of ongoing learning. As one graduate stated, “I think with all teaching, especially literacy, it’s an ongoing learning for the teacher” (P9). Another graduate expressed, “obviously I still have a lot to learn, but I feel like I have the base knowledge that I need to plan for my program; I’ve already started planning my program for next year” (P2). Thus, graduates’ understood that, as teachers, they would continue to learn and develop their knowledge and skills as literacy instructors.
Becoming a literacy instructor: A proposed socio-cultural model of teacher development

The results discussed thus far include the “basic description” and “conceptual ordering” of two-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario, as outlined by Patton (2002, p. 490) in his description of grounded theory. In the grounded theory approach proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2008), the final stage of analysis involves integrating the identified categories, described in the previous section, to arrive at an explanatory theory or framework. I accomplished this through the recursive and iterative process of analyzing the data, and through the writing of integrative memos and diagrams. In addition, comparing and contrasting the findings from this study with the literature on teacher learning, teacher preparation, and literacy instruction, further clarified the relationship between the identified categories.

Thus, the findings presented in the previous section, in addition to the literature reviewed, serve as the evidence-base upon which I propose a model of teacher preparation for literacy instruction. Using an activity theory framework, as suggested by Grossman and her colleagues (1999), the proposed model outlines the settings and processes through which prospective teachers become literacy instructors. Activity theory proposes that an individual develops frameworks for thinking through problem-solving actions that take place in specific settings. Thus, relying on activity theory allows the possibility to attend simultaneously to individuals and the settings in which they learn and develop (Grossman et al, 1999).
During teacher preparation, teacher candidates are immersed in two primary activity settings, namely the program course work and the field placements. Each of these settings, with their specific goals and purposes, mediate prospective teachers’ development as literacy instructors. Each setting, in a way, represents a separate and distinct mindset. The concept of mindset entails a set of beliefs or a way of thinking that determines behaviour and outlook.

There are specific components and processes in each context that influence candidates’ development as teachers and how they learn to teach literacy. Based on graduates’ descriptions of their experience in their pre-service program, as well as the literature base that outlines the evidence-based components of effective teacher preparation, the proposed model includes the description of the goal, purpose, and components of each activity setting, as they relate to teacher candidates’ development as literacy instructors.

In addition to the two identified activity settings, the variability in the experience of interviewed graduates revealed that the individual learner mediates and integrates the components and processes of each setting. Therefore, the role of the individual learner is central to the model of learning to teach at the pre-service level. The interaction between these three mindsets; that is, the mindset of the program course work, the mindset of the field placements, and the mindset of the individual learner, is at the core of the process of learning to teach at the pre-service level.

The model also outlines the outcomes of the process of learning to teach as identified from the data. They include graduates’ appropriation of conceptual tools (i.e., knowledge and understanding), their appropriation of practical tools (i.e., pedagogical
skills and strategies), and their feelings of confidence and self-efficacy as literacy instructors. In addition to these outcomes, the data revealed that at the end of their teacher preparation program, graduates have begun to form a vision of literacy instruction. This vision includes their identity as teachers and the vision of teaching and learning that will guide their literacy instruction. Graduates’ vision constitutes the new resulting mindset after going through the process of teacher preparation.

Figure 2 presents the proposed socio-cultural model of pre-service teacher preparation in literacy instruction. In addition to specifying the components of pre-service education, the model outlines the relationship and interactions between components. More specifically, the proposed framework describes the manner in which each of the activity settings or mindsets influences the outcomes of teacher preparation. These relationships are represented by arrows. Unidirectional arrows indicate the influence of one component of the model over another. Bidirectional arrows indicate the interaction of components in the model. The components are explained in detail following the diagram of the model.
Figure 2 Model of pre-service teacher preparation for literacy instruction
Methods course

The overall goal or purpose of a methods course is to provide students with the foundation of knowledge and skills for teaching literacy. Ideally, it is through course work that teacher candidates develop their understanding of the theories and principles of how children learn, of what children need to learn, and the most effective way to teach subject matter. Another important goal of course work is to instill and promote a reflective stance towards teaching and learning in prospective teachers.

There are two elements in methods courses that need to be considered. These two components, namely the course content and the pedagogy of the course instructor, can be regarded separately in terms of the key features that should be considered in each one. Despite their separate composition and relevance in the process of learning to teach, they also interact and influence each other.

Content. The content covered in methods courses is more readily understood and remembered by teacher candidates when it is presented in the context of an organizing framework. This framework is most useful if it incorporates the developmental perspective of literacy development. The organizing framework allows teacher candidates to make sense of the different components, to understand their purpose, and the relationship among components. When an organizing framework is not provided, graduates have a harder time understanding the coherence or connection of the range of information covered. It is interpreted as “bits and pieces” instead of an integrated whole that guides their understanding. Moreover, having an organizing framework allows graduates to further build and deepen their understanding of literacy instruction as they
can relate and incorporate new information gained in other settings (i.e., their practicum placements) to their existing framework.

The content covered in methods courses should focus on the *evidence-based key components* of literacy instruction and the specific instructional strategies to develop these skills (e.g., coverage of phonemic awareness and teaching strategies that target phonemic awareness). These evidence-based components are easily accessible in consensus reports such as those of the National Reading Panel (2000) and the International Reading Association (2007).

Similarly, the *purpose and methods of assessment* need to be covered in depth in the context of methods courses. In addition to covering assessment as a topic in its own right, assessment should be incorporated in all the other topics covered through methods courses so that its connection to instruction is modeled and made evident.

Issues of *diversity and differentiated instruction*, which include cultural and language diversity as well as individual learning differences, need to be incorporated into every aspect of the content covered in methods courses. Similar to the treatment of assessment, incorporating issues of diversity and differentiated instruction when covering other topics will promote an infusion approach as suggested by Kosnik and Beck (2009). This, in turn, will help teacher candidates make connections about the manner in which they can address the varying needs of students in the classroom. This approach reinforces the vision that diversity is central and integral to classroom teaching.

Finally, *program planning* also needs to be specifically addressed in the content of methods courses given that this is one of the first skills that prospective teachers will be asked to perform when they begin their teaching careers. The coverage of program
planning in the methods course should promote the ability to formulate teaching goals and develop teacher candidates’ understanding of how the different instructional components relate and interact with each other to achieve such goals. It should also encourage prospective teachers to reflect on how they can incorporate assessment to inform instruction as well as to differentiate instruction in their program. Engaging prospective teachers in a task that is so closely tied to the reality of teaching provides them with a unique learning opportunity to make connections between theory and practice. Providing graduates with a structured opportunity, with support, to think through these issues, will better prepare them for accomplishing this teaching task and give them the sense of confidence that they can perform this independently.

**Pedagogy.** The pedagogy of methods courses affects the manner in which the content is presented and experienced by teacher candidates. Given that teacher preparation course work is one of the last experiences of prospective teachers as students, it entails a unique opportunity to influence their understanding of teaching and learning. As such, the course instructor serves as a role model of the espoused teaching principles and practices. Therefore, *modeling* plays a particularly important role in graduates' experience in course work. This modeling includes general approaches to teaching and learning (e.g., student-centered) as well as modeling of specific instructional and assessment strategies (e.g., using rubrics to evaluate course assignments). For modeling to be most effective, the underlying principles and rationale should be made *explicit* to teacher candidates. Through this process, the linkage between theory and practice is made evident as graduates experience the benefits and/or limitations of a specific approach or
strategy. In this sense, the pedagogy of teacher education courses influences student teachers’ appropriation of conceptual and practical tools.

Another essential pedagogical tool is to plan assignments that are closely related to the realities of teaching. These include tasks that prospective teachers will have to do once they are in the classroom (e.g., develop a literacy program, assess students’ work) or tasks that encourage them to think about and reflect on issues related to teaching and learning. In this sense, the goal or purpose of the assignment should also be made explicit to teacher candidates, specifically in terms of the skills that are hoped to be developed through completing the task. It is also useful to provide guidelines of the issues graduates should reflect on in completing the assignment.

The ideal pedagogy for methods courses involves a balance between: a) direct instruction of relevant information; b) modeling teaching approaches; c) allowing teacher candidates to experience and implement instructional strategies; and d) structuring opportunities for discussion and reflection that allow teacher candidates to build their own knowledge (e.g., assignments). Through this balance of direct instruction and inquiry, the two primary goals of course work, namely to provide a theoretical and practical knowledge-base, and to instill a reflective approach to teaching can be achieved.

**Field placements**

Field placement in classroom settings is an additional context that influences the process of learning to teach at the pre-service level. This setting represents a particular set of goals and purposes in the development of prospective teachers. Through their experiences in practice teaching, teacher candidates are exposed to the realities of teaching, which include, but are not limited to, becoming aware of the varying needs of
students, the challenges of time and classroom management, and the decision-making involved in classroom teaching. In line with the purpose of exposing pre-service teachers to the realities of teaching, field placements provide the opportunity for teacher candidates to enact the knowledge and skills they have gained through coursework.

An additional purpose of field placements is to provide graduates with the opportunity to connect theory with practice. In this sense, graduates’ practice teaching experience serves as an opportunity to question, reflect on and/or reinforce their understanding of important features of literacy instruction and development. Moreover, practicum placements also increase graduates’ exposure to teaching approaches and practical tools.

There are two elements to consider in prospective teachers’ field placements, the contexts and students they encounter during their placements and the role that host or associate teachers play in graduates’ field experience.

**Contexts and students.** Prospective teachers require being exposed to a wide range and variety of contexts and populations during their practice teaching placements. Consistent with the goal of encountering the realities of teaching, having the opportunity to observe and teach students from a variety of grade levels; socio-economic backgrounds; cultural, ethnic and language backgrounds; and special needs (e.g., learning disabilities) influences teacher candidates’ understanding of diversity and differentiated instruction. Specifically, the more teacher candidates are exposed to children with varying needs and abilities, the more aware they will become of the pervasiveness of diversity in the classroom. This, in turn, will reinforce the importance of adopting an infusion approach to diversity and differentiated instruction. In addition, it also allows
pre-service teachers to realize that contextual factors are as influential in the decisions made in teaching as concepts and beliefs.

As has been shown in the literature, prospective teachers benefit from *early and repeated practice teaching opportunities* in which they can encounter and begin to develop an understanding of the multiple demands of teaching. Moreover, repeated opportunities to observe students and practice teaching skills increase the likelihood that prospective teachers will change their pre-existing beliefs and visions about teaching and learning; especially if these are accompanied with opportunities to reflect on what occurs in their practicum placements. Thus, having practicum placements interspersed with course work would ideally provide opportunities for teacher candidates to reflect on what they experience in their practicum placements in the context of their methods courses, with the benefit of having the support and guidance of the course instructor to reflect on their practicum experience.

**Host teachers.** The role of host teachers and the relationship they establish with teacher candidates are very influential in the practice teaching experience. Host teachers function as gatekeepers of the amount and type of exposure graduates will have to instruction in the classroom setting. Ideally, the relationship between teacher candidates and host teachers should be collaborative and supportive. They should collaborate in establishing the goals and expectations of prospective teachers’ placements. Moreover, to support prospective teachers’ enactment, host teachers should provide coaching and feedback to teacher candidates as they begin to teach and interact with students.

In addition to the previously mentioned ideal role of host teachers, it is important to acknowledge that they also serve as role models in terms of their teaching approaches
and specific instructional practices. This is consistent with the goal of the field placement to increase the repertoire of practical tools, such as instructional and assessment strategies. However, for this modeling to be most beneficial to teacher candidates, host teachers should be explicit in discussing and sharing their motives and underlying rationale for their instructional decisions and practices.

Finally, teacher candidates also benefit from observing the interaction between their host teachers’ teaching behaviours and the impact of these on students’ learning. Observing this transactional pattern reinforces their connections between theory and practice, as well as influencing their beliefs and visions of teaching and learning. Although there is general agreement in the literature that the field placement experience is most beneficial when the teaching approach and methods of the host teachers are congruent with those espoused by the teacher preparation program, there is also some evidence (Grossman et al., 2000) that having contrasting experiences helps to deepen graduates’ understanding of the principles they were taught in methods courses. The findings from the present study provide further evidence for this. The reality is that it is unlikely that the recommended congruence will be evident in every placement experience. Therefore, encouraging graduates to reflect on their contrasting experiences will support them in integrating and making sense of these situations.

**Individual learner**

The process of preparing teachers for subject-matter instruction, at the pre-service level, entails the interaction and integration of graduates’ experience in each of previously discussed settings. Thus, central to a model of teacher preparation for literacy instruction, is the role that the individual learner plays in the process.
The purpose of including the individual learner in a model of learning to teach is to outline the characteristics of the individual learner that can be addressed explicitly in teacher preparation.

**Prior beliefs and experience.** It is widely accepted that prospective teachers bring their beliefs and ideas about teaching, based on their prior experiences or apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), to the process of teacher preparation. These beliefs and prior experiences serve as filters for the new information that teacher candidates will encounter through their teacher preparation program. Acknowledging and addressing these prior beliefs and notions has been identified by the literature as key to allowing teacher candidates to understand and adopt the beliefs and visions of teaching espoused by a teacher preparation program (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In this respect, in addition to the two “mindsets” that the methods course and practicum placements represent, student teachers’ prior beliefs and experiences about teaching and learning constitute a third mindset that requires consideration. It is this third mindset that mediates the manner in which the other two mindsets are interpreted and integrated by teacher candidates. The dynamic interaction between these three mindsets is likely to generate contradictions, for example between theory and practice, or between prior beliefs and disconfirming evidence of those beliefs. Teacher candidates need support in negotiating these contradictions and in making connections between theory and practice.

**Active engagement.** An important characteristic of the individual learner is to be engaged in the learning to teach process. Given that the individual learner is the interface between the two settings, teacher candidates need to be active participants of their development, in negotiating the interaction between the two settings and integrating
information and experience from one setting with those of the other. Graduates’ engagement can and should be promoted in both settings. Primarily, methods courses can have a great influence in engaging prospective teachers through the course pedagogy and the type of activities they are involved in. Moreover, providing teacher candidates with a roadmap of what they might encounter during their placements, as well as a list of issues to keep in mind and reflect on during their field experiences, would help to engage them and to direct their attention to learning opportunities in practice teaching.

**The roles teacher candidates play.** One way of understanding the influence of the individual learner is to distinguish the two roles that teacher candidates engage in during their teacher preparation. On the one hand, teacher candidates partake in the role of student, for example during their enrollment in course work. On the other hand, candidates also experience the role of teacher, for example in delivering a lesson in their practicum placements. Each of these roles represents a different mindset and set of skills that teacher candidates bring to the process. For example, in the student role, teacher candidates’ mode of operation is primarily to observe, think about, and reflect. In contrast, in the teacher role, graduates are mostly concerned with acting or doing. This distinction is relevant as it likely influences what teacher candidates’ attend to and the manner in which they process the information they receive from the environment.

Prospective teachers oscillate between their role as students and their role as teachers throughout their program of study. Although each activity setting is more conducive to a specific role, that is, graduates are more likely to adopt the role of student during their coursework; they also adopt this role during their practicum placements (e.g., when they observe their host teacher deliver a lesson). Similarly, although their role as
teachers is mostly expressed in their classroom placements; graduates also experience their role as teachers during their course work (e.g., when they work with student data during their methods course).

In teacher preparation, teacher candidates need to be made aware of the two roles they function under during their time in the program. Encouraging and supporting teacher candidates to reflect on what they experience in each of these roles will strengthen their ability to negotiate and integrate their experience as teachers and as students. This, in turn, will influence their appropriation of tools, their understanding of teaching and learning, and their vision of literacy instruction.

**Outcomes of pre-service teacher preparation**

**Conceptual tools.** Conceptual tools refer to principles or ideas about teaching and learning such as broad theories, concepts, and subject matter knowledge. They include knowledge of explanatory frameworks to organize concepts and ideas, as well as pedagogical knowledge of subject matter. Similarly, the understanding of learning and learners is also a conceptual tool. Examples of conceptual tools for literacy instruction include: balanced literacy; critical literacy; the developmental trajectory of reading, writing and language skills; and the relationship between oral and written language among others. Examples of conceptual tools not exclusive to literacy instruction include student-centered instruction, teacher-centered instruction, and constructivism.

Teacher candidates’ exposure to conceptual tools is primarily in the context of their methods courses. It is in methods courses that they should be presented with theories, concepts, and the research-based knowledge of an area of study. Thus, it is
through course work that graduates are exposed to the language specific to the profession and the area of study.

The findings of the current study indicate that course work has the most significant influence on prospective teachers’ knowledge and understanding of a subject matter, such as literacy instruction. This finding is consistent with the literature on teacher preparation (Risko et al., 2008). Therefore, pre-service teachers’ appropriation of conceptual tools is primarily mediated by the content and pedagogy of their methods courses.

**Practical tools.** Practical tools refer to pedagogical skills and instructional strategies that prospective teachers can implement in classroom teaching. They are consistent with what Feiman-Nemser (2001) described as the beginning repertoire for teaching. Practical tools include curricular materials, subject specific models for teaching, and assessment strategies. Examples of practical tools specific to literacy instruction include: guided reading and writing, strategies for reading comprehension, systematic phonics programs, and use of inventive spelling among others.

Prospective teachers are exposed to practical tools through their methods courses and their practicum placements. In introducing practical tools in the context of methods courses, their relationship with conceptual tools needs to be made explicit so that teacher candidates understand the application of theory to practice.

The field placement has the potential of being particularly influential in candidates’ appropriation of practical tools. When pre-service teachers are exposed to a variety of placements, they have increased opportunities to broaden their repertoire of instructional and assessment strategies by experiencing the teaching practices of host
teachers. Moreover, it is in the context of the classroom setting that teacher candidates can witness the implementation of strategies and students’ responses to them. Being able to observe and experience this interaction between teaching strategies and student learning deepens graduates’ understanding of practical tools.

Teacher candidates’ appropriation of practical tools is also enhanced in their field placements when they are provided the opportunity to implement or enact teaching skills. This opportunity to enact broadens their knowledge of the steps and procedures required for implementation. Graduates’ experience enacting skills in the context of the classroom setting is particularly influential because it tests their knowledge, their understanding, and their confidence. Whether or not they experience their enactment as successful will also influence their appropriation of practical tools. In this respect, host teachers can play an important role in candidates’ appropriation of practical tools if they provide coaching, feedback and support in their attempts to enact instructional skills.

Confidence and self-efficacy. Another relevant outcome of teacher preparation is prospective teachers’ feeling of confidence and their self-efficacy as literacy instructors. Teacher candidates feel confident when they consider the pre-service program prepared them to teach literacy to students. In particular, candidates’ knowledge base and understanding of literacy development and instruction (i.e., conceptual tools) and their repertoire of pedagogical skills and strategies (i.e., practical tools), directly influence their level of confidence. Thus, the methods courses and the field placements influence prospective teachers’ confidence and self-efficacy as literacy teachers by supporting and enabling the appropriation of conceptual and practical tools. In addition, through the integration of their experience in the role of students and the role of teachers, teacher
candidates develop a sense of self-efficacy that allows them to feel confident to face the

task of teaching.

Among the many skills and competencies that pre-service teachers identify as
influencing their confidence level, the ability to assess students’ needs and to be able to
address the needs of all students are considered central to their confidence as teachers.
This becomes particularly evident in the context of practicum placements where, through
their exposure to students, teacher candidates become aware of the challenges of teaching
diverse learners. This, in turn, allows them to develop a more realistic view of their
competence and readiness to teach. When teacher candidates believe that their program
provided them with a strong foundation of knowledge and understanding of literacy
instruction, particularly if it is organized around a guiding framework, they develop a
sense of self-efficacy that they can face challenges and problem-solve situations they will
encounter.

**Vision of teaching.** A final outcome of pre-service teacher preparation for
literacy instruction is candidates’ vision of teaching. Teacher candidates’ vision of
teaching can be understood as their mental representation of teaching and learning at the
conclusion of their teacher preparation program. This vision includes their identity as
teachers, which incorporates their views about learning and teaching, and the goal or
ideal that will guide their practice as literacy instructors.

Prospective teachers’ vision of teaching is greatly influenced by what they
experience in the pre-service program in their role as students and as teachers; that is,
what they were taught was the “ideal” and what they experienced that “worked” in their
classroom placements. Thus, the resulting vision is a combination of conceptual, practical
and experiential understanding of literacy instruction. Ideally, prospective teachers’ vision of literacy instruction will derive from the integration of the three outlined mindsets, that is, the mindset of the methods course, the mindset of the field placements and the mindset of the individual learner.

Teacher preparation lays the foundations for graduates’ identity as teachers. One important element of their identity as teachers is the sense of responsibility for students’ learning. This aspect of their identity is closely related to graduates’ feelings of preparedness and self-efficacy. It also depends on being able to reflect on and question their attributions with respect to students’ success or failure in learning. In this sense, pre-service teachers should be encouraged to attribute the success or failure of students, in part, to their effectiveness as teachers. Thus, teacher preparation guides prospective teachers’ understanding of the fundamental role that teaching plays in children’s learning.

Another characteristic to incorporate in graduates’ identity as teachers is the importance of working in collaboration with others. Teacher preparation should promote a vision of teaching and learning as occurring in a community, instead of in isolation. The concept of collaboration will influence both their identity as teacher, feeling part of a community, as well as how they envision children will learn best; that is, in community and collaboration with their peers.

Another important component of graduates’ vision is the conception that teaching is a profession that requires ongoing learning. In this respect, teacher preparation should promote habits of thinking about teaching, such as the ability to question and reflect on one’s teaching beliefs and practices. The understanding that teaching involves ongoing learning can be supported by instilling a vision of evidence-based practice. Teacher
preparation plays a crucial role in communicating the importance of relying on principles and strategies whose effectiveness has been empirically validated. In addition to offering graduates state-of-the-art knowledge and skills, which in and of itself can have a positive impact on graduates’ confidence level, promoting an evidence-based stance toward teaching reinforces the importance of ongoing learning and keeping up to date with developments in education.

In terms of the goals or ideals to guide literacy instruction, graduates’ teaching should be based on the view that learning requires the engagement of the learner. Thus, the notion of making subject matter, in this case literacy, motivating and meaningful for students should be central to their vision of teaching. Similarly, a vision of literacy instruction as requiring a balance between direct and indirect instruction should be promoted in teacher preparation. These tenets serve as principles and standards that will guide graduates’ teaching practice. The extent to which teacher candidates incorporate these ideals into their vision of teaching can be greatly influenced by their opportunity to experience them in their roles as students and as teachers in the pre-service program. Thus, the pedagogy of their course work, as well as the opportunity to witness or implement these teaching principles during their field placements, will influence the inclusion of these principles into their vision of teaching.
Chapter 4

General Discussion

One of the goals of this study was to address the existent gap in the literature, in the Canadian context, with respect to the impact of length of teacher education on outcomes related to elementary literacy instruction. The findings of Study 1 suggest that there are consistent differences between graduates from one- and two-year programs in Ontario. These differences related to the addressed research questions that included the conceptual and applied knowledge of literacy instruction, the amount of exposure to literacy-related topics, and graduates’ feelings of preparedness for literacy instruction. In this exploratory study, graduates from two-year programs reported greater breadth in the coverage of literacy in their programs, which included the exposure to literacy-related concepts and issues related to assessment and literacy difficulties. More importantly, graduates from two-year programs also appeared to have greater depth of conceptual and applied knowledge of literacy instruction. In addition, graduates from two-year programs more readily considered and included evidence-based components of literacy instruction in describing an ideal literacy program. Thus, in addressing the stated research questions, this exploratory study suggests that there are differences between graduates from one- and two-year programs in Ontario in terms of their preparation for literacy instruction. In this respect, it supports and extends previous findings of the benefits of extended programs in the United States (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005).

Although the design of Study 1 makes it impossible to ascertain whether the identified differences can be attributed to the length of the program, it is possible to speculate that, in line with the life space argument, shorter programs cannot give
adequate attention to all that a teacher needs to know to begin teaching. Previous studies have found that teacher candidates from one-year programs in Canada report having insufficient time in their programs to reflect upon the information and concepts that were presented (Bainbridge & Macy, 2008). Moreover, given that prospective teachers have difficulty integrating different kinds of knowledge, such as propositional knowledge with practical knowledge in the field (Clift & Brady, 2005), it is possible that lengthier programs allow teacher candidates more time to reflect, integrate, and connect theory and practice in a way that deepens their understanding of subject matter. However, more controlled studies are required to isolate the specific impact of length of program on graduates’ knowledge and skills in literacy instruction. Similarly, it would also be necessary to follow graduates into their first years of teaching to determine whether there are differences in their classroom teaching practices.

Given the identified differences between one- and two-year programs, the second overall purpose of this investigation was to obtain an in-depth understanding of how two-year teacher preparation programs in Ontario prepare teachers for literacy instruction. This research was timely, and particularly relevant, given that most of the existent literature on teacher preparation, with the exception of a few recent endeavors (Bainbridge & Macy, 2008; Beck et al., 2007), is derived from programs in the United States. Considering that social and cultural factors influence teaching and learning, research that is derived locally is important in understanding how teachers are being prepared for literacy instruction in Canada.

The following sections summarize the descriptive findings of the investigation of two-year programs as they relate to the stated research questions. These findings
elucidate the identified differences between graduates from one- and two-year programs in their preparation for literacy instruction in the elementary grades.

**Literacy content of two-year programs.** In terms of the range of literacy content covered in two-year programs, teacher candidates described that their programs covered the developmental progression of literacy, word-level instructional strategies, and text-level comprehension strategies. Although there was some variability across the two programs studied, overall, the content covered corresponded with the evidence-based knowledge of effective literacy instruction. This explains why graduates from two-year programs were more likely to name evidence-based components in their description of a *good* literacy program than those from one-year programs.

There were, however, two areas that graduates felt were not sufficiently covered in the two-year programs. These were issues related to writing instruction and assessment. Although graduates did report some coverage of writing in their literacy-related courses, they felt there was more emphasis placed on the coverage of reading instruction. Similarly, graduates felt that literacy assessment was not sufficiently covered in their programs. The findings from the current study suggest that, although graduates were knowledgeable of a wide range of assessment tools, they were missing the in-depth understanding of the purposes of assessment and how to relate assessment to their overall literacy program. This coincides with previous findings by Beck et al. (2007) in which graduates also reported feeling that their programs missed a more comprehensive coverage of assessment tools and of ways to integrate assessment with instruction.

**Graduates’ understanding of literacy instruction.** Graduates from two-year programs demonstrated a relatively good understanding of key literacy concepts (e.g.,
phonemic awareness). They were also aware of general approaches to literacy instruction (e.g., balanced literacy) and of specific components of a literacy program (e.g., phonics; vocabulary instruction). In addition, at the conclusion of their program, graduates identified a wide range of instructional strategies and were able to relate these to specific instructional goals. Thus, for example, graduates from two-year programs were able to identify instructional strategies to target specific instructional skills such as reading comprehension.

Teacher candidates from these programs also demonstrated knowledge of ways to address diversity in their classrooms, such as modifications in how information is presented and providing a variety of ways in which students can demonstrate their knowledge. In addition to being able to describe instructional practices for differentiated instruction, graduates from two-year programs were also mindful of the importance of developing their knowledge of the learner. They also reflected on the importance of being flexible in their application of instructional strategies depending on the needs and strengths of their students. The level of comfort and competence that graduates revealed in discussing issues related to diversity was likely reinforced through their exposure to diverse learners in the settings in which they carried out their practicum placements (e.g., with ESL populations and students with special needs).

**Feelings of preparedness.** Overall, graduates from two-year programs feel adequately prepared for literacy instruction, and they demonstrated a range of knowledge and understanding of issues related to literacy instruction. They relate this feeling of preparedness to the content and pedagogy of their methods courses, and to the extensive
field placements throughout their program. The relationships between these factors are expanded below.

**Processes and contexts that influence the development of literacy instructors:**

**Implications for teacher preparation**

In addition to obtaining a detailed description of two-year programs, an additional goal of this study was to understand the contexts, processes and characteristics that influence teacher candidates’ development as literacy instructors. The proposed model for teacher preparation presented earlier incorporates and reflects these findings (see Figure 2). These findings have important implications for pre-service programs.

**Methods courses.** The first finding to highlight relates to the crucial importance of methods courses for subject matter instruction. The impact of the content and pedagogy of methods courses in developing teachers’ theoretical conceptions of literacy has been previously noted in the literature (Grisham, 2000; Risko et. al, 2008). It was clear from the description of teacher candidates from two-year programs that the majority of their factual knowledge and conceptual understanding was derived from their coursework. This suggests that, if graduates are not exposed to the theory and research-base of literacy instruction in their methods courses, it is unlikely that they will be exposed to it in any other setting.

Grades’ knowledge and understanding of literacy instruction was facilitated when a developmental framework was used to organize the course content. Consistent with Darling-Hammond’s et al. (2005) description of the usefulness of framework to organize knowledge, graduates relied on the developmental framework to organize information and to understand relationships between concepts. Thus, the findings from
the current study provide further evidence to support the argument that the quality and depth of coverage in methods courses matters in teacher preparation.

Another important implication derived from this investigation is that greater efforts need to be made to help prospective teachers make connections between assessment and instruction. In the programs investigated, the coverage of assessment was typically done in a separate course than the specific literacy-related courses. Although clearly the issue of assessment is important enough to merit a separate course, this separation is reinforcing the gap between assessment and instruction. Thus, these findings concur with Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) suggestion that assessment needs to be closely related to teaching so that it will make its role of informing teaching practices more evident for beginning teachers. Similarly, methods courses need to focus more on covering the elements of writing instruction.

**Pedagogy and the role of teacher educators.** In addition to the importance of the content of methods courses and of organizing the content around a framework, course instructors also have a decisive impact on graduates’ knowledge, skills, and understanding. This influence is most important given the fact that teacher education is, for most candidates, their last experience in the role of students. As such, course instructors have an important role in modeling the desired teaching practices. This is particularly relevant given the finding that the pedagogy of course instructors influenced the appropriation of conceptual and practical tools.

One example of how teacher candidates’ experience as students may influence their development as teachers is in their understanding and attitudes towards direct and indirect instruction. Graduates from the two-year programs made reference to what they
had experienced through their coursework and how this influenced their understanding of learning and teaching. More specifically, they reflected on their experience with the different modalities of instruction and identified the drawbacks and benefits of each approach. This was true both in the instances where they might have felt there was “too much” of them (e.g., too much time lecturing) or “not enough” of them (e.g., insufficient direct instruction on the “nitty gritty” of teaching students to read and write). Therefore, teacher educators can have a positive impact on teacher candidates’ pedagogy by modeling a balance of direct and indirect instruction. As Lunenberg and his colleagues (2007) suggest, such modeling needs to be accompanied by explicit explanations of the rationale for using each modality and helping teacher candidates make connections between the teaching purpose of applying an instructional approach and their learning experience. More research is needed to obtain a better understanding of the influence of course instructors as role models in the development of beginning teachers.

**Promoting connections between theory and practice.** The findings from the current study coincide with those of other researchers in Canada (Bainbridge & Macy, 2008; Beck et al., 2007) in terms of the value that teacher candidates place to a comprehensive coverage of theory related to literacy instruction. However, they also suggest that greater efforts have to be made in teacher preparation to support teachers in making theory-practice connections.

In this sense, another important implication of the current study is the need for course instructors to make the links between theory and practice explicit for teacher candidates. Although, in some instances, graduates did describe having opportunities to make theory-practice connections in their courses, these were mostly related to linking
teaching strategies to a particular instructional goal. Although this type of connection is clearly important, linking broader conceptual issues with their practical implications did not seem to be sufficiently addressed in the literacy-related courses. For the most part, graduates were left to their own devices to integrate the theory with practice. This finding is consistent with what Lunenberg et al. (2007) found in their study of teacher educators where there was insufficient coverage of the links between practice and theory.

One way in which pre-service programs can promote theory-practice connections is by providing structured opportunities for teacher candidates to reflect on and integrate their experience in coursework and their experience in classroom placements. This can be accomplished by helping teacher candidates become aware of the different roles they assume during teacher preparation, that is, their role as students and as teachers, and how each of these influences their development as teachers. In addition, teacher educators can also scaffold prospective teachers in the process of making sense of their experience in practicum settings and in negotiating seemingly contradictory information from their coursework and their placements. Future research efforts are required to elucidate the impact of providing this support in the context of specific subject matter instruction in teacher candidates’ ability to link the theory presented in their methods courses to how they teach and how their students learn.

**Fostering an evidence-based approach to classroom instruction.** One of the main goals of this study was to explore whether the evidence-based knowledge of effective literacy instruction was being covered in teacher preparation. In the comparison of one- and two-year programs, one of the most notable differences found was that graduates from the lengthier programs were more aware of and knowledgeable of the
evidence-based components of effective literacy instruction. The fact that many graduates from one-year programs failed to mention these components and, in many instances, had a poor understanding of them is discouraging. Similar to the findings of Walsh and his colleagues (2006) in their review of course outlines across multiple education faculties in the United States, this suggests that pre-service programs in Ontario are lagging behind in incorporating evidence-based knowledge in preparing teachers for literacy instruction.

From their descriptions, it was evident that graduates of two-year programs were exposed to this evidence-based knowledge through their coursework. Graduates valued having been exposed to the scientific literature on literacy instruction and partly derived their feeling of confidence and preparedness from the fact that their knowledge base was founded on the research literature. Moreover, the value of evidence-based practices was part of their identity as teachers.

In line with Walsh et al.’s (2006) assertion that teacher preparation is “where future teachers establish an identity connected to the professional requirements of their vocation” (p. 46), it is the role of pre-service programs to instill and promote an evidence-based approach to literacy instruction. In order to accomplish this, teacher educators need to be well versed on the scientific knowledge base related to reading and writing instruction. As suggested by Joshi and colleagues (2009), this may require professional development for course instructors to develop their expertise in evidence-based knowledge so they can model and encourage best practices.

The role of host teachers. Finally, the current study revealed the important role that host teachers play in determining the type of experience that prospective teachers will encounter in their practicum placements. This finding is consistent with research by
Beck and Kosnik (2002) in terms of the importance of the relationship with the host teacher in candidates’ experience. This suggests that teacher candidates need support in navigating this relationship and that greater efforts need to be made by pre-service programs in communicating expectations to host teachers and monitoring graduates’ experience.

It is striking that most graduates report having several practicum placements in which they were not able to participate in literacy instruction at all. This suggests that teacher candidates are not being allowed the opportunity to actually practice and implement teaching skills before they begin teaching their own classroom. This obstacle will likely interfere with the development of their ability to enact the knowledge and skills promoted in their coursework.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the low response rate of graduates from two-year programs. This limits somewhat the interpretation of the findings in terms of how representative they might be of graduates from two-year programs. This limitation is particularly evident in terms of the number of interviewees from Program B. Although the proportion of interviewed graduates from each program corresponded with the actual proportion of teacher candidates in both programs, it is possible that the findings of this study are more representative of graduates from Program A than Program B.

Another limitation of the qualitative study was the impossibility to conduct member checking with interviewed participants. Although efforts were made to verify the accuracy of findings through various measures, not having the opportunity to verify the participant’s reports and the interpretation of their responses is a limitation of this study.
The design of both of the studies reported in this thesis did not allow for accounting for possible confounding variables that could explain some of the findings. This is particularly the case in the comparison of one- and two-year programs, where variables such as program admission requirements, could explain some of the identified differences. In addition, the fact that the two-year programs are graduate level also adds an important distinction between one-and two-year programs. Thus, although it is tempting to view the findings of these studies as support for the value of lengthier teacher preparation programs, the design of these studies does not allow identifying the mechanisms that account for the differences between graduates from one- and two-year programs.

Most of the findings in both studies are based on self-report data from graduates from the various programs. There are limitations to self-report data, especially as it pertains to evaluating feelings of preparedness and teachers’ report of their knowledge. For example, Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich and Stanovich (2004), demonstrated that teachers’ calibration of their knowledge, based on self-report, was often inaccurate. Moreover, self-report measures are constrained by problems that affect their interpretability, such as response biases, biases of perception or memory errors. Memory errors are particularly salient when, as in these studies, participants are asked retrospective questions about their program.

Finally, although the current studies made efforts to measure graduates’ knowledge regarding literacy instruction and the application of this knowledge, the lack of measures of actual classroom instruction and teaching practices limits the implications of the findings from these studies.
Future directions and conclusions

Despite the considerable advances that have been made in terms of the evidence-based knowledge of effective literacy instruction and effective teacher preparation for literacy instruction, there is still work to be done to ensure that teachers are being prepared to teach their students to read and write effectively. The current two studies contributed to clarifying the current state-of-affairs of teacher education for literacy instruction in Canada. They also pioneered in proposing a model for teacher preparation that will increase the likelihood that prospective teachers are adequately prepared, based on sound scientific evidence, to ensure the all children learn to read and write.

Thus, much remains to be done to ensure that the “science of reading and writing” finds its way into every elementary classroom in Canada. Given the important role of teacher educators, future research efforts should concentrate on assessing the knowledge base and skills of teacher educators in Canada. Similarly, professional development opportunities to promote the incorporation of evidence-based practices in teacher preparation programs need to be developed, implemented, and tested. Clearly, the beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge-base of teacher educators need to become the focus of attention of research to understand why the evidence-based knowledge of literacy instruction has yet to find its way into many teacher preparation programs in Ontario.

Finally, it is striking that graduates from two-year programs appeared to be better prepared for literacy instruction than graduates from one-year programs. Given the skills, knowledge, and understanding that prospective teachers require to begin the challenging task of teaching children to read and write, it seems as though having more time to reflect and practice, with the support of mentors and professors, might produce teachers who are
better prepared and more confident about their skills. This line of thought is encouraging. Future research efforts, which take into account confounding variables such as admission requirements, are needed to clarify the benefits of extended programs in Canada.
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Appendix A

Pre-service Teacher Survey

Pre-service Teacher Survey Consent Form

Dear Faculty of Education Student,

We want to know more about the two-year teacher education programs in Ontario. As a student from one of the two graduate teacher education programs in Ontario your experience is unique. We would like to request your participation in helping us know more about two-year teacher education programs. It is our hope that 50 faculty of education students will help us by sharing what they have learned in their classes. In order to do this, we ask that you participate in filling out a questionnaire, which will take about an hour to complete. In appreciation for your time we will send you a $20 certificate for teaching resources from a major educational supplies company.

So we can get an even better idea about what is being covered in class we also ask that you send us the reading lists, course outlines, class topic schedule, and assignment sheets from any courses related to teaching literacy skills to elementary students. We are not trying to “evaluate” your program so we ask that you please remove the instructor’s name from these materials.

Please know that your confidentiality is assured. All identifying information will be coded. Only Dr. Dale Willows, a professor at the U of T, and the graduate student conducting the study will have access to the data. We are looking for general trends in two-year teacher education programs so the information you provide will be grouped with other information collected from student teachers across the two-year programs in Ontario.

A long-term goal of this study is to find out how teacher education programs affect teaching practice. For that reason, we will be personally interviewing twenty of those who complete the questionnaire after the end of their studies. Please note that your participation at this or any stage of this study is voluntary. In order to ensure accuracy, and if you permit, the interview session will be audio taped and then transcribed. Tapes will then be destroyed.

My name is Blanca and, as a graduate student working under the supervision of Dr. Willows, I am conducting this study for my doctoral dissertation. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have (bheredia@oise.utoronto.ca). You can also contact the Ethics Review office (416-946-3273) if you have any questions about your rights as a participant of this study.

I agree to complete the survey described in the above letter to be conducted, at my convenience during March and May 2007. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Signed: _________________________________________ date: __________________

I will not see student teachers’ names or the respective names of the faculties attended.

Signed: _________________________________________ date: __________________

Dale Willows, Ph.D., C. Psych. OISE/UT (416) 923-6641 ext. 2452

I will code names and faculties of education upon receipt of surveys and after interviews so that confidentiality is assured.

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The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of material covered in primary/junior pre-service programs. It is not a test of your knowledge. We will be grouping your responses with the information provided by many others. We ask that you do not research any of your answers.

Primary/Junior Pre-service Teacher Survey

Section 1: General Information (Please print)

1. Name: _____________________________________________________    Female ☐   Male ☐

Your confidentiality is assured. Only the research assistant will see this survey. Your name and your university and program of study will be replaced with codes and then removed.

2. Current mailing address: ________________________________________________

3. Current phone number: ________________________________________________

4. Permanent* address: ________________________________________________

5. Permanent* phone number: ________________________________________________

E-mail address: ________________________________________________


7. Languages spoken: Only English ☐   Other languages spoken: __________________________

*Please provide an on-going contact address and phone # (as you may be asked if you would like to participate in an interview at some time over the summer).

Section 2: Educational Background/Experience

8. Please list any undergraduate/graduate degrees you hold (please include where your degree was earned).

9. Please share your reasons for going into teaching: __________________________
10. Have you had any other trade or profession? Yes □ No □

If yes, please describe your role and how long you were involved in this work.

______________________________

______________________________

Section 3: Faculty of Education

11. Program, Section

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Location / Program</th>
<th>Check One</th>
<th>Indicate Section Number or Option Name (if any)</th>
<th>Indicate Dates Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OISE/UT</td>
<td>MT 2-yr program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA Child Studies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

12. Division: P/J □ J/I □ other specialty: ____________________

13. At this time I do intend to teach next year (mark one): Yes □ No □

14. The division I hope to be teaching next year is: Primary □ Junior □ No preference □

15. Amount of time practice teaching (please include both your practicum and any related experience):

Grade level: _______________ # of weeks: ________________
Grade level: _______________ # of weeks: ________________
Grade level: _______________ # of weeks: ________________
Grade level: _______________ # of weeks: ________________
Related experiences: __________________________________________

16. The amount of time I spent practice teaching was:
Not enough □ Almost enough □ Appropriate □ Too much □ Excessive □

17. Rate how well you feel you are doing (did) in the pre-service program:
Poor □ Satisfactory □ Well □ Very Well □ Excellent □

18. Rate how well you feel you are doing (did) in your practicum:
Poor □ Satisfactory □ Well □ Very Well □ Excellent □

19. How well did your pre-service program prepare you for your practicum:
Section 4: Early Literacy Education

20. In total how many hours did you spend in literacy related classes in your faculty program? *(If unsure, please give your best estimate): _______

21. Please indicate how much time was spent in your literacy course(s) discussing each of the following terms: 1=NONE  2=VERY LITTLE  3=SOME TIME  4=A LOT OF TIME  5=A GREAT DEAL OF TIME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>inventive spelling</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>whole language</td>
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<tr>
<td>dyslexia/reading disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>onset/rime</td>
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<td>teaching in context</td>
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<td>digraph</td>
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<td>diphthong</td>
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<tr>
<td>modeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>the “schwa” sound</td>
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<tr>
<td>phonics</td>
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<tr>
<td>phonemic awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>phoneme</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>language experience</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>grapheme</td>
<td></td>
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<td>scaffolding</td>
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<tr>
<td>morpheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>cloze passages</td>
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<tr>
<td>orthography</td>
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<tr>
<td>semantics</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>inner ear infections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>decoding</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscue analysis</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reading recovery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

23. Please indicate how much time was spent in *your literacy course(s)* discussing each of the following topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>how to help a student with specific reading difficulties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to help a student with writing difficulties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to assess a student’s reading abilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to recognize when a child is not reading at grade level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to recognize when a child is not writing at grade level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the causes of reading problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to assess reading difficulties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. We are interested in your philosophy of teaching. Please answer from *your* point of view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading a lot is the best way to overcome a reading problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading instruction should not be necessary after the end of the third Grade.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching phonics, word attack skills, and spelling skills directly to students is good.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should be encouraged to guess at words on the basis of meaning and syntax only after they are encouraged to decode the word.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading skills can be taught out of context (i.e., not only when a child is reading a book to you).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics instruction should not begin until first grade.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would describe myself as a whole language person.

25. We would like you to gauge your instructor’s response to the same statements. Please respond from his/her point of view.

1=STRONGLY DISAGREE   2=DISAGREE   3=NEUTRAL   4=AGREE   5=STRONGLY AGREE

Reading a lot is the best way to overcome a reading problem.

Reading instruction should not be necessary after the end of the third Grade.

Teaching phonics, word attack skills, and spelling skills directly to students is good.

Children should be encouraged to guess at words on the basis of meaning and syntax only after they are encouraged to decode the word.

Reading skills can be taught out of context (i.e., not only when a child is reading a book to you).

Phonics instruction should not begin until first grade.

I would describe myself as a whole language person.

26. In your opinion, what are the essential components of a good primary literacy program? ________

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

27. In your opinion, what are the essential components of a good junior literacy program? ________

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
28. Did you hear of these titles in your program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All star</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Classrooms that work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Distar reading</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Embedded phonics</td>
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<tr>
<td>First steps</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guided reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Impressions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jolly phonics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Journeys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature circles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Making words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscue analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Morphographic spelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Phonics they use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The literacy diet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word walls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Please describe what, if anything, you wish had been included in your program that was not?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

30. What aspects of your literacy course(s) do you feel could have been left out?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

31. What were the most useful components of your literacy program? What will help you next year?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Please circle one of the following for questions 32, 33, and 34.

1 = NOT AT ALL   2 = A LITTLE   3 = ADEQUATELY   4 = WELL   5 = COMPLETELY

32. How prepared do you feel to teach reading to your students next year?


33. How prepared do you feel to teach writing to your students next year?

1  2  3  4  5

34. How prepared do you feel to assess the literacy skills of your students next year?

1  2  3  4  5

35. List the three books/articles that have had the greatest impact upon your literacy instruction philosophy. Please list them in order of importance to you:

First: ________________________________, ________, ________________

title                        year                        author

Second: ________________________________, ________, ________________

title                        year                        author

Third: ________________________________, ________, ________________

title                        year                        author

Very Important:

Please include the following materials from all of your language and literacy course(s)*:

☐ course outline
☐ assignment criteria
☐ class topic schedule
☐ prescribed reading materials (author, title, publisher)

*Please include all course materials with a language and literacy component that you completed as part of your P/J Pre-service program. Please indicate clearly which courses were required and which were electives. Please remove all program and instructor identification from all of these materials.
## Appendix B

**Number of participants from each one-year teacher preparation program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brock</td>
<td>St. Catharines: Concurrent</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Catharines: Consecutive</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamilton: Concurrent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamilton: Consecutive</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakehead</td>
<td>Concurrent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nipissing</td>
<td>B.Ed: Consecutive</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OISE/UT</td>
<td>B.Ed – Consecutive</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>B.Ed – Consecutive</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Ontario</td>
<td>B.Ed – Consecutive</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>Windsor- Consecutive</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chatham: Consecutive</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>Concurrent</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen’s</td>
<td>Concurrent</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Faculties represented in matched sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brock University – St. Catharines</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brock University – Hamilton</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OISE – B. Ed. Programs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens University</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ottawa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York University</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nipissing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Western Ontario</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Windsor</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D
Interview schedule

start time: 
finished: 
Date

- Before we begin, obtain consent for the interview. Also consent to audiotape the interview.
- I am interested in everything you have to say about your program and your teaching experiences...things that were good and things that were not. It’s all helpful in making me understand.

Section 1: General Information

1.) Name:

2.) Current mailing address:

3.) Current phone number:

4.) Permanent address:

5.) Permanent phone number:

6.) Have you accepted a teaching position? Where? Grade level:

Section 2: Faculty Program

7.) How many classes were related to language and literacy? How many hours of instruction (in total)? (Obtain breakdown of different courses, year of the program in which course was taken. If necessary #hours/week and # weeks)

8.) I want to learn about the language and literacy component of your faculty program. Please describe your language and literacy program in detail (e.g., research base/theory, program development, strategies/teaching techniques, and assessment (how to assess students)). Inquire about whether they were provided with evidence to show what works and why it works. Do you remember any practices that you learned that were based on research?

9) I would like to get a sense of the workload that was required in your literacy courses, in terms of readings and/or assignments? Did you find the workload reasonable? Were you able to read all the required readings? What proportion of the assigned readings did you actually complete? Are there any articles or texts that you remember as particularly useful?

10.) Please think about how you were assessed in your literacy classes? What stands out most in your mind?
11.) Were the ways in which the classes taught consistent with the instructional strategies promoted in class? Please explain. (In other words, was there modeling of what you were being taught)

12.) How did your pre-service program affect your understanding of how to teach literacy to students?

13.) In what ways was your faculty’s literacy program different from your expectations?

Section 3: Practice Teaching
*How many total hours of practice teaching did you complete in your faculty program? (# of weeks, full-time or part-time)

Describe the settings in which you had practicum placements (grade level, school population, special needs, ESL)

14.) How did your practicum affect your understanding of how to teach literacy to students?

15.) Was what you learned in your literacy course relevant to your practicum experience? Was your practicum experience integrated in any way with the theory-base provided in your literacy course? (case studies, discuss practicum experience in class)

16.) Did your host teacher share the same philosophy regarding literacy instruction as your program instructor? In what ways were their philosophies similar/different? (child centered? activities based? curriculum driven? direct instruction? explicit instruction?)

17.) Did you have free-reign to plan your literacy related activities in your practice teaching? Explain your answer. (Prompt for literacy related activities if necessary)

Section 4: Preparedness

18.) Do you feel that you were well prepared to teach literacy to your students next September?

1 = Not at all    2 = Only a little    3 = Somewhat    4 =Fairly    5 = Very

Please explain your response.

19.) What are your biggest concerns about teaching your own class your first year? (Not necessarily literacy related)

20.) Are any of your concerns related to teaching literacy to your students? If so, what are they?

Section 5: Planning

21.) What do you believe are the essential components of a good elementary literacy program?
22.) How would you change your literacy program to meet the needs of your wide range of students (special needs, ESL/ESD etc.)?

23.) What assessment tools/methods do you plan on using next year to assess student’s literacy development?

24.) How would you determine if a child was below level in reading, writing, spelling?

Section 6: Early Literacy Education
This section relates to early literacy education. Some of the questions are challenging...don’t worry if you don’t know all the answers. We just want to get a flavor about what you’ve been exposed to.

25.) Go through each term asking how familiar they are with it, where they heard about it, and what they remember about it.

career concepts of print
  Where

scaffolding
  Where

grapheme
  Where

semantics
  Where

whole language
  Where

phonemic awareness
  Where

cloze passages
  Where

morpheme
  Where

metacognitive strategies
  Where

dyslexia/reading disability
  Where

onset/rime
  Where

phonics
  Where

inventive spelling
  Where
orthography

phoneme

diagraph

reading fluency

schema development

miscue analysis

blends

26.) What have you learned in your preservice class that would help you identify the strengths of a student in Grade 1 who can read nonsense words like: thip, slithy, and chupping?

27.) Would you be worried if a Grade 1 student wrote: yer is mi ty djruk (Where is my toy truck?). What does this child know and what does he/she need to learn? (Yes/No)

28.) Please describe some ways to improve reading fluency.

29.) Please describe some ways to improve reading comprehension.

30.) Please describe some ways to improve vocabulary.

31.) What would you take into consideration when selecting an appropriate book for a particular child’s independent reading?

32.) If a child was struggling to read a word what strategies would you suggest the child use and in what order?

First,
then,
then,
then,

33.) Why might a child have difficulty with reading/writing/spelling?

34.) When should a child be encouraged to start writing?

35.) Why might a student’s comprehension development start to decline around the fourth grade?
36.) How would you explain the spelling of the following words to a Grade 5 student:

deceive:

magician:

37.) Please record the number of syllables and morphemes in the following words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Syllables</th>
<th>Morphemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unhappily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coffee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38.) How many speech sounds in the words below?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Speech Sounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know</td>
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<tr>
<td>taught</td>
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39.) Which of the following two statements describes your philosophy of literacy teaching more accurately:

A/ “I believe that students learn reading, spelling and writing best when their teacher instructs them directly and encourages them to apply what they have learned in their experiences with print.”

B/ “I believe that students learn reading, spelling and writing best through discovery during their own personal experiences with print.”

Please explain your choice:

Thanks for participating! Good luck next year!
When would be the best time to contact you if necessary?
Appendix E

Definitions and scoring criteria for literacy terms

**Concepts of print** – determining a student’s basic understanding of conventions of around the written word. In effect, “What is the child attending to as he looks at print on the page?” (Reading Rockets, p. 23). This includes putting the book right way up, sweeping left to right, attending to letter order, distinguishing between a letter and a word.

**Scaffolding** – in learning, the gradual withdrawal of adult or teacher support, as through instruction, modeling, questioning and feedback, for a child’s performance across successive engagements, thus transferring more and more autonomy to the child. (IRA)

**Grapheme** – A written or printed representation of a phoneme, as b for /b/ and oy for /oi/ in boy (IRA). A grapheme is the smallest part of written language that represents a phoneme in the spelling of a word. A grapheme may be just one letter, such as b, d, f, or several letters, such as ch, sh, th, ck, ea, igh (Put Reading First).

**Semantics** – The study of the meaning of language, the analysis of the meanings of words, phrases, sentences, discourse, and whole text (IRA). Relating to the meaning in language. A student may rely on the context and meaning of what is written to guess at an unfamiliar word.

**Whole language** – A professional development and theoretical perspective that believes that all language systems are interwoven. They avoid segmentation of language into component parts for specific skills instruction (condensed from IRA). A philosophy of instruction that promotes “meaning first.” If a student is unable to read a word by sight, then context and pictures are encouraged.

**Phonemic awareness** – is the awareness of the sounds (phonemes) that make up spoken words. It is important for learning to read. It is measured by asking a child which two words rhyme, through sound-to-word matching and blending, isolating phonemes, segmenting words into phonemes and deleting phonemes (condensed from IRA). It is the ability to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds – phonemes- in spoken words (Put Reading First).

**Cloze passages** – are exercises, which require student to fill in a word missing from the text by using context clues. These activities promote both semantic and syntactic cue systems. They are created by removing every fifth or so word from a reading passage.

**Morpheme** – a meaningful linguistic unit that cannot be divided into smaller meaningful elements, as the word book, or that is a component of a words as s in books (IRA).
**Metacognitive strategies** – an awareness or knowledge of one’s mental processes such as that one can monitor, regulate, and direct them to a desired end (IRA). Using games or tools to monitor and improve one’s learning.

**Reading disabilities** – reading achievement that is significantly below expectancy for both and individual’s reading potential and for chronological age or grade level, sometimes also disparate with one’s cultural, linguistic, and educational experiences. Reading achievement significantly below what could be expected of a person; a marked ability-achievement discrepancy (IRA). One or more dysfunctions that result in poor performance in reading.

**Onset/rime** – an onset is the part of a syllable preceding the syllable peak or nucleus; normally the consonant preceding the vowel of a syllable, as str in strip. A rime is a vowel and any following consonants of a syllable, as /ook/ in book or brook (IRA). They are parts of spoken language that are smaller than syllables but larger than phonemes. An onset is the initial consonant sound of a syllable. A rime is the part of a syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it.

**Phonics** – A way of teaching reading and spelling that stresses symbol-sound associations, used especially in beginning instruction (IRA). Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes (Put Reading First).

**Inventive spelling** – The result of an attempt to spell a word whose spelling is not already known, based on the writer’s knowledge of the spelling system and how it works (IRA). When a child creates their own spellings of a word based on their knowledge of letter s and sounds. Each invented spelling is a snapshot of how the mind conceives spelling.

**Orthography** – The spelling patterns and rules of language. The English language is variable and complex but follows predictable orthographic principles (Teaching reading is rocket science).

**Phoneme** – A minimal sound unit of speech that, when contrasted with another phoneme, affects the meaning of words in a language (IRA). It is the smallest part of spoken language that makes a difference in the meaning of words. English has about 41 phonemes. A few words such as a or oh have only one phoneme. Sometimes one phoneme is represented by more than one letter (Put Reading First).

**Digraph** – Two letters that represent one speech sound, as ch for /ch/ (IRA). A digraph is a pair of letter expressing one sound (e.g., th, sh, ch). It is distinct from a blend in which both letter sounds continue to be heard (e.g., sl. Pr).

**Reading fluency**- is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read, they recognize words automatically. They read aloud effortlessly and with
Fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding the words, they can focus their attention on what the text means (Put Reading First).

**Schema development** – A system of cognitive structures stored in memory that are abstract representations of events, objects, and relationships in the world (IRA). A set of concepts that together form a framework of knowledge about some specific area.

**Miscue analysis** – A formal examination of the use of miscues (reading errors) as the basis for determining the strengths and weaknesses in the background experiences and language skills of students as they read (IRA).

**Blends** – To combine the sounds represented by letters to produce a word; sound out. The joining of sounds represented by two or more letters with minimal changes in those sounds (IRA). They are individual phonemes combined to make onsets, rimes, syllables and words (Put Reading First). In blends both letter sounds continue to be heard (e.g., sl, pr).

**Scoring scale:**
1 – No answer or completely wrong answer
2 – Vague or slightly flawed answer
3 – Answer has some of the key elements but is incomplete
4 – Good answer but missing at least one key element
5 – Completely thorough answer
Appendix F

Preliminary list of coding categories with counts per code

1. Mismatch between graduate level and teaching style - 9
2. Demonstration of teaching strategies - 11
3. Modeling - 7
4. “waste of time” / use of time in courses - 8
5. Expectations about program - 10
6. Constructivism vs direct instruction in their own course - 6
7. Attitude/approach toward assignments - 6
8. Consistency across literacy related courses - 1
9. What program missed - 11
10. Confidence to teach - 9
11. Having a clear teaching goal - 2
12. Clarity of what needs to be done to teach literacy - 10
13. “the nitty gritty” of teaching a child to learn to read - 4
14. Framework guiding literacy instruction - 9
15. Metacognition: rationale or understanding of literacy/activities - 6
16. Fears and concerns - 22
17. Background knowledge/ previous experience - 7
18. Knowledge building - 1
19. Recognizing gaps in knowledge - 2
20. Reflecting about changes in perceptions and beliefs - 2
21. Thinking they have the resources/information/material to “figure things out” - 10
22. “You learn by doing” - 2
23. “Talking to other teachers” - 7
24. Thinking about teaching next year - 5
25. Ongoing learning for teachers - 1
26. Teaching as a “challenging” task - 1
27. It’s “busy” in the classroom - 2
28. Perception of peers - 2
29. “student talk” – discussion with classmates about concerns/complaints - 1
30. Assessment process - 27
31. Assessment tools - 22
32. Assessing reading level - 6
33. Teaching basic reading skills - 0
34. Differentiated instruction - 21
35. Students’ learning styles - 0
36. Making literacy meaningful - 5
37. Motivation and interest for literacy - 7
38. Integrated literacy - 7
39. Balanced literacy - 7
40. Phonics vs. whole language - 3
41. Research-informed practice - 16
42. Writing instruction - 2
43. Teaching strategies in practicum - 6
44. What they “got out of practica” – how it affected their understanding - 16
45. Degree of participation in practicum placements - 15
46. Exposure to literacy in placements - 9
47. Relationship with host teacher - 7
48. Difference/similarity between practicum and literacy courses - 18
49. Placement experience process: changes in awareness/understanding of instruction as they progressed through placements - 1
50. Instructional strategies/programs – aprox 40
51. Planning literacy program - 12
52. Literacy topics covered in courses - 9
53. Workload/assignments - 25
54. Integration of practicum experience and coursework - 18
55. Explicit vs implicit instruction - 12
56. How they are assessed as students – feedback - 9
Appendix G

List of codes used to organize data

1. Mismatch between graduate level and teaching style
2. Demonstration of teaching strategies
3. “waste of time” / use of time in courses
4. Expectations about program
5. Constructivism vs direct instruction in their own course
6. What program missed
7. Confidence to teach -
8. Clarity of what needs to be done to teach literacy
9. Framework guiding literacy instruction
10. Metacognition: rationale or understanding of literacy/activities
11. Fears and concerns
12. Background knowledge/ previous experience
13. Reflecting about changes in perceptions and beliefs
14. “Figure things out” + “learn by doing” + “talking to other teachers”
15. Thinking about teaching next year + ongoing learning+ challenging task+ busy
16. Assessment process
17. Assessment tools
18. Assessing reading level
19. Differentiated instruction
20. Making literacy meaningful
21. Motivation and interest for literacy
22. Integrated literacy
23. Balanced literacy
24. Research-informed practice
25. Teaching strategies in practicum
26. What they “got out of practica” – how it affected their understanding
27. Degree of participation in practicum placements
28. Exposure to literacy in placements
29. Relationship with host teacher
30. Difference/similarity between practicum and literacy courses
31. Instructional strategies/programs
32. Planning literacy program
33. Literacy topics covered in courses
34. Workload/assignments
35. Integration of practicum experience and coursework
36. Explicit vs implicit instruction
37. How they are assessed as students – feedback
Appendix H

Final codebook

1) 2COURS: Lack of consistency between two literacy courses offered
   (1): Mismatch between graduate level and teaching style
   (2): Demonstration of teaching strategies and modeling
   (4): “waste of time”/ use of time in courses
   (9): What program missed
2) PEDA: Pedagogy – instructional approach in literacy courses
   (1): Mismatch between graduate level and teaching style
   (5): Expectations about the program
   (6): Constructivism vs direct instruction in their own course
3) MODEL: Modeling
   (2): Demonstration of teaching strategies and modeling
   (6): Constructivism vs direct instruction in their own course
4) RREAD: Required readings in literacy courses
   (53): Workload/assignments
5) ASSIGN: Course assignments
   (51): Planning literacy program
   (53): Workload assignments
6) GRADASS: Graduates’ assessment
   (56): How they were assessed as students-feedback
7) EXPOSEP: Graduates’ exposure to and participation in literacy instruction in practica
   (44): What they got out of practicum
   (45): Degree of participation in practicum
   (46): Exposure to literacy in placements
   (47): Relationship with host teacher
8) CONNECT: Making connections between theory and practice
   (44): What they got out of practicum
9) REPertoire: Broadening repertoire of instructional strategies
   (43): Teaching strategies in practicum
   (44): What they got out of practicum
10) DIFFSIM: Differences and similarities between literacy course content and practicum
   (20): Reflecting about changes in perceptions and beliefs
   (48): Differences/similarities between practicum and literacy courses, between host teacher and course instructor
11) INTEGRA: Incorporating placement experience in graduate courses
   (54): Integration of practicum experience and coursework
12) CONFID: Confidence to teach. How prepared they feel to teach literacy based on clarity of knowledge and skills needed to teach literacy
   (9) What program missed
   (10): Confidence to teach
13) CLARITY: Knowing what needs to be done to teach literacy (or lack thereof)
   (12): Clarity of what needs to be done to teach literacy
(14): Framework guiding literacy instruction
(15): Metacognition - understanding of literacy instruction
14) NEXT YEAR: Thinking about teaching next year, planning, areas they feel prepared and others they do not
   (24): Thinking about teaching next year
      Recognizing gaps in knowledge
15) FIGUREOUT: I can figure things out - what they would do with things they don’t know or aren’t sure of.
   (10): Confidence - self-efficacy
   (23): Talking to other teachers
      Going back to course resources
16) CONCERN: Areas of concern
   (16): Fears and concerns
17) B.LIT: Balanced literacy
   (39): Balanced literacy
18) INT.LIT: Integrated literacy
   (38): Integrated literacy
   (52): Literacy topics covered
19) EVI-BAS: Evidence-based practice – research in courses
   (15): Metacognition: rationale
   (41): Research-informed practice
20) INDVSDIR: Indirect and direct instruction
   (55): Indirect vs direct instruction
21) COMP&STRAT: Literacy components and teaching strategies
   (50): Instructional strategies/programs
   (52): Literacy topics covered in courses
22) LIT.PROG: Developing a literacy program
   (51): Planning literacy program
23) MOTIVAT: Making literacy motivating and meaningful
   (36): Making literacy meaningful
   (37): Motivation and interest for literacy
24) DIVERSE: Teaching diverse learners
   (34): Differentiated instruction
25) PURMETHASS: Purpose and methods of assessment
   (30): Assessment process
   (31): Assessment tools
   (32): Assessing reading level
26) UNCERASS: Uncertainty about assessment
   (9): What program missed
   (30): Assessment process
27) PRIOR – Background or prior knowledge of teacher candidates
## Appendix I

### Sample Content-Knowledge Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>Content: literacy</th>
<th>Content: assessment</th>
<th>Knowledge: essential components</th>
<th>Knowledge assessment methods</th>
<th>Knowledge: struggling student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2001 | • Comprehension: (picture cues, looking at title, asking questions)  
      • Spelling: (word walls, high frequency words, theme word charts)  
      • Phonics – sound out  
      • Vocabulary- through reading  
      • Levelled reading, guided reading, indepen. Reading, shared reading and writing  
      • Not enough writing  
      • Ref/Prog. Jolly Phonics, Guided reading, & Writing (Fountas & Pinnell), Four Blocks | • Running records  
      • Observations in guided reading  
      • Practicum: DRA & CASI | • Balanced  
      • Real reading and writing: interest and motivated. “they get into it then use strategies.”  
      • Components: phonemic awareness, phonics, concepts of print, comprehension strategies, practice going through writing  
      • Strategies: Author’s chair, reader’s chair and buddy reading | • Standardized tests: DRA & CASI  
      • Anecdotal notes: observations, self-assessments  
      • Peer assessments  
      • Checklists: reading behaviors (e.g. reading diff. genres)  
      • Rubrics: writing (punct. spelling, etc.)  
      • Running records (part of DRA) | • Compare their assessment results with Ontario curriculum expectations |

| 2002 | • Covered 10 diff. aspects of literacy  
      • Phonics, Phonemic awareness  
      • “everything I wanted to know about language and literacy.”  
      • Ref/Prog.: research based on classroom experience. Four Blocks, Literacy diet and Jolly Phonics. | • Not covered as much. Hoping more was covered on “formative assessments” on how to determine a student’s level at the beginning of the year.  
      • Running records, standardized.  
      • Practicum: DRA, but didn’t learn how to administer it. | • Goal “love of reading and writing”  
      • Modeling  
      • Individual/differentiated instruct.  
      • Integrated literacy  
      • Components: phonics, concepts of print, genres/text struc  
      • Strategies: read aloud, shared reading and writing, sight words | • Sentences to assess letter-sound correspondence  
      • Sit with each student to hear them read-running record, DRA (haven’t done it)  
      • Journal writing  
      • Self-evaluation kind of books they like | • One-on-one assessment  
      • “I just know where a grade 2 is supposed to be” from practicum and course – internalized knowledge |