READING, WRITING AND PEDAGOGY:
THE IMPACT OF ONTARIO EDUCATION FACULTIES’ P/J
PROGRAMS ON GRADUATES’ KNOWLEDGE, AND ABILITY TO
TEACH LITERACY

by

Elizabeth Haas-Barota

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Graduate Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Elizabeth Haas-Barota
Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology
University of Toronto

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of Ontario’s Primary/Junior teacher preparation programs on graduates’ knowledge and ability to apply what they know about literacy education. The research examined the content of the programs, the extent to which this content reflected evidence-based components of literacy instruction, and the degree of variability across programs. A range of strategies including self-reporting by graduates, interviews, and reviews of course materials (e.g., course outlines, course topic schedules, reading lists) were used to examine the breadth and depth of what was covered in the required literacy courses.

A proportional sample of 210 graduates representing all nine English-speaking faculties of education in Ontario completed surveys and submitted course materials. Twenty-nine of these also participated in in-depth interviews. Interviewees were asked to reflect upon their understanding and ability to apply what they had learned, as well as to offer their impressions of their programs and to discuss their personal feelings of preparedness to teach literacy. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to describe and summarize findings. Process/Outcome Matrices revealed various themes.
In summary, faculty literacy programs varied greatly with respect to both length and content. Course materials and descriptions from graduates also suggested that variability across sections within programs was as great as that across programs. Although courses covered theories of child development they generally lacked a theoretical framework for literacy instruction. Moreover, many respondents reported learning little about how to teach reading and writing. Such responses were more prevalent in certain programs. Many graduates believed that explicit instruction is a necessary component of “good” literacy teaching, however, most graduates were not able to demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of language and literacy, and many could not describe how to implement effective literacy instruction, or to address the diverse needs of students.

Recommendations include: lengthening the required faculty literacy courses in order to provide more breadth and depth of coverage; refining the manner in which instruction in literacy education is provided at faculties; increasing the vigilance with which governing bodies oversee faculty literacy course content; and improving practicum placement experiences.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter begins by explaining the purpose of the present research, including an overview and the context in which it was undertaken. This is followed by some of what was and is known about literacy instruction and information about the governing body that oversees Ontario’s faculty programs.

The purpose of this research was to provide a snap-shot, in terms of content and variability, of Ontario faculties’ Primary/Junior literacy programs; to determine the degree of correspondence between what was taught and what research indicates should be taught; and to describe the programs in relation to new teachers’ knowledge, abilities, confidence, and philosophy regarding literacy instruction.

This study was undertaken between 2001 and 2003. At that time, approximately 3200 P/J preservice students attended nine Faculties of Education in Ontario each year. Graduates earned education degrees and became qualified to teach at the P/J level at all schools across the province.

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1 For the purposes of this study the term “program” referred to any faculty program that was offered by a different university, at different university location, or was clearly different in the manner in which it is organized (e.g., Concurrent Education, a two-year program, etc.).

2 Although there were 10 universities offering B.Ed. (P/J) degrees in Ontario in 2001/2002 and 2002/2003, this study focused only on the nine whose program instruction was in English. In the case of Ottawa University, where both an English and French program was offered, only the English program was examined. This was because the literature regarding essential literacy instruction, which will be discussed in relation to these programs, involved teaching English-speaking students to read and write in English.

3 For the purposes of this study the term graduate will refer to someone who has completed their teaching degree. Preservice student will refer to someone who is attending a Faculty of Education in order to become a teacher. Survey Respondent will refer to a faculty graduate who completed a Survey for this study. Interviewee will refer to a faculty graduate who was interviewed for this study.
Like today, each Ontario faculty offered its own unique teacher education program, with some providing several specialized courses of study within their own institution. A total of 26 different programs were offered each year of the study. Variability was further increased due to the range of content and instruction within the different sections of each program.

A major focus of the study was to determine what approaches were taken by the different faculties and instructors in addressing the critical and daunting challenge of providing graduates with the knowledge base and skills required to teach elementary students to read and write. It was also important to determine if these approaches were consistent with what research indicated should be taught.

Another principal focus of this thesis was on determining the impact of early literacy instruction programs on graduates’ understanding and competence to teach reading and writing. This included their understanding of key literacy concepts, their knowledge and ability to apply what they know regarding literacy programming, reading and writing assessment, and instructional strategies. In addition the study examined graduates’ own perceptions of their preparedness to teach and of their philosophical approach to teaching reading and writing in order to provide insight into the impact of faculty courses on graduates.

This study used a mixed-method approach in order to address these questions. Participants were P/J faculty graduates from all the English-speaking elementary accredited programs.
across Ontario. These graduates completed mail-in Surveys. To supplement the information provided in the Surveys, Interviews were then conducted with a representative sample of graduates from each faculty. This sub-sample was asked about both the content of their literacy course(s) and their practice teaching experiences. Course materials from required literacy courses were also reviewed.

Prior to the data collection for the study, significant advances had been reported in the literature regarding how to teach reading and writing and these spoke to the content that should be included in preservice literacy programs. A comprehensive review of reading research done by the National Reading Panel (NRP), 2000 (Teaching Children to Read) reported that the best approach to teaching reading was to include a combination of components. For reading, the main components, which have become known as “the big five,” are: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension (SEDL, 2000). Similarly, components of effective writing instruction were reported to include: letter formation, word study and spelling, writing conventions, expressive language, and composition strategies (Learning First Alliance, 2000; SEDL, 2000). Moreover, reading and writing processes are complementary, with the development in one contributing to the development of the other.

Several reports relevant to the topic of this thesis have come out since the data collection for the thesis was completed. Of particular note with respect to the important contribution of teacher preparation programs in literacy education, was the International Reading Association’s report: Teaching Reading Well, (IRA, 2007). This report outlined features
of exemplary preservice reading instruction programs. These features included providing research-based instruction in how students became successful readers; and faculty who model successful instruction techniques. The report also provided suggestions for improved practice teaching, and dealing with issues related to assessment, and student diversity.

In Ontario one mechanism for ensuring high quality faculty programs is the accreditation process run by the Ontario College of Teachers. Since 1997, the Ontario College of Teachers has been responsible for accreditation reviews of preservice programs across the province. However, at the time of the data collection for this thesis, the Ontario College of Teachers’ monitoring did not impact directly on the content of literacy education (personal communication, Accreditation Unit Manager and Acting Professional Affairs Co-ordinator, October, 2001). The content of the province’s Faculty program continues to fall under the purview of the Ontario College of Teachers.

This is of particular importance in light of compelling research indicating that the quality of faculty literacy programs can impact greatly on the quality of literacy instruction that graduates’ provide to their students (Maloch et al., 2003).

In short, much was and is known about how to most effectively teach reading and writing to students. Much was and is also known about what needs to be taught to preservice teachers regarding literacy instruction.

The purpose of this thesis was to address the following unanswered major questions:
1.) What is being taught at Ontario faculties regarding early literacy instruction?

2.) How closely does what is being taught correspond to what research indicates should be taught?

3.) How well can graduates define basic literacy terms and identify the structural components of English?

4.) How well are graduates able to apply their knowledge about teaching literacy to questions of curriculum planning, instruction, program modification, and assessment?

5.) How confident are graduates regarding literacy instruction and what are graduates’ philosophies of literacy instruction?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter begins with providing an overview of the challenges inherent in designing, researching, and improving faculty programs. These challenges were looked at generally and also specifically as it related to literacy instruction. Secondly, this chapter provides a summary of what research has shown to be the essential components of an effective elementary literacy program. Thirdly the chapter provides a review of what is known about current practices at faculties. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining some of the issues and research regarding practicum experience in the context of the development of graduates’ knowledge, pedagogy, confidence, and philosophy of literacy teaching.

In effect, this chapter offers an overview of what research indicates needs to be included in preservice literacy programs and how to best instruct preservice teachers.

What We Know about Teacher Preservice Education

All faculties of education face the daunting challenge of preparing tomorrow’s educators. Evidence shows that the influence of teachers is a critical factor in determining student achievement (Collias, Pajak, & Rigden, 2000). Research has also indicated that the impact of a teacher, positive or negative is cumulative. In effect, it has a lasting, measurable effect on academic performance (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Effective teachers create classroom environments for learning that can provide students with both a firm foundation of skills while simultaneously inspiring students to reach their potential.
This being the case, it would seem reasonable to expect a wealth of research regarding how teacher preparation programs prepare their preservice students here in Ontario\(^4\) and elsewhere\(^5\). However, at the time this study was undertaken\(^6\), there were, in fact, few published studies looking at Ontario faculties and their preparation of preservice students. These studies did not focus on faculty course content or literacy instruction. This study was an attempt to provide some insight into teacher preparation programs across Ontario with a particular focus on the preservice students’ language and literacy instruction.

Reviewing teacher preparation programs in general, is a challenge. Galluzo and Craig (1990) describe some methodological impediments that continue to pose problems for reform. The first being, what outcomes should be measured? They outline the following categories to be assessed: (a) general, professional, and subject-matter knowledge; (b) teaching behaviour/skills; (c) attitudes and disposition; and (d) perceptions of preparation.

Galluzo and Craig propose that the best measures of faculty-programs would have to be devised at each particular faculty. It would involve assessing the subject-matter proficiencies and level of professional knowledge of graduates. Yet, here again, there are roadblocks. The authors caution that this would be a costly and likely unsuccessful exercise. They suggest that devising acceptable measures is probably unattainable because even within a particular faculty, staff would be unable to reach a consensus about what should be assessed.

\(^4\)In 2009, Kosnik and Beck published a qualitative study of graduates from OISE/UT’s one- and two-year programs exploring the impact of literacy courses on them as beginning teachers. The findings are included in this chapter in order to provide further insight into the Ontario context.

\(^5\)In 2006 Walsh, Glaser, and Dunne Wilcox reviewed the content of faculty literacy courses in the United States. Findings are included in this chapter in order to provide further insight into the content of literacy instruction courses elsewhere.

\(^6\) Data for the present study were collected in 2002 and 2003.
Others outline the challenges differently. Katz and Raths (1992) argue that course content and the manner of instruction at faculties are often ineffective because they are shaped by the many dilemmas that are “endemic to teacher education”. These are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

| Dilemma #1: Coverage Versus Mastery | -faculties are continually being expected to expand curriculum because there is a perceived need for the inclusion of new findings or a need in the student population that must be addressed  
|                                    | -due to external time constraints, this results in all material being discussed in only a superficial way or some material being left out altogether so that other material can be covered thoroughly |
| Dilemma #2: Evaluative Versus Affective Emphasis | -one expectation of faculty instructors is to exclude weak or inept recruits from entering the profession but this conflicts with the expectation that faculty instructors will support and encourage candidates so that they are more likely to improve their skills |
| Dilemma #3: Emphasis on Current Versus Future Needs of Candidates | -candidates are typically highly dependent upon faculty instructors for direction, prescription and evaluation  
|                                    | -the temptation is to provide candidates with recipes and gimmicks that are easily understood rather than wading into the theories and complexities of the profession that they might later come to appreciate |
| Dilemma #4: Thematic Versus Eclectic Approaches | -some faculties organize their courses around a theme, philosophy, or model while others encourage a more eclectic approach  
|                                    | -having all faculty courses conform to a theme (e.g., diversity) risks being proscribed, overly-simplified and cloying, however, it has the potential to provide candidates with a coherence across courses |
| Dilemma #5: Emphasis on Current Practice Versus Innovative Practice | -faculties can choose between helping candidates acquire competence in current standards of practice or help them learn the most recently developed innovative practices |
| Dilemma #6: Specific Versus Global Assessment Criteria | -some faculties support concrete and specific criteria for assessment where others use more broadly defined constructs, for example, candidates will develop an integrated and interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding of child development  
|                                    | -the former runs the risk of trivializing complexities where the latter may result in candidates feeling assessments are arbitrary, unfair, or unclear |

Certainly, dilemmas #1, 2, 3, and 6 come acutely into play with respect to faculties’ language and literacy instruction programs. Regarding Dilemma #1, in teacher education the most impactful finite resources is time. Too often, depth of program is sacrificed in
favour of breadth of program. Many researchers have continued to find that trying to cover too many topics leads to program deficits in important areas (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Grossman & Schoenfeld, 2005).

As Hagger and McIntyre (2006) state, in preservice education it is always necessary to be “selective about the content covered”. They argue that without depth of coverage and an adequate understanding of key elements, the graduates themselves cannot “select, choose, adapt, and integrate in the constructivist manner envisioned” in most teacher preparation programs (Kosnik & Beck, 2009, p. 3).

Unfortunately, literacy instruction is a topic that demands both depth and breadth: both coverage and mastery. Courses need to cover a breadth of topics including Ministry curricula, long range planning, student instruction, and assessment procedures. However, there are many complexities regarding literacy instruction that must be mastered in order to teach literacy effectively. These will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Dilemma #2, “evaluative versus affective emphasis”, also comes into play in faculty literacy programs. Although there is an expectation that faculty instructors will exclude weak or inept recruits from entering the teaching profession the reality is that faculty instructors rarely do and “although preservice teacher evaluation has an accountability function, it is not widely respected” (Raths & Lyman, 2003). One argument being that becoming a teacher is a long and challenging process during which one needs to be supported and encouraged to build knowledge, refine skills and become a reflective practitioner.
Emphasis on “current versus future needs of candidates” is another dilemma strongly linked to literacy instruction at faculties. Generally, preservice students clamber for that “bag of tricks” that they can pull from when they are teaching.

Kosnik and Beck (2009) describe this in more intense terms: “a preoccupation with immediate survival” (p. 8). Envisioning running a classroom for a day, a term, and a year can be intimidating. When students are disengaged or confused the teacher is responsible for reaching into the bag, pulling out a new strategy, or accommodating/modifying program to make learning happen. Like a magician, a skilled teacher makes this process seem effortless but this belies the knowledge base that makes it possible to pull out just the right strategy in just the right context for just the right child. Providing the knowledge-base and guiding the development of preservice student skills is a long and challenging process.

Dilemma #6 looks at “specific versus global assessment” for preservice students. Faculty literacy instruction programs sometimes sacrifice more challenging thought-provoking assignments which would further the preservice students’ understanding in order to provide them with a do-able, self-confidence boosting assignment. In some Ontario faculties, literacy programs favour the do-able assignments. In several faculty programs, marks are given for merely attending class or attending and participating. The Ontario College of Teachers has recommended that this practice not continue.

Effective Literacy Teaching: A Convergence of Evidence

This chapter began with providing an overview of and some of the challenges inherent in designing, researching, and improving faculty programs generally and specifically as they
relate to literacy instruction. Now the focus shifts to what research has shown to be the essential components, or the what, of an effective elementary literacy program. Research has provided a convergence of evidence outlining the components of effective literacy instruction. This growing body of research has found acceptance by various well-renowned literacy organizations including the American Federation of Teachers (1999), and the Learning First Alliance (LFA, 2000).

A variety of different methodologies were used by researchers but all arrived at the same conclusion. Some of the studies surveyed the knowledge and practices of effective literacy teachers. Pressley, Rankin, and Yokoi (1996) determined what components of literacy instruction were required by looking at “exemplary” teachers’ programs. Eighty-three primary teachers who had been nominated by their supervisors as effective literacy instructors were surveyed. These teachers were asked to list the practices they considered essential to literacy instruction and then asked to offer details about the activities/lessons and time spent on each component.

These teachers described: classrooms filled with print, and lessons incorporating explicit modeling of reading, and instruction in comprehension strategies and the writing process. They described practices involving reading and writing across the curriculum, and the explicit teaching of spelling, vocabulary, decoding skills and strategies. These effective literacy instructors also included ways to encourage students’ motivation for literacy.
In another research study, Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Collins Block, and Morrow (1998) looked at the differences between classes of exemplary and typical primary reading teachers. They determined that students in the classroom of exemplary teachers were more on-task and engaged in literacy related activities. These more effective literacy teachers used whole language principles and explicit skills-based instruction for reading and writing.

Another study involved comprehensive meta-analyses of the components of exemplary literacy instruction. The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) conducted a review based on a pool of more than 100,000 studies. Researchers examined the data with respect to the following five literacy components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (i.e., “the big five”) in order to determine how to most effectively teach reading. The report’s findings regarding these components are described below.

Phonemic awareness is an aural skill that requires the ability to recognize, think about and manipulate the individual sounds in words. The National Reading Panel determined that phonemic awareness instruction was “highly effective under a variety of teaching conditions with a variety of learners across a range of grade and age levels” (p. 7). Researchers found that children of different abilities improved their reading skills as a function of phonemic awareness training and that the effects of phonemic awareness instruction on reading lasted “well beyond the end of training”.

Phonics refers to the relationship between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language. The NRP found that systematic phonics instruction produced significant benefits for students in kindergarten through Grade 6. It was determined that receiving systematic phonics instruction resulted in enhanced reading and spelling in kindergarteners. Grade 1 students who were taught phonics systematically were better able to decode and spell, and they showed significant improvement in their ability to comprehend text. Students who struggled to learn to read benefitted from systematic synthetic phonics instruction. These children “improved substantially in their ability to read words and showed significant, albeit small, gains in their ability to process text as a result of systematic synthetic phonics instruction” (p. 9).

Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with appropriate expression. NRP findings showed that effective fluency instruction resulted in improved word recognition, and comprehension. The NRP determined that “repeated oral reading procedures that included guidance from teachers, peers, or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels” (p. 12).

A strong vocabulary is important for understanding what is read. The NRP found that “vocabulary instruction did lead to gains in comprehension, but that methods must be appropriate to the age and ability of the reader” (p. 14). They determined that vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly. Preteaching new vocabulary words before reading a text, was also helpful as were repetition and multiple exposures to new vocabulary.
Comprehension is about understanding what is read. Researchers determined that providing instruction in a variety of reading comprehension strategies was most effective. These strategies can be taught explicitly and include teaching students to: self-monitor for understanding, use graphic and semantic organizers, answer questions with immediate feedback, ask questions about text, become aware of story structure, and summarize (p. 15).

The Committee for the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children of the National Research Council reached similar conclusions regarding the essential components of expert literacy instruction. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) reviewed the existing research literature on normal reading development and instructional approaches to prevent reading difficulties. They determined that reading instruction in the primary grades should focus on the development of word recognition and comprehension skills within a motivating context. Their findings also support the NRP’s findings that phonemic awareness and phonics account for more variation in early reading and spelling than IQ, maturity level, and listening comprehension.

**Writing**

Children must be provided with opportunities to write meaningful text themselves. Reading and writing share a reciprocal relationship. When breaking down words in order to write them, letter-sound relationships are rehearsed and reinforced and readers rely on this relationship when reading. Research also indicates that each skill also requires distinct and unique cognitive processes. Reading and writing have different purposes and starting points
and therefore require targeted instruction (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). Writing necessitates explicit instruction in spelling patterns, text structures, and conventions as well as practice printing and handwriting so that the process becomes automatized.

A review of the details of the evidence concerning the components of effective reading and writing instruction is far beyond the scope of this thesis, given the literally thousands of relevant studies that exist, but the following table provides a summary of the evidence-based essential components of effective literacy instruction that have been drawn from key reviews of the relevant literature. The components presented in Table 2 represent the literacy education content that P/J preservice students should understand and be able to apply in the classroom. In effect, it outlines the what that needs to be included in preservice literacy programs.

**Table 2**

**Essential Components of Effective Literacy Instruction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonics and Decoding</td>
<td>Systematic and explicit instruction in letter-sound associations and word identification strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic Awareness</td>
<td>Explicit instruction in sound identification, matching, segmentation, and blending.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>The ability to read text accurately and quickly is improved by using strategies like repeated and guided oral reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Explicit 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>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>Spelling and Handwriting</td>
<td>Explicit instruction of sound-symbol associations, spelling patterns and letter formation.</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>

(Put Reading First, 2001; LFA, 2000; NRP, 2000; Heredia, 2010)
What is at Stake?

Indeed, learning to read and write is a complicated process. The challenge of teaching reading and writing is made even more daunting when one appreciates the impact of reading and writing failure on a child. Many children struggle to become proficient readers and writers. It is estimated that “about 20% of elementary students in the US have significant problems learning to read” The same source also reports that the same percentage of “elementary students do not read fluently enough to enjoy or engage in independent reading” (American Federation of Teachers, 1999).

What are the sources of these learning problems? Basic intelligence does not appear to play a major causal role. Stanovich, Cunningham, and Freeman (1984) found that IQ is “only weakly and non-specifically related to achievement in the early grades”. In fact, the reverse is true. Reading failure is a threat to intelligence and general cognitive skills. In one of many seminal papers on the impact of early literacy failure, Stanovich (1986) outlines the consequences of poor reading ability:

Slow reading acquisition has cognitive, behavioural, and motivational consequences that slow the development of other cognitive skills and inhibit performance on many academic tasks. In short, as reading develops, other cognitive processes linked to it track the level of reading skill. Knowledge bases that are in reciprocal relationships with reading are also inhibited from further development. (p. 390)
Conversely, good readers improve. Children who acquire alphabetic coding skills begin to recognize many words and as word recognition becomes more automatic, children are able to give more attention to comprehension. These children likely read more and as Stanovich states: the rich get richer⁷. Experts agree that children who initially experience difficulty learning to read and write can be helped “by instruction that teaches directly the specific language skills on which proficient reading depends”⁸. In effect, leaving out evidence-based components from elementary programs leads to dire consequences for some students.

**Effective Literacy Instruction and Preservice Programs**

The seminal paper from the International Reading Association (2007) mentioned in the Introduction set forth six essential features for creating and sustaining preservice programs that produced effective reading teachers. These six foundational features included: research-based instruction in how students became successful readers; faculty who modeled successful instruction techniques for preservice students; practice-teaching that closely coordinated with coursework; an examination and addressing of the diversity among student; intentional and regular assessment of students, graduates, faculty, and curriculum; and, Governance to achieve a vision.

With regards to the first essential feature, that of providing research-based instruction in reading, the IRA pointed to six elements. These included providing a foundation in research and theory; word-level instructional strategies; text-level comprehension

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⁷Stanovich refers to this as the “Matthew Effect” (named after the Apostle Mathew who was a tax collector and whose job resulted in making the rich richer and the poor poorer).

⁸Ibid., p. 20
strategies; reading-writing connections; instructional approaches and materials; and assessment techniques.

Kosnik and Beck (2009) completed a qualitative study to gain insight into the views and practices of OISE/UT preservice literacy instructors and graduates. This Ontario study involved twenty-two graduates who were observed in their classrooms and interviewed at various points during their first two years of teaching. Seven were selected as case studies in their third year of teaching. When asked to reflect upon their faculty program, these graduates reported learning many things from their literacy course(s), including: the importance of engaging learners; strategies for developing an inclusive class community; the names of high-quality works of children's literature, and a variety of general teaching strategies.

Graduates reported a need for: more instruction in program planning, more explicit instruction on developing a literacy program, and more connections between theory and practice. Interestingly, most beginning teachers valued the theoretical component of their course. However, from the preservice graduates’ perspective, there was a lack of coherence and integration in the information presented in their literacy-related courses. This left them alone to figure out how to organize and structure their understanding of literacy instruction. For example, most valued being taught the theories related to literacy instruction, however, many felt the theory was not explained clearly enough or in sufficient depth. Important terms such as “balanced literacy”, “guided reading”, and “phonics” were simply not understood (p. 5).
The authors argued in favor of identifying priorities for preservice teacher education. Generally, 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. Specifically, the authors recommended giving priority to: subject content and pedagogy; program planning; pupil assessment; classroom organization and community; inclusive education; professional identity; and developing a vision for teaching.

Evidence from the United States has revealed that teacher preservice programs lack evidence-based reading research. Not only that, the graduates themselves appear to know that they lack the training to provide effective reading instruction and, as a result, do not feel adequately prepared to teach.

An early and widely-cited survey of 440 teachers by Lyon, Vaassen and Toomey (1989) found the majority of teachers reported that their preservice education program did not provide effective instruction within the university or school practicum settings. Recent graduates did not feel prepared to teach and reported that their expertise developed primarily through their own teaching experiences. A sub sample of interviewed graduates reported that the content of the course was somewhat superficial.

More recently, researchers (Walsh, Glaser, & Dunne Wilcox, 2006) working on behalf of the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), randomly selected 72 faculties of education to learn what preservice teachers are taught about reading instruction. Researchers reviewed the required reading from 223 literacy courses, including 227
required texts and syllabi. Schools were scored on how well their courses presented the core components of the science of reading. In effect, how well the content of the courses aligned with the findings of the NRP. Results indicated that only 15% of the education schools provide future teachers with even minimal exposure to the science of reading. Course syllabi revealed a tendency to dismiss the scientific research in reading. Also of concern was that only four of the 227 texts used in teacher education literacy courses were rated as “acceptable” for use as a general, comprehensive textbook.

Surprisingly, the NCTQ study determined that phonics was the most frequently taught of “the big five” components. This suggests that, there is not necessarily an ideological resistance to phonics instruction (p. 27).

Of concern, however, was the finding that, in many cases, what was taught in the preservice literacy courses were models of reading instruction that were not consistent with research findings. This included the idea that reading skills will develop “naturally,” and that explicit instruction is obsolete and/or detrimental to students (p. 30).

**Missed Opportunity**

Once graduates have completed their preservice instruction they are certified to teach in Ontario and may never take another course to improve their literacy instruction. Ontario’s New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) will likely not fill the void. NTIP’s goal is to support effective teaching, learning, and assessment practices so that “new teachers can continue to develop the requisite skills and knowledge that will support increased success
as teachers in Ontario\textsuperscript{9}. The mentoring of new teachers by experienced teachers is a main focus of this initiative.

Research conducted in the United States would suggest that new teacher mentoring would likely not fill the void because the experienced teachers, themselves, lack a foundational understanding regarding literacy instruction.

Some very revealing data were obtained by Moats in 1995. Her research involved 89 teachers with five to 20 years of experience. The subjects were found to have, “an insufficient grasp of spoken and written language structure and they would be unable to teach it explicitly to either beginning readers or those with reading/spelling disabilities” (p. 45). In fact, only 20% of regular teachers and 10% of special educators themselves felt that the content of their reading and reading instruction courses had been adequate (Moats & Lyon, 1996). There has been no evidence since to suggest that this pattern, that Moats observed 16 years ago has changed.

On a positive note, however, McCutchen and Berninger (1999) found that this knowledge and the required instructional skills could be taught. Their goal was to work with teachers to help them, “assimilate their existing knowledge of effective practice, modifying and supplementing their practice” with research-based expertise. A great deal of time was required to deepen teachers’ understanding of phonological awareness. To do this they had to encourage teachers to focus on the sounds in words rather than the spellings. They

\textsuperscript{9}See Ministry of Education web site (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/induction.html) 01/10
completed activities to isolate and count phonemes. For example, they overtly explained to teachers that *ship* and *sing* have three phonemes each rather than four.

These researchers found that some teachers improved their practice more quickly than others but concluded by reporting that it was possible to effect long-term change in teacher practice when the skills were supported by knowledge of a research-base.

Moats' study 16 years ago described a thorough understanding of the structure of language as “the missing foundation in teacher education”. She argued that without this foundation, teachers could not meet the diverse needs of students at risk for reading and writing failure. She stated that a strong foundation in this area would make it possible for teachers to do five important things a) be better able to interpret and respond to student errors; b) pick the best examples for teaching decoding and spelling; c) organize and sequence information for instruction; d) use knowledge of morphology to explain spelling; and e) integrate the components of language arts’ instruction.

After an intensive six-week language course, 90% of teachers were able to adequately master phonemic awareness. Those who did complete the course were emphatic in their endorsement of the usefulness of the information to their teaching. She reports that 85-93% of the class agreed that the information was highly useful or essential to their teaching. A high number, 91%, felt that this type of course should be required for all teachers of reading, writing, or language.
Similarly, Brady and Moats (1997) recommended that faculty literacy courses provide preservice students with a thorough understanding of the conceptual foundations of literacy development, a thorough understanding of the structure of language\(^{10}\), and supervised practice in the teaching of reading.

**Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities**

There have been many advances in knowledge about literacy and learning disabilities. However, these findings are inconsistently disseminated in preservice programs. For example, many studies have looked at the effectiveness of a variety of instructional practices aimed at preventing or remediating language disabilities (e.g., Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998; Lundberg, Frost, & Petersen, 1988; Olson, Wise, Ring, & Johnson, 1997; Orton Dyslexia Society, 1997, Torgeson, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1997; Vellutino, Scanlon, Sipay, & Small, 1996). Clearly, these instructional strategies are of little use if teachers are unaware of them. Preservice education offers an unparalleled opportunity to present these findings.

The Ontario College of Teachers, the organization that accredits preservice programs in Ontario, recognized this problem during the first round of faculty reviews and as a result has made the following recommendations:

\(^{10}\)These structures include phonetics, phonology, orthography and its relationship to sounds and meaning, syntax, and text structures.
[That] knowledge of special education becomes one of the core areas of concentration for teacher education programs and regulations should be amended to state that a course in special education form one of the core requirements for graduates. (p. 15)

Also, that graduates have opportunities to:

…acquire and to practice strategies to deal with the realities of differently abled learners across all disciplines and divisions because Ontario’s classrooms are becoming increasingly inclusive and graduates need to have a firm grasp of the professional knowledge, commitment to students and teaching practices associated with teaching children who are differently abled.

…acquire and to practice the skills to modify curriculum and assessment to meet the needs of children with learning exceptionalities. (p. 15)

In summary, research conducted in the United States has found that the elements required for the most effective literacy instruction were rarely evident in teacher preservice programs. A review of other findings indicates that mentoring new teachers is not a solution to the problem. On a positive note, however, the required knowledge and instructional skills can be learned.

It is clear that there is a need for more information about the preparation for literacy education that faculties across the province provide preservice students.
Issues and Research Regarding Practicum

Practicum placements are an important element of the teacher education program. The goal of the practicum placement is to provide the preservice student with school-based field experiences where they can apply newly acquired skills in real classroom settings. Most preservice students complete several placements. Often different placements involve observing and teaching classes of differing grade levels located in different schools. During these placements it is expected that preservice students receive feedback, usually from their hosts\(^{11}\) and sometimes a faculty supervisor, about their teaching. Preservice students are encouraged to reflect upon their performance.

For a long time, questions have arisen in the literature about the quality of preservice student’s practicum experiences (Goodlad, 1986). They are often reported, by preservice students, to be the most valued component of teacher preparation programs (McClure, 2008; Ontario College of Teachers, 2005). However, Zeichner (2006) outlined concerns with practicum placements. He cited specifically, the incompatibility “between the curriculum of the teacher education program on the university campus and student teachers’ work in schools” (p. 4). Among other things, he cautioned that there was often a conflict of teaching practices.

Regardless, studies by McDermott, Gormley, Rothenberg, and Hammer (1995) and Kagan, (1992) both found preservice students with more experience teaching were more concerned

\(^{11}\)The “host” teacher is the regular classroom teacher who models instructional practices, offers guidance in program planning, and observes and evaluates the preservice student.
with student learning, were less concerned about what others thought about them, and were able to articulate times when they were encouraged about their experiences teaching.

These researchers argued that practicum experience accelerated preservice students’ growth towards expert pedagogy. They suggested that with “extensive and varied classroom experiences and constructive evaluations about their teaching” preservice students moved more quickly to more insightful thoughts about their teaching and their students’ learning.

**Attempts at Improving Program/Practicum**

Other researchers have recognized and targeted specific problems with the practicum experience and have strived to rectify them.

Anderson (1998) devised a study to determine how to provide optimal feedback to preservice students during their practicum. She attempted to optimize the benefits of faculty supervision by offering preservice students feedback based on checklists, by taking field notes while observing preservice students’ lessons, and by using a dialogue journal. Preservice students were also required to meet with their faculty supervisor for a post-observation conference during which the supervisor pointed out two-to-three items that needed improving and offered suggestions for improvement.

Examples of field notes indicated that they addressed both literacy related issues and issues related to classroom management.

You demonstrated good wait time for answers to your questions. You were right to ignore the responses of children who blurted out answers. It might
be necessary to stop and remind them of the classroom rules when this begins. Then give the “finger-to-lips signal” to those who persist. (p. 125)

And with regards to another preservice student’s lesson,

You did a great job introducing the new vocabulary words. (One note, the final y in ordinary constitutes a fourth syllable and sounds like long e.) You also did a very good job of building background—an essential step for comprehension. (p. 126)

According to Anderson, preservice students valued feedback from host teachers and faculty supervisors a great deal (4.52/6, and 4.71/6 respectively). Anderson recommended that written feedback without oral feedback was not effective and that feedback became less effective if it was delayed.

Harris and Harris (1992) devised another study to address critics’ concerns regarding, a) the incongruence between what was taught in literacy instruction courses at the faculty and what was observed in the practicum placements, and b) difficulties finding competent host teachers. Their hypothesis was that working towards a partnership between university faculties and schools would improve instruction in both facilities. Researchers spent three years adapting the faculty program while developing a “reciprocal mentoring” structure with selected schools. They argue that the:

…best literacy teachers must be prepared by the best teacher education programs that universities can achieve...The clinical [practicum] portion of teacher preparation programs has a profound influence on how the
In 1986, Goodlad described this potential school/faculty relationship in a symbiotic way. He described the mutually beneficial linking as virtually untried. Ideally, he argued, this would allow “key” or “partner” schools (Goodlad, 1984) to be on the vanguard of implementing new research regarding programming and instruction. Universities would be able to provide more ideal practicum placements for preservice students and would have a place to conduct research.

As with faculty programs, research has shown that reviewing and improving practicum placement experiences is challenging. Some researchers looked at preservice students’ learning outcomes and how these could be optimized with regards to literacy skills instruction. Shefelbine and Hollingsworth (1987) sought to identify what kinds of decisions in reading instruction were potentially troublesome for preservice students and whether feedback about their instruction would result in improved literacy teaching.

Seven areas of reading instruction were identified and a theoretical framework was used to determine the quality of skill displayed by preservice students. Fourteen preservice students were measured according to how well they were able to diagnose the cause of student comprehension problems (e.g., lack of prior knowledge, poor word identification skills). They were also assessed on how well they were able to adapt lessons to meet students’ needs; balance context with isolated skills instruction; select appropriate texts for students
(95%\textsuperscript{12} accuracy levels); include a variety of reading strategies; provide word recognition instruction; and activate their students’ prior knowledge.

Researchers rated the decision making abilities of their subjects and found that half were unable to make “good” decisions in any of the seven areas. The preservice students who were more thoughtful decision makers had trouble in four of the more complex reading instruction areas (diagnosis, planning, lesson balance, and word recognition). Their responses lacked organization and depth and even though they knew a “substantial amount” about these areas they were not sure how to sequence and “systematically” teach them.

Another important finding was that 9/14 preservice students were affected by difficulties managing students. For them, the priority became gaining and maintaining command of the class rather than focusing on what students were learning and how to best instruct them. Instead, they selected instructional strategies that allowed for more teacher-directed controlled interactions. Also, developing routines distracted more than half of the preservice students. This preoccupied them from addressing more instructional concerns.

The findings of the study indicated that teacher education programs should help preservice students master instructional routines and these skills must be “automatized so that preservice students’ attention and efforts can be directed to teaching”.

Research has found that although some problems persist, practicum placements provide preservice students with valuable experiences. It was also found that preservice students

\textsuperscript{12}Durrell and Catterson, 1980 suggest children select reading materials that are of interest and can be read with few mistakes so that comprehension is not compromised.
highly valued being provided with insightful and timely feedback regarding their instructional practices. It is important to remember that becoming an expert literacy teacher is a complex process and that a foundation in instructional routines and student management is a prerequisite.

**Becoming a Teacher: Graduates’ Pedagogy and Philosophy**

Clearly, the content of preservice literacy programs is an area requiring further investigation. This is especially important because preservice programs have the potential to be a powerful influence on graduates’ beliefs and educational practices. Risko et al. (2008) reviewed 15 years of research regarding preservice reading instruction and determined that changes in beliefs and pedagogy resulted most strongly when these teachers in training were involved in completing activities closely related to teaching students. This included collecting and analyzing student work. These researchers also found that along with practicum placement experiences, “explicit explanations, use of examples, modeling, focused feedback, practice within the university classroom” were most impactful in developing student teachers’ beliefs and practices.

Risko and her colleagues concluded there is a strong relationship between explicitness and the impact of the particular strategy in changing student teachers’ beliefs and pedagogical knowledge.

It is important to keep in mind that Preservice students arrive at faculties having already been students in classrooms for many years. As such, they are not blank slates upon which
information is recorded (Zeichner & Liston, 1987, Lortie, 1975). Rather, they enter the programs with “loosely formulated philosophies of education that personally explain what teachers do and how children learn in classrooms” (Buchman & Schwille, 1983). Risko’s 2008 findings suggest ways to shift preservice students’ paradigms toward best teaching practices.

Summary of What Research Says Effective Preservice Education Looks Like

Table 3 has been included below in order to organize the findings described in this chapter as they relate to the required components of faculty programs (Language Arts) and how to deliver them to preservice students.

Table 3
What Research Says Effective Preservice Education Looks Like

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depth of Literacy Knowledge</td>
<td>Build a depth of knowledge related to the required components of an elementary literacy program (see Table 2) and how best to teach these components;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadth of Literacy Knowledge</td>
<td>Build breadth of knowledge regarding literacy (e.g., knowledge of the Ontario Ministry of Education documents such as Language Arts 1-8, Writing Exemplars, English Language Learners, Special Education- A Guide for Educators; an understanding of process writing, writing genres, guided and shared reading and writing, knowledge of high quality reading materials etc.);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Student Diversity</td>
<td>Examine, and assess a diverse range of elementary students’ work in preservice literacy course(s) and accommodate and modify activities/lessons/assignments to meet the needs of all students;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Teaching Literacy</td>
<td>Gain hands-on experience with a diverse range of students in practicum teaching language arts and to receive specific and timely feedback on instructional techniques and strategies used;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe Expert Modeling</td>
<td>Learn from “expert” instructors and host teachers modeling exemplary literacy instruction;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn Program Planning, Organization, and Student Management Skills</td>
<td>Be provided with many opportunities to develop practical program planning, and organization techniques (Shefelbine &amp; Hollingsworth, 1987) and classroom management strategies and receive specific and timely feedback on those techniques and strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Improving preservice literacy instruction is indeed a challenge. Research has provided insight into what needs to be included and how to best deliver the required knowledge and
skills to preservice students. The next chapter provides a context within which these issues will be discussed.
Chapter 3: Background and Purpose of the Research

The Ontario Context: Nine Faculties and 26 Programs

This chapter provides a brief overview of the 26 programs in Ontario and reports the duration of each program’s literacy course(s) and practice teaching. It concludes by outlining the role of the Ontario College of Teachers.

Teacher education programs in the province are typically offered by universities and delivered by faculties of education (Appendix A lists all P/J Teacher Education programs that were being offered in Ontario in 2001/2002 and 2002/2003). Becoming a teacher requires the completion of a three or four year degree from an accredited university and at least one year of teacher education at a faculty of education. At the successful completion of this year, graduates are recommended to the Ontario College of Teachers for the awarding of a Certificate of Qualification to Teach.

Applicants to faculty programs select one of three options according to the grades they would like to teach: Primary/Junior (JK to Grade 6), Junior/Intermediate (Grade 4 to Grade 10), or Intermediate/Senior (Grade 7 to Grade 12). As this study focuses on early reading and writing instruction, only those enrolled in the Primary/Junior track were selected as subjects and only course materials from these programs was reviewed.

During the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 academic year, teaching degrees were offered at ten universities across Ontario. This study focuses only on the nine whose program instruction was in English. In the case of Ottawa University where both an English and French program was offered only the English program has been examined. This is because the
literature regarding essential literacy instruction, which will be discussed in relation to these programs, involved teaching English-speaking students to read and write in English.

Twenty-six different programs leading to teaching degrees were offered at the nine faculties involved in this study (see Table 4 listing all of the Faculties and Programs included in the present study). Some programs were unique because graduates entered the program at the same time they began their undergraduate degrees (Brock, Lakehead and Queen’s) or after their second year of their undergraduate program (York). These Concurrent programs required the completion of several faculty courses and at least two practice teaching blocks while concurrently completing an undergraduate degree.

The equivalent of a Bachelor Degree in Education and a Master degree were conferred to graduates from OISE/UT’s Master of Arts in Child Study and Education, and the Master of Teaching programs. These were both two-year programs. The Master of Arts in Child Study offered intense practical experience and qualified graduates to become elementary school teachers with a Master degree. According to the web site, the Master of Teaching program prepared graduates to assume a leadership role in education and, like the Master of Arts in Child Studies program, provided a strong foundation in research.

Some programs were unique because of their location. For example, Lakehead’s faculty language arts course was taught in an elementary school. Other universities ran satellite programs in different geographical locations. For example, Brock ran both the Concurrent and Consecutive program out of the main campus in St Catharines, and Hamilton. OISE/UT ran programs from their main campus, as well as from Central, East, North, Regional, GTA Catholic South, Crosstown, and Mid-town sites.
Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty of Education</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>York (Toronto)</td>
<td>Consecutive Concurrent</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>Windsor Chatham</td>
<td>Consecutive Consecutive</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OISE/UT</td>
<td>OISE/UT Central East</td>
<td>Consecutive Consecutive</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Regional GTA Catholic South</td>
<td>Consecutive Consecutive</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Crosstown Mid-Town</td>
<td>Consecutive Consecutive</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA (Toronto)</td>
<td>Master in Child Studies and Education</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (equivalency) and Masters degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Master in Teaching</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (equivalency) and Masters degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen’s</td>
<td>Queen’s (Kingston)</td>
<td>Consecutive Concurrent</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakehead</td>
<td>Lakehead (Thunder Bay)</td>
<td>Consecutive Concurrent</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brock</td>
<td>St. Catharines Hamilton</td>
<td>Consecutive Concurrent</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nipissing</td>
<td>Nipissing</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Western (London)</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most teacher education programs offered preservice students an opportunity to vary their own programs somewhat by providing a range of elective options. For example, at
Queen’s, Primary/Junior preservice candidates completed the required Arts, Language, Mathematics, Personal and Social Studies, Science, Technology, and two noncurricular courses (Critical Issues and Policies, and Theory and Professional Practice). However, students may have chosen to take these subjects within specialized programs (e.g., Outdoor Education Program\textsuperscript{13}, Aboriginal Teacher Education, and Artist in the Community).

At some faculties, preservice students completed required courses but were able to select from a number of specialized courses. Several universities offered an additional elementary literacy instructions course as an elective.

Another difference across faculties was the number of sections in the programs. Where one program may have only one section (e.g., E17, with 17 students) another may have more than 10 sections (e.g., H21, with a total of 476 students). At faculties where enrolments were high several instructors taught sections of the literacy courses.

**The Ontario College of Teachers: Their Mandate and Requirements for the Accreditation of Faculties**

The Ontario College of Teachers was established in 1997 by the provincial government. The Ontario College of Teachers is a self-regulating body for the teaching profession in Ontario and is mandated:

\textsuperscript{13}As these programs are very small (all less than 30) and contained more Junior/Intermediate and Intermediate/Senior track students in them, they were not included in this study. The ATEP program had Primary/Junior track students but was extremely small. The registrar’s office reported six students in different years of study in 2001/2002 (personal correspondence, January, 2002). As such, this program was also not included in this study.
3. (1) 3 to accredit professional teacher education programs offered by postsecondary educational institutions.

Ontario College of Teachers Act

They are charged with reviewing and giving direction, with respect to the accreditation of preservice programs and providers, and to report their findings.

In order to carry out this mandate the Ontario College of Teachers Council elected an Accreditation Committee to review Faculty of Education programs at the province’s universities. This committee developed an accreditation process and criteria for the accreditation of preservice programs. By 2000, all faculty programs had been reviewed and initial accreditation granted (Lakehead and Laurentian Universities had been granted accreditation with conditions). The Ontario College of Teachers reported that “the accreditation process is viewed as a necessary and rigorous catalyst for affirmation and change in programs of professional teacher education” (Preservice Teacher Education: Initial Accreditation Handbook, p. 9).

The content of Ontario’s Faculty programs falls under the purview of the Ontario College of Teachers. As mentioned in the Introduction, the Ontario College of Teachers’ Accreditation Committee did not look, in a detailed fashion, at the degree to which research was informing early literacy program instruction. None of the Accreditation Committee members were literacy experts. Given the centrality of literacy instruction in elementary education it was also surprising to find that the Ontario College of Teachers did not present

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14Laurentian’s Faculty of Education program was in French and was not included in this study.

15The Acting Professional Affairs Co-ordinator: Ontario College of Teachers reported this (personal correspondence, October, 2001) and the Preservice Accountability Administrator also reported this (personal correspondence, May, 2011).
specific expectations for either the *content* of literacy education courses to be offered by
faculties of education or for the *amount of time* that faculties should allocate to preparation
for literacy instruction.

The main focus of this thesis is on the content and process of teacher preparation in the area
of P/J literacy education provided by Ontario’s faculties, but some important preliminary
information for this investigation concerns how much actual time is spent in each faculty
program on the coursework and practica in which the students acquire exposure to the
literacy content provided by their program.

**The Ontario Context: Length of Faculty Language Arts Courses and Literacy
Instruction across Preservice Programs**

As mentioned above, the Ontario College of Teachers did not have specific expectations for
the *amount of time* that faculties should allocate to literacy instruction.

The question “How much time was spent in each Preservice Program on Language Arts
and Literacy Instruction?” might seem a simple one. In fact determining the answer to this
question was far from a simple matter. It could not be determined directly by looking at
university calendars or course descriptions. Several data sources had to be examined to
produce *estimates* of the number of hours in each faculty program that were allocated to
literacy preparation. The information that is provided in this section was gleaned from the
Surveys and Interviews, as well as from the course outlines, that provided the data for the
main investigation of the thesis.
Both in the Surveys completed by all participants and in the Interviews with a subset of the participants there were questions specifically asking for this information. Survey question #21 from Appendix B asked: In total (hours per week X weeks per year) how many hours did you spend in literacy related classes in your faculty program? (If unsure, please give your best estimate): ___________. The Interview protocol for #7 from Appendix C asked: How many classes were related to language and literacy? How many hours of instruction in (total)? (if necessary: # hours/week and # of weeks). In addition some course documents provided information about the amount of time in literacy education coursework. All of these data sources (where available) were used to determine and corroborate estimates of the number of hours preservice students in each program spent engaged in required courses in literacy education.

Where there were multiple participants from a program their estimates were averaged. Two Survey participants’ outlier estimates\(^\text{16}\) were not included in the calculation of the average number of hours of literacy instruction in their respective courses.

For many programs, the number of hours reported from sources were similar (e.g., for Program I, the mean for Survey responses was 22.5 hours and the course outlines indicated 21 hours and 20 minutes).

\(^{16}\) One Survey Respondent reported three hours and another reported 450 (neither of which was supported by course outlines or classmates).
Table 5 summarizes the number of hours allocated to required literacy coursework in the program ranging from the lowest number of hours to the highest number of hours. Details of the data that went into the calculations are provided in Appendix D.

These data concerning amount of time allocated to literacy courses are reported here to serve as a context for the overall study examining the literacy content in faculty preservice programs. Clearly there was considerable variation in the number of hours of language arts and literacy courses offered across Ontario’s 26 faculty programs.

As shown in Table 5 courses across the province ranged from 21 hours and 20 minutes to 72 hours. This indicated quite a variance, with the graduates with the longest program receiving more than three times the number of hours of instruction as the graduates from the shortest program.
Gauging the number of hours of literacy instruction received at their respective faculties proved difficult for graduates. There were several reasons why it was problematic to determine the number of hours. As one interviewee stated, “It was hard to pinpoint the number of hours” (163, l40).

In part, the confusion was due to the structure of some of the faculty programs. Concurrent Education students finished some components of their education degrees while completing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Surveys</th>
<th>Number of Hours in Required Literacy Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H21</td>
<td>N=29</td>
<td>21.3/29.3(^{17})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I22</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20</td>
<td>N=18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K25</td>
<td>N=11</td>
<td>32.6 to 45(^ {18})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K26</td>
<td>N=22</td>
<td>32.6 to 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8-16</td>
<td>N=22</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J24</td>
<td>N=16</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J23</td>
<td>N=8</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F19</td>
<td>N=25</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>N=5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>N=9</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>N=7</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E17</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>68 to 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E18</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{17}\) Course outlines from 2001/2002 graduates clearly indicate that this course was 21 hours and 20 minutes (16 classes times 1 hour and 20 minutes). In 2002/3 the course was 29 hours and 20 minutes (16 classes times 1 hour and 50 minutes). See schedules from Year 1 Survey respondents: 72, and 84 versus Year 2 Survey respondents: 122, 123, 124, 185, 187, 189, 192, 194, 195, 197, and 201.

\(^{18}\) This variance in allotted time is clearly stated in course schedules and verified by participants in the study.
undergraduate courses. After completing their undergraduate degree, Concurrent Education students spend their final year focused solely on their Bachelor of Education. During this time they were involved in an extended practicum placement. The four Concurrent interviewees had all had some literacy related instruction prior to their final year of study. Students having completed the Master in Teaching program and the MA in Child Studies program graduated with both the equivalent of a Bachelor of Education and with a Master’s degree and had taken one literacy course in each of the two years of this program. Understandably, taking courses over an extended period made remembering their duration, in total, a challenge.

Another factor leading to confusion was the inclusion of literacy related issues in classes outside of required or elective literacy courses. As recorded in Appendix D, listing Graduates’ Estimations of Literacy-Instruction Hours at Faculty, (including required course hours, elective course hours, language-related focus in other courses in hours and the total number of hours of faculty instruction in literacy), 12 of 29 interviewees mentioned covering some language and literacy matters in classes like Educational Psychology, Child Development, and Issues in Education, Curriculum Development, and Classroom Management. Most of these discussions were reported to “not last very long”. As it was part of the faculty program this time was recorded and is reflected in the Appendix D but it is not included in the totals in Table 5 which is restricted to the required courses with a literacy component.
Five of 29 interviewees had taken elective literacy courses. This time was included in the Appendix D totals as it was felt that since the faculty had given students the opportunity to take the class it was important to report these hours. However, again, these hours are not included in Table 5 as they were not part of required course(s).

Interestingly, not all students had a separate literacy course, as such. For example, the focus of one program was on “equity and diversity” issues. In this case, teaching literacy was discussed from an equity perspective. The graduate from this program reported that, “Equity, and how that related to teaching language or math or whatever, was the number one thing” (163, l83). In this case the graduate was asked to estimate the total number of hours of equity instruction as it related to literacy.

Several interviewees cautioned that not all of the time spent in their literacy class was on-task. One reported that one-third of the time was spent completing an online component by “redundantly responding” to things discussed in class. Others talked about instructors of their required courses often “going off on tangents” and only vaguely discussing issues related to literacy. Nevertheless, all required course time was included in Table 5. This is because it would be problematic, and very subjective, to try to determine on-task-time retrospectively. Graduates were simply asked to calculate how long these required courses were in terms of total hours.

In sum then, the findings concerning the time allocated to the required literacy content in the preservice programs across the province demonstrated that there was considerable
variability not only in terms of the amount of time allocated to that aspect of the programs but also as to how that content was distributed within the programs, most literacy content being concentrated within a particular course and some being essentially incidental within a course whose focus was not literacy per se.

The Ontario Context: Length of Practice Teaching Assignments/Practicum Placements

Another requirement for program accreditation by the College of Teachers involved the completion of a minimum number of practice teaching hours by students. All graduates must complete 300 hours of teaching in a classroom. This time is to be spent observing and planning program, and instructing and evaluating students.

Faculty programs themselves required the completion of the minimum number of hours but there was a large range in the number of hours, with those enrolled in Concurrent and the two-year programs completing considerably more hours of practice teaching than those in other programs. Such time differences in practicum placements could clearly contribute to the amount and type of practical literacy-related experience student teachers have within their programs.

Table 6 lists the number of practicum hours reported by Interviewed graduates in their program. Interviewees were asked to calculate their totals aloud so that their addition could

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19Extending the preservice practicum from 40 to 60 days was recommended in the final report of a pilot project conducted at three Ontario universities between 1995 and 1997. The longer practicum brought Ontario closer to the practicum requirement in other Canadian jurisdictions.
be checked. Notes were made by interviewers on the side of the transcript as the calculations were made.

Table 6

**Practicum Hours by Faculty Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Program(s)</th>
<th>Reported Number of Hours (Subject Number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A/</td>
<td>Location 1: Concurrent Location 1: Consecutive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location 2: Concurrent Location 2: Consecutive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Concurrent Consecutive</td>
<td>338 (104), 275 (134), 275 (105), 275 (107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Concurrent Consecutive</td>
<td>365 (128), 300 (126), 300 (127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>325 (109), 280 (110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Consecutive Two Year Masters Consecutive</td>
<td>420 (68), 600 (103)*, 900 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>280 (131), 250 (132), 275 (133)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>250 (117), 250 (118), 250 (125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H/ I</td>
<td>Location 1: Consecutive Location 2: Consecutive</td>
<td>275 (119), 300 (120), 400 (121), 290 (122), 330 (123), 300 (124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Concurrent Consecutive</td>
<td>675 (114), 505 (115), 535 (163)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Concurrent Consecutive</td>
<td>743 (113), 440 (111), 425 (112)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This information was taken from the Surveys as no graduate from this Two Year program was interviewed.

According to the data in Table 6, the amount of time preservice students in various preservice programs spend in practicum placements ranges from a low of 250 hours (50 hours below the amount of time stipulated by the Ontario College of Teachers) over a period of one academic year to as high as 900 hours over a period of two academic years. Moreover, it should be noted that the practicum time requirements stipulated by the Ontario College of Teachers and by individual faculty programs are nonspecific with respect to
subject area experiences. The requirements refer to overall placement time, rather than to practical experience in any specific content area, such as literacy, in particular. Within the framework of the guidelines it would be possible, theoretically, to complete the required practicum hours without any specific hands-on experience designing and implementing a literacy program.

Not only the amount of time spent in practicum placements but also the types of placements are relevant to their usefulness in developing preservice students’ knowledge and skills in implementing literacy programs. Faculties of Education have placement offices that are responsible for co-coordinating graduates’ placement at schools. To a great extent they are at the mercy of Boards of Education that must support the placement of graduates in their schools. Principals must also support these placements and are the ones who typically approach their teaching staff to encourage them to host faculty students. At times, principals simply ask all teachers, during a staff meeting, whether any are interested in hosting a preservice student and volunteers are sent faculty students.

Often, the lack of availability of host teachers is a problem. Whether or not the teacher is a good model of how to incorporate the latest research relevant to the Language Arts in their teaching is likely less a factor than more practical considerations in the coordination of practicum placements.

A recommendation from The Ontario College of Teachers (2001) indicated that they were aware of some of the general problems with practicum placements. They advise faculties to develop criteria for the selection of host/associate teachers and that host/associate schools be aligned with the program of professional teacher education goals. They recognized that,
“often the demand for practicum placements for graduates limits the program’s availability to work with school district partners to identify the best individuals with whom graduates may practice” (p. 16).

Thus, with respect to the amount of practical experience that preservice students in the different preservice programs receive, as well as the specific types of experience they receive, there is a great deal of room for variation. Such variation could well affect graduates’ preparedness to teach literacy.

**Purpose of the Research**

It was within this complex Ontario context and across these various programs that the research in this thesis addressed the following overarching questions:

What is being covered in the literacy courses offered by Ontario’s faculties of education and to what degree does this content correspond to what research indicates should be taught?;

How do the courses impact on Ontario’s faculty graduates’ knowledge and ability to teach literacy?; and,

How do the courses impact on graduates’ confidence and their philosophy of reading and writing instruction?
Chapter 4: Methodology

Not everything that can be counted, counts

and not everything that counts, can be counted.

Albert Einstein

Overview of Research Approach

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the study itself. This includes the rationale for the methodology and the manner in which data were collected. The second section provides a description of Survey participants and how the data from this group were collected, coded, and analyzed. The third, details information about the sub group of interviewees and how the data from this group were collected, coded, and analyzed. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of the methodological safeguards put in place to ensure a high degree of trustworthiness and rigour.

This research was designed to find out what counts in the literacy component of preservice programs. Analyses involved both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to describe the content and impact of the P/J programs offered across the province. To determine the focus of the various courses, in addition to the Surveys and Interviews, print data sources included course goals/outlines, class topic schedules, prescribed reading materials, and

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20 See Creswell, 2003 for more on the use of mixed method approaches to research design.
assignment criteria\textsuperscript{21}. Although some analyses involved tallying of like components across programs, these print materials were generally looked at qualitatively.

In total, 210 P/J faculty graduates from all 26 elementary accreditation courses across Ontario submitted Surveys covering the literacy content, as well as their personal impressions, of their respective faculty programs and practicum experiences. They also sent in their course outlines/goals, class topic schedules, prescribed reading materials, and assignment criteria\textsuperscript{22}. Twenty-nine of the subjects who completed Surveys were interviewed in order to provide a more in-depth look at the various programs from graduates’ perspectives. Open-ended questions were included in the Interview in order to elicit more detailed descriptions of their thoughts and experiences.

Documents from programs were collected in order to support findings (Patton, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This multiple methodological source approach to collecting data adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth, to any inquiry.

A qualitative approach was necessary in order to answer questions about what students actually learned and could articulate and apply from their program rather than what was taught to them according to course outlines. Issues regarding affect also required a qualitative approach. Getting to the heart of these questions required students to reflect

\textsuperscript{21}Course materials were collected from all faculties, from 27 of 29 interviewees, and from 22 out of 26 programs.

\textsuperscript{22}One Survey and one Interview were conducted from one of the four programs from which materials were missing. Multiple Surveys were collected from another; the other two programs were represented by only one subject and therefore were not discussed in detail as information about these programs could not be corroborated.
upon how their perceptions of language and literacy instruction changed over time. This included amassing information about graduates’ feelings regarding their perceived preparedness to teach and anxieties about teaching. A qualitative approach also allowed for the coalescing of data around themes that were not initially seen at the outset of the study but emerged from the data (e.g., Perceived Value of Literacy Course).

Quantifying some responses expressed by many graduates was done when thought appropriate. Although cautioning against overuse, Spindler and Spindler (1992) state that this is an effective way to extend and reinforce certain kinds of data, their interpretation and helps test hypotheses across samples.

A number of quantitative measures have been included from both the initial Survey and the Interviews in order to add further insight into program content and impact. Measures included true/false questions, Likert Scale responses regarding the amount of time spent in class on various literacy terms/topics, and scores on tasks regarding graduates’ knowledge of literacy terms and knowledge of the structure of language.

**Description of Research Approach**

**Data Collection (Surveys)**

To determine the content, manner of instruction, and impact of faculty literacy programs and practicum placements, preservice students from across Ontario were encouraged to complete a Survey. The complete Survey is available in Appendix B. All attempts were made to have students’ submit Surveys within months of completing their respective
faculty programs. It was felt that this would ensure a truer recollection of their respective programs.

Several approaches were taken to encourage participation. Posters, designed with pockets containing mail-in requests for Surveys, were printed and displayed at the various campuses. Preservice students who used the mail-in cards were sent a Survey along with a return envelope.

The poster also included the URL address for a web site containing information about the study, a link to post questions, and a link to request a Survey. Questions were answered via email and when requests for Surveys were received, Surveys were mailed out along with a return envelope. Graduates could also have any questions regarding the study answered, or request the Survey, by calling the toll-free phone number.

One hundred and three Surveys were completed and returned during the spring of 2001. It was felt that more graduate input was required to establish a clearer overview of the various programs so posters, the web site, and the phone line were set up again in the spring of 2002.

Since one goal was to gain proportional representation from the various programs, and since some programs had little or no representation, the use of posters was targeted to those faculties where participation rates had been lower than required.
For example, 89 of the 3190 faculty graduates in Ontario were from Faculty A: Program 2. In order to have proportional representation six Surveys were required from graduates of that program. Larger programs, like Faculty H: Program 21 with 476 graduates, required 31. As with several of the programs, proportional representation was not fully achieved (29 Faculty H graduates participated). Attempts were also made to have representation from the various sections of programs.

Three other methods of soliciting participants were used in 2002. Information about the study was posted on a chat board sponsored by Ontario College of Teachers’ Professionally Speaking magazine, as well as on the jobsineducation.com web site. Advertising space was purchased in Professionally Speaking and various campus newspapers. Postings and advertisements included the study’s phone number and the study’s web site address (from which Surveys could be requested). Please see Appendix E for copies of the various recruitment materials used in this study.

A $25 voucher for school resources was sent out upon receipt of the complete Survey. This was used as an incentive to encourage participation.

As a result of these efforts, 210 complete Surveys were received24. Survey respondents were asked to include copies of course materials when they returned their Surveys. In order to ensure that a clear picture of programs was established, participants were contacted by phone or email if a response was unclear or missing, or if course materials had not been

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23 Calculations were determined using the total number of graduates for 2001/2002 year.

24 Several Surveys received could not be used, one person was a Junior/Intermediate graduate, and a few could not be contacted in order to fully complete the Survey or clarify vague or confusing Survey responses.
included. Consequently, requested materials from each university and from 22 of 26 programs were obtained.

The course materials obtained included course outlines, class topic schedules, assignment criteria, and prescribed reading materials (author, title, publisher) from the language and literacy component of faculty program. It should be noted that, to maintain anonymity of the print materials, Survey respondents were asked to remove all program and instructor identification and to indicate whether items were from required or elective courses.

**Survey Participant: Context**

According to the 210 students surveyed, 95% planned to teach the year after graduation. Of these, 45% planned to teach at the Primary level (JK-3), whereas 20% planned to teach at the Junior level (Grades 4-6). The remaining 30% did not have a preference for either the Primary or Junior division.

Most of the students were between the ages of 20 and 29 years (71%), 15 percent were between 30 and 34 years and the remainder were between the ages of 35 and 49. The majority of survey participants were female (96%), and had no children (82%). Most had some prior experience working with children.

**Participants (Surveys)**

In order to participate in this study graduates had to have recently completed their faculty programs at one of nine Ontario universities. They also had to have been enrolled in the Primary/Junior division.
In the chart below, the numbers of graduates at each faculty have been calculated as a proportional percentage of all 2001/2002 Ontario graduates (N= 3190). The first two columns list the various faculties and programs. The next two columns contain the calculations used to determine how many Surveys were required to have proportional representation. The final column is a record of the actual number of Surveys obtained by program. Surveys were collected from all universities and programs. All program sites were also represented.

**Table 7**

**Programs and Proportion of Surveys Obtained**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Programs (e.g., Concurrent, Consecutive)</th>
<th>Number of Students from Each Program as % of Total Graduates (2001/2002)</th>
<th>Number of Surveys Needed</th>
<th>Number of Surveys Obtained (N=210)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>121 (3.79%)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>392 (12.29%)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H/I</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>476 (14.92%)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35 (1.10%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37 (1.16%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17 (0.53%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8-16</td>
<td>347 (10.88%)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>92 (2.88%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>288 (9.03%)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>360 (11.29%)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93 (2.90%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>211 (6.61%)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56 (1.76%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>89 (2.78%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 (0.31%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>111 (3.47%)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>240 (7.52%)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>215 (6.74%)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Participant Codes (Surveys)**

Numeric and alphabetic codes were assigned to all participants so as to protect participant and program identities. Numbers were assigned to particular Survey respondents followed by letters indicating the university and program from which they had graduated. As the data were collected over two years, the 2001 cohort was assigned a “01”, and the 2002 cohort were assigned a “02” designation. Surveys were organized in file folders according to university/program alphabet codes and by year.

**Research Instrument**

As the Survey contained both open-ended questions and fixed choice (closed) questions both quantitative and qualitative analyses were required.

**Qualitative Analyses (Survey)**

Qualitative Analysis is a process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The Survey contained three open-ended questions that were analyzed qualitatively. Survey respondents were asked to describe anything they wished had been included in their program but was not. They were asked to describe aspects of their literacy program, if any, that could be left out, and to describe the most useful components of their literacy program.

These responses were later categorized and tallied in order to be presented in graph form (see Graph 1, Graph 2, and Graph 4). Categories were assigned so that like responses could
be quantified and a general sense of Survey respondents’ opinions could be garnered. Attempts were made to maintain differences within categories if appropriate. For example, many Survey respondents said that more information about literacy programs (e.g., First Steps) should have been included in their faculty literacy course. If they mentioned a specific program this was noted when compiling the tally. Several of the 210 Survey respondents were alone in mentioning a specific item. These responses were not felt to be representative enough to include in the graphs or discussion.

As responses were charted alongside their respective faculty/program code any coalescing of opinions could be observed. When discussing emergent themes, direct quotes from graduates were used in order to provide insight into respective views and opinions.

Quantitative Analyses (Surveys)

The SPSS program was used to analyze three types of questions from the Survey. The first type of question related to demographics (e.g., age, experience) of the subjects. The second question asked Survey respondents to check yes or no with regards to whether they had heard of various program titles, teaching strategies, and literacy concepts in their faculty programs. Pearson correlations between responses to these terms were performed to investigate whether there were relationships between the quantities of time spent discussing the different terms.

The third type of question involved Likert scales. Survey respondents were asked how prepared they felt to teach reading to their students next year, how prepared they felt to
teach writing to their students next year, and how prepared they felt to assess the literacy skills of their students next year.

**Data Collection (Interviews)**

More in-depth responses were required to gain a truer picture of faculty programs and their impact so a representative sample of subjects were asked to participate in a follow-up Interview.

This sub-sample of the Survey respondents was chosen using a combination of random and selective sampling. One key goal of the study was to gain a rich and thorough description of programs and their impacts on graduates. One Survey respondent was not included in the random selection of interviewees because this graduate had not elaborated on the Survey when answering open-ended questions regarding what was missing, what was unnecessary, and what was useful about his/her program. All others were included in a random selection from their respective courses. The intent was to have representation from as many different programs, courses, and sections as possible.

Interviews were conducted later that spring and summer, after completion of their faculty program but prior to interviewees beginning their teaching careers. It was felt that this would ensure a truer recollection of their respective programs.

Potential interviewees were contacted by phone (Appendix F) and asked to participate in a follow-up Interview. Twenty-nine Survey respondents were interested in participating. See

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25In order to have representation from two additional programs two of the subjects (11 and 68) participating in the larger study (who were interviewed after one year of teaching) were included in this analysis. See * in Table 8.
Table 8 below for a breakdown of program size (%) and the number of interviews obtained from each faculty. As the Interview contained several questions in which interviewees were asked to reflect on their programs, and because several questions required participants to have examples in front of them in order to answer, a copy of the Interview questions was emailed to the interviewees several days before the scheduled interview. A $50.00 voucher was offered as incentive for participation in the lengthy interview session. As a result, 29 Interviews were conducted.

Table 8

Number of Interviews Obtained by Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Programs (e.g., Consecutive, Concurrent)</th>
<th>Number of Students from Each Program as % of Total Graduates (2001/2002)</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Obtained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>121 (3.79%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>392 (12.29%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>476 (14.92%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35 (1.10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37 (1.16%)</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17 (0.53%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8-16</td>
<td>347 (10.88%)</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>92 (2.88%)</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>288 (9.03%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>360 (11.29%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93 (2.90%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>211 (6.61%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56 (1.76%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>89 (2.78%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 (0.31%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>111 (3.47%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>240 (7.52%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>215 (6.74%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants (Interviews)

The Interviews of all 29 interviewees were audiotaped\textsuperscript{26} and later transcribed verbatim. These graduates selected the times for their Interviews and were asked to find a comfortable spot away from distractions and have their copy of the questions in front of them. To ensure they had a copy in front of them prior to beginning the Interview subjects were asked how many pages they had received.

Five graduate students conducted the Interviews\textsuperscript{27}. These interviewers participated in a training session regarding how to use recording devices and the procedure for contacting their list of prospective interviewees. During the session all Interview questions were reviewed and concerns raised by interviewers discussed. Interviewers were advised to conduct the interview in a friendly but serious and objective manner. There were also discussions about the importance of putting the interviewee at ease and maintaining a neutral attitude during the Interview.

Other topics for discussion included how to deal with unexpected participant behaviour, interruptions, and the clarifying questions. Some proactive steps were taken to minimize unexpected behaviour and interruptions. First, the interviewees were asked to schedule the Interview at a time of their convenience. They were aware that the Interview would be about one hour long. Also, half-way through each Interview, participants were asked if they wanted to take a break or reschedule at a later time to complete the Interview.

\textsuperscript{26}Tape recording in-depth interviews is strongly recommended (Seidman, 1998) because it provides researchers with original data so that transcripts can be checked for accuracy. Transcribing verbatim responses is valuable because each word a participant speaks reflects his or her consciousness (Vygotsky in Seidman, 1998).

\textsuperscript{27}Several of these interviews were used in a related study completed by Heredia, 2010.
In emails and during initial phone contact the interviewees were advised to find a quiet place free of distractions for the Interview. If interruptions did occur the interviewee was asked if they would prefer to reschedule in order to finish the Interview.

Although the Interview had been field tested three times, it was felt by interviewers that some of the questions required more clarification and prompts. As a result, some questions were rephrased and some open-ended questions such as *I want to hear about the language and literacy component of your faculty program. Please describe your language and literacy program in detail*, had prompts added. In this case, *After letting them answer, prompt if any of these were not mentioned: research base/theory, program development, strategies, and assessment.* Prompts were italicized and added to the interviewer’s copy of the Interview only. This was done so that all interviewees would be provided with an opportunity to include important information. See italicized prompts on Interview (Appendix C).

Interviewers were asked to have interviewees define or clarify any terms they used that were ambiguous such as “balanced literacy”, and “rich literacy environment”. This was in order to be sure what the interviewee had actually meant. If the interviewee shared information that was not asked for, but was relevant to the study, interviewers were encouraged to ask follow-up questions and include this information in the transcript.

Interviewees had also been informed three times about the use of an audiotape recorder so that this would not come as a surprise.
Participant Codes (Interviews)

Since all of the interviewees had completed the initial Survey, the numeric codes already assigned to them were used again in order to keep track of tapes and transcripts, and to enter data for quantitative analysis.

In order to maintain anonymity and to keep track of participants a colour code system was devised for qualitative analyses (Tesch, 1990). A colour was used to represent each faculty program, and then a second colour was used to differentiate subjects from the same program. Another colour was assigned to indicate if they had completed the Concurrent or Consecutive program. The fourth colour indicated whether they had been participants from the first year of data collection or from the second year of data collection.

Research Instrument

Qualitative Analysis (Interviews)

Many qualitative questions addressed issues regarding the content of the faculty programs. Interviewees were also asked about how the program was delivered (e.g., primarily lecture style). They were asked questions about the impact of their faculty program, their instructor’s approach, their assigned readings, and their assignments on their understandings about teaching. Similar questions were asked about their various practicum placements.

How much interviewees knew about foundational literacy-related concepts and language structures as well as pedagogy was also a focus of several of the questions. Other questions
looked at how well students could apply their knowledge to develop and modify program, and assess students. The remaining questions were designed to determine aspects regarding the changes in philosophy of interviewees and their level of self-efficacy.

Qualitative analysis is typically done on three levels. The first level is simply to organize the data for the purpose of describing them in narrative form. The second level involves identifying, describing, and interpreting themes or attributes. The third level requires the themes or attributes to be connected in order to infer relationships between and among the data (Siegelman, 2001).

The investigator listened to all of the tapes and checked all of the transcripts after they were completed. A tracking sheet which included all interactions with the interviewee, a rough and good copy of the transcribed Interview, and a copy of the interviewee’s initial Survey were kept together in a large envelope.

Each interview was transcribed by hand and three additional copies were made. Three copies were coded by drawing four coloured lines down the margin (Tesch, 1990). The investigator then read through all of the Interview transcripts several time. This helped the investigator become more familiar with the data and begin to notice some recurring issues. Notes were recorded and some informal tallies made in an attempt to recognize any trends or inclinations.

I listed various possible topics which emerged from the transcripts. This was consistent with organizing structures outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1998). After several attempts at
copying and tallying relevant units of data from the transcripts I began to modify and refine the initial topics I had selected. Related data were clumped together under the newly refined set of topics. For example, the term “Epiphany” was used as a topic heading for the things that interviewees had identified as powerful, new understandings. The term “Roadblock” was used as a topic heading for things the interviewees perceived as impediments to their development as an elementary teacher.

Twenty-eight topics were identified (see Appendix G for a list of these topics). This was considered a reasonable number of topics. Twenty-five to 50 are recommended (Tesch, 1990) as they can be “manipulated with a little effort; after that it becomes difficult to remember the entire range of categories”.

The data were then organized according to these topics using the “cut-up-and-put-in-folders approach” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Three copies of each entire transcript had been colour coded (for year of graduation, identity, university, and program) so cutting sections from the Interview did not compromise identification of the interviewee. A colour-coded master list of interviewees was made in order to identify subjects. This was important because it allowed for the checking of the accuracy of quotations. It was also important because when trying to identify trends by program, being able to determine program representation was key.

Writing a large “Q” beside the four vertical lines indicated any particularly interesting or representative comments made by interviewees. Since allowing the graduates to speak for
themselves helped illuminate and support the findings (Patton, 1990) many quotations are incorporated into the next chapter. On a regular basis, the location on the audiotape (the tape counter number) was noted on the transcript in brackets. This aided in locating a particular quote on the audiotape in order to verify it.

If it seemed apparent that comments represented a tendency these comments were tallied. This strategy is supported by Miles and Huberman (1994) who suggested doing this to protect against investigator bias and to support or challenge an emerging hypothesis.

Questions asked and observations made while reading through each file were recorded on a paper kept in that file. Similarities and differences in graduate experiences and perceptions were observed and noted on the paper.

This process helped the researcher achieve a high level of familiarity with the data collected but it became clear that emerging patterns were linking back to the initial interview questions.

At this stage another copy of the colour coded transcript was used to collect answers to the interview questions that best informed the topics that had emerged. In effect, the “cut up and put in folders” approach was used again for each of thirty-three questions from the interview.

Having both sets of folders made it easier to see how the process of becoming a teacher corresponded to classifications made in research studies related to the in-servicing of teachers (Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Showers, 1990). In similar research studies these
categories were referred to as: content, process, context, and impact (Siegelman, 2001; Jackett, 2005). These categories were adopted to assist in the organizing of data. Different colours of tape were used to label the top of each folder according to these categories.

It was important to look at the data in a variety of display arrangements in order to generate new insights and emerging patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 429; Patton 1990, p. 411). The use of matrices is suggested as “an especially economic way to see…relationships” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The structure of a process/outcome is to organize program processes by outcomes. Process/Outcome Matrices were completed for all 29 interviewees.

For the purposes of this study Faculty, Practicum, Demonstration, and Collaboration were included in program process. The knowledge gained regarding Content of Faculty Program, Pedagogical Skills (General), the Curriculum, its Application (Literacy), the Learner, Context, and Ends, Purpose and Values of that learning and the impact on the graduates’ Attitudes and Feeling and feelings of Self-Efficacy were considered outcomes. The interviewees’ scores on literacy term definition questions, and questions requiring the identification of syllables, phonemes, morphemes were also included on these charts. True and false questions regarding their teaching philosophy and Likert scores regarding their self-assessed confidence level and preparedness to teach were also added. Please see Appendix H for completed examples.
Table 9

Process/Outcome Matrix (Process of Teacher Education)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge:</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Practicum</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Skills (General)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Skills (Application of Literacy Knowledge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the Learner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends, Purpose and Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and Feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus began the search for connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts and connections between categories. The matrices were read over and over looking for patterns and relationships between the process and the outcome for each interviewee. This graphic organizer was found to be useful for making within-case and cross-case comparisons of subjects.

After reviewing all of the matrices eight themes were identified that relate to teacher preservice education: Theme One (Content): Literacy Course Content; Theme Two (Process): Graduates’ Perceived Value of Faculty Literacy Course(s); Theme Three (Context): Range of Practicum Experience; Theme Four (Context): Perceived Value of Practicum; Theme Five (Impact): Demonstration of Pedagogical Knowledge and Application of Skills, Theme Six (Impact): Knowledge Base Regarding Language; Theme
Quantitative Analysis (Interviews)

The Interview contained questions that were of a quantitative nature. Graduates were asked to describe a series of Educational Psychology (e.g., scaffolding), Literacy Instruction (e.g., inventive spelling), and Word Knowledge (e.g., phoneme) terms. These terms were marked according to a five-point scale and Cronbach's Alphas were used to measure interrater reliability where the two markers scored answers differently. The Alphas computed for these terms were acceptable (>0.80).

Identical scales were used in a related study conducted by Heredia (2010). A similar result for interrater reliability was achieved (>0.78). In the aforementioned study, the scale was also assessed for internal consistency. Cronbach’s alpha was used on the five measured constructs. Scores obtained on the definitions of key literacy concepts were used to measure internal consistency. Cronbach’s alpha scores for Exposure to key literacy terms, Exposure to difficulties in literacy, Preparedness, and Definition of key literacy terms were above 0.80 reflecting good internal consistency reliability (0.88 to 0.93). Those for Graduates’ philosophy of teaching and Instructor’s philosophy of teaching were only 0.45 so that any analyses involving these scales must be interpreted with caution.
Methodological Safeguards

Ethical Considerations

The study was undertaken within the context of a larger project (Willows, 2002). All of the procedures used in this study fit within the parameters outlined by the wider project. As such, this study qualified for an expedited ethical review.

There were no anticipated risks to the subjects. All subjects were volunteers and they were made aware that they may withdraw from participation in the study at any time. As described in the original approved application, letters were included in the Survey packages and only those who returned a completed and signed consent form were included in the study. See Appendix I for a copy of the participant consent letters used for the Survey.

Selected interviewees were reminded again in an email, and prior to beginning their Interview over the phone, that their Interviews would be recorded on tape. They were assured that their names, respective universities and programs of study would be replaced by codes. Interviewees had been assigned numbers when they had completed the initial Surveys and this number was again used to keep track of the tapes and transcripts. A master list was retained by myself. Colour codes were assigned and used for the qualitative analysis. Original Surveys, Interview audiotapes and transcripts were kept under lock and key in a university lab.

As some of the questions were challenging, concerns were raised about interviewees feeling self-conscious about being unable to answer some of them. Due to this, a comment was added for interviewers to say at the beginning of this difficult section. All interviewees
were told not to worry if they didn’t know all of the answers and to simply try to do their best. If they continued to seem uneasy interviewers reminded them that these were hard questions and that many of the interviewees felt the same way.

One must also be careful to analyze the data in an ethical manner. Care was taken to represent the views of the graduates in the findings section. Wherever possible, corroborating evidence was used. For example, did another faculty literacy classmate participating in the study report excessive amounts of time allocated to a particular aspect of their program? Did they describe the research base, provided in class, in a similar way? Did the course outline and reading list support this finding? It is only in the Discussions chapter that this investigator’s opinions are expressed.

Dr. Willows, an instructor of one of the faculty literacy programs from which graduates were interviewed, was also my thesis advisor. She is also a member of the National Reading Panel, the findings of which provided some research basis in the literature review section. This being the case, questions might be raised about possible bias or undue influence. For this reason, the findings were made known to Dr. Willows only when the thesis was near completion.

When looking at this issue it is important to keep in mind that the purpose of the research described in this thesis was not to evaluate or rank faculties in any way. Rather, the goal was to determine the variability of programs across the province, determine the research base, and measure the impact of literacy programs on graduate’s own knowledge and skills base, and their feelings of confidence, and teaching philosophy. Because of this, data were
discussed in terms of all participants rather than on a program-by-program basis. Aspects of programs that appeared to impact positively or negatively on preservice students were also discussed.

**Trustworthiness and Rigour**

Whether or not the findings of a qualitative study are trustworthy is always an important issue. In order to be trustworthy, the collection of data and its analyses and the conclusions drawn from them must show: credibility, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Credibility**

The credibility of qualitative research depends upon several things including the use of “rigorous methods” that result in the collection of high quality data (Patton, 1990). Course-related document gathering was done with care. Students who did not initially send in their course materials were contacted and asked to do so with the promise that photocopying expenses would be reimbursed. Copies were collected from participants even if another Survey participant had already sent in the documents (in order to provide corroboration). Any vague answers on the Survey, or missed questions, were followed up on with vigilance. Any vague answers recorded on Interview tapes were also followed up on. Audio tapes and transcripts were checked multiple times in order to be sure that the transcripts were correct and that quotes and tape location counts were accurate.
The concept of triangulation in qualitative research refers to the use of a variety of sources or measures for data collection. For the purposes of this study different data-collecting techniques (Survey, Interviews, and course documents) were used to corroborate findings. Also, where possible, data from graduates who had been in the same class were reviewed together in order to verify information (e.g., program descriptions).

Any inconsistencies across sources were included in the findings and possible explanations were given where sources diverged.

One barrier to credibility is researcher biases and predispositions. Efforts were made to counter this by engaging in systematic searches for alternate themes, divergent patterns, and rival explanations (in effect, looking for data that supports alternate explanations). Any anomalous data, where found, have been reported in this study. Additionally, descriptive examples of the data have been provided throughout the Findings chapter in order to support the proposed interpretation.

**Transferability**

Transferability concerns whether findings of a particular study can be extended beyond the particular subjects in that particular study. In effect, can what is learned from this Interview sample be generalized to the larger population?

One step towards assuring generalizability is to select a sample that is representative of the larger population (Seidman, 1998, p. 44). Although every effort was made to attract a
representative sample from the population of elementary preservice students participants were volunteers and thus by definition were not a truly random sample.

However, the following steps were taken to make the data as representative of faculty programs as possible. Participants representing all programs at all English-speaking faculties of education in the province were involved in this study. Course documents were collected from each faculty and from 22 of 26 programs. In-depth Interviews were completed with representatives from every university and 16 of 18 programs/courses of study (Table 8).

Survey participants were somewhat proportional to the population of graduates from their respective programs. Attempts were made to include graduates from several sections of the same program. In working towards these goals, the percentages of respondents reporting particular things about their programs/courses comes closer to representing all Ontario faculty graduates.

All this being said, reflections and opinions of faculty graduates make up the bulk of data sources for this study. Since all experiential basis for these opinions is mediated by the context of the graduates’ personality and previous experiences, any transfer of findings must be done with caution.

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Different locations providing the same program of study from the same university were not included in this count.
**Dependability**

Qualitative researchers cannot hope to replicate the results of a particular study. What they can do is strive for methods that will help “outsiders concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense – they are consistent and dependable” (Merriam, 1988).

Primary source documents, original transcripts, tally sheets, category file folders, matrices, and the master sheets were retained and an explanation regarding how they were obtained or derived has been provided in this thesis.
Chapter 5: Findings

The findings of this study have been reorganized under eight principal themes that were derived from the 28 topics initially used to organize the data. A fuller explanation regarding how the themes were derived, using Process/Outcome Matrices, was outlined in the previous chapter. The present chapter on Findings describes the themes in detail and presents a range of evidence supporting each theme. A summary of findings for each theme is presented at the end of each section.

The eight themes have been further organized according to the four categories – Content, Process, Context, and Impact – as listed below:

**Theme One (Content): Literacy Course Content;**

**Theme Two (Process): Graduates’ Perceived Value of Literacy Courses;**

**Theme Three (Context): Range of Practicum Experience;**

**Theme Four (Context): Perceived Value of Practicum;**

**Theme Five (Impact): Demonstration of Pedagogical Knowledge and Application of Skill;**

**Theme Six (Impact): Knowledge Base Regarding Language;**

**Theme Seven (Impact): Self-Efficacy; and**

**Theme Eight (Impact): Teaching Philosophy of Graduates.**

The Overview framework on the following page summarizes the eight themes within the four categories with a series of boxes and these boxes are used as headings to serve as an organizer for the presentation of the findings throughout this chapter.
Overview of Themes

### Content
**Theme One: Literacy Course Content**

1.) **Description of Literacy Courses**
   a.) Time Spent Discussing Literacy Terms/Programs
   b.) Courses’ Research Base
   c.) How to Do Long-Range Planning/Set up a Language Arts Program
   d.) Use of Teaching Strategies
   e.) How to Assess Students’ Reading and Writing
   f.) How to Help a Student with Learning Disabilities

2.) **Range of Required Texts**
   a.) Range of Required Texts
   b.) Impact of Readings

3.) **Variability Across and Within Faculties: A Summary**
   a.) Differences: Concurrent versus Consecutive, and Consecutive versus Consecutive

### Process
**Theme Two: Graduates’ Perceived Value of Literacy Courses**

1.) **Time and Value Added**
2.) **How to Teach**
3.) **Surprises**
4.) **What Graduates Felt Should Have Been Left Out of Their Literacy Courses**
5.) **Course Assignments and Graduate Evaluations**

### Context
**Theme Three: Range of Practicum Experience**

1.) **Freedom to Plan: Activities and Lessons**
2.) **Freedom to Plan: Language Arts**

### Impact
**Theme Four: Perceived Value of Practicum**

1.) **Impact of Practicum on Graduates’ Understanding of How to Teach Literacy**

**Theme Five: Demonstration of Pedagogical Knowledge and Application of Skills**

1.) **Program Planning**
   a.) Interviewees’ Description of a “Good” Primary/Junior Literacy Program
   b.) Building Comprehension Skills
   c.) Building Fluency/Automaticity Skills

2.) **Adapting and Modifying Programs**

3.) **Assessment**
   a.) Strategies to Evaluate Future Students
   b.) Identifying “Poor” Readers and Writers

4.) **Students Who Struggle**
   a.) Identifying Reasons Why a Student Might Struggle
   b.) Helping a Struggling Reader
   c.) Helping a Child Struggling to Decode Words

5.) **Application of Skills**
   a.) Assessment of Students’ Ability to Read Nonsense Words
   b.) Assessment of Students’ Inventive Spelling
   c.) Junior Spelling Instruction

### Impact
**Theme Six: Knowledge Base Regarding Language**

1.) **Knowledge and Application**
   a.) Knowledge of Literacy-Related Terms
   b.) Basic Language Knowledge

**Theme Seven: Self-Efficacy**

1.) Graduates’ Perceptions of Their Own Abilities

**Theme Eight: Teaching Philosophy of Graduates**

1.) **Teaching Philosophies of Instructors and Graduates**
2.) **Philosophies of Instructors and Host Teachers**
3.) **Graduates’ Philosophies: Direct-Teaching vs. Child-Centred Instruction**
Qualitative analysis of the 29 Interviews pointed to literacy course content and its consistencies and variations within and across sections, programs and faculties as a central theme that emerged from the process/outcome matrices.
In this section of the Findings, the nature of the content of the required literacy courses in the faculty programs across Ontario is explored through an examination of the various sources of data collected in the study: the Surveys, course print materials, and the Interviews.

Virtually all elementary preservice students attending Ontario’s faculties of education are required to complete a course related to language and literacy instruction. It is, for many candidates, the only course covering this important material that they will ever take. In fact, only four out of 29 graduates interviewed for this study took an additional elective course related to literacy instruction during their faculty year. It is imperative then, that the required literacy course provide a comprehensive understanding of how to effectively teach reading and writing.

One of the dilemmas of faculty preservice programs, that of breadth versus depth, comes acutely into play when looking at the content of faculty literacy courses. This is because the teaching of reading and writing is an area where inherent complexities require that teachers understand the breadth of curricular expectations, and have the teaching strategies necessary to design appropriate and engaging activities, lessons, and units, and assess and modify for optimal student learning.

A depth of understanding is also required by teachers. They must be aware of the underlying foundations of language and language learning so that they can make expert

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29 Those enrolled in a section of a program (e.g., at J) focusing on a particular theme, however, studied literacy from that perspective (e.g., “equity and diversity”) and may not have had a literacy course per se.

30 See the six dilemmas outlined in the Literature Review section.
judgments in order to instruct effectively. This presupposes an understanding of the components of effective literacy instruction\(^{31}\), and a child’s developmental stages. Since early intervention and insightful remediation can lessen the impact of learning problems, it is critical that teachers be able to recognize and apply what research has shown to be the best strategies for helping struggling students. This is why teachers also need the knowledge and skills to adapt and modify programming for students with special needs (ESL/ELL, LD).

Insight into the degree to which faculty literacy courses were providing this “breadth and depth” was gleaned from the responses of the 210 new graduates, representing every faculty across Ontario, who completed the Survey. The Survey was designed to reveal the range of content about elementary literacy education (JK-6) being provided across Ontario. Survey respondents also provided copies of the course outlines, class topic schedules, reading lists, and assignment outlines, for the literacy course(s) they had taken during their faculty program. The responses to the Surveys and the content of the course print material provided a fairly clear picture with respect to the breadth and depth of what was being taught in the required literacy courses in the faculty programs.

1.) Description of Literacy Courses

Six areas of course content were specifically reviewed. The first two areas: Time Spent Discussing Literacy Terms/Programs; and Courses’ Research Base look at what foundational literacy topics and concepts were covered. The next two areas How to Develop Program/Long-Range Planning; and the Use of Teaching Strategies look at course

\(^{31}\)See Table 2 (in the Literature Review section).
content regarding how to apply this knowledge to programming and instruction. The final two areas focus on *How to Assess Students’ Reading and Writing*; and *How to Help a Student with Learning Disabilities* look at course content as it relates to assessing and adapting/modifying program to meet the needs of all students.

**a.) Time Spent Discussing Literacy Terms/Programs**

The purpose of this section was to form an impression of what was being discussed in the literacy classes and course readings in the 26 preservice programs across the province.

Some knowledge of key literacy terms and topics is necessary if graduates are to be able to articulate student understandings. This knowledge would also imply that graduates had developed some basic understanding of foundational aspects of language, and of reading and writing instruction. A familiarity with various teaching strategies and commercial programs is also important because it indicates that the Survey respondents have knowledge of some tools that can be used to instruct students.

Two sections of the Survey allowed graduates to indicate how much time they spent discussing key literacy terms, teaching strategies, and programs. Although such percentages are only rough estimates, aggregated across the 210 respondents they were useful as a way to detect patterns.

To answer questions regarding the degree to which courses covered key literacy concepts the Survey listed 23 literacy related terms. Survey respondents circled a number from 1
(none) to 5 (a great deal of time) for each term to indicate the amount of class time spent discussing the term.

Although this information does not directly assess the graduates’ understanding of these terms, it can be inferred that if little or no time was reported to be spent on the term it is likely that students did not understand the term (or did not learn this term in their literacy course). See Table 10 for the frequency of response types for terms. The bold type within the cells indicates terms where greater than 50% of those surveyed recorded spending either “none” or “very little” time discussing the term.
Table 10

Frequency of Response Type for Key Literacy Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>None (%)</th>
<th>Very little time (%)</th>
<th>Some time (%)</th>
<th>A lot of time (%)</th>
<th>A great deal of time (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inventive Spelling</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Language</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyslexia</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset/Rime</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching In Context</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digraph</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphthong</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schwa</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonological Processing</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Experience</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapheme</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffold</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloze Passage</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthography</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Ear</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscue Analysis</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Recovery</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the 210 Surveys completed, representing all of the faculties and programs, a majority of Survey respondents had heard “nothing” or “very little” about terms related to foundational aspects of language. Survey respondents reported “very little” or “no” course time spent discussing “Morphemes” (69%), “Graphemes” (67.1%), and “Orthography” (83.8%). Interestingly, 44.2% reported hearing very little or nothing about the term “Phoneme”.

Other, more specific terms related to how letters and sounds are put together were reported to be even less well covered in literacy courses. The following terms were reported to have been discussed very little or not at all in courses: “Digraph” (87.6%), “Diphthong” (90.8%), and the “Schwa” sound (92.9%). Even the term “Onset/Rime”, was reported by 75.7% Survey respondents to have been discussed very little or not at all.

For a vast majority of Survey respondents, terms related to learning disabilities were covered “very little” or not at all (“Dyslexia”, 83.8%; “Inner Ear”, 96.2%).

More time was spent in class discussing terms like “Language Experience” (51.4%), “Scaffolding” (47.7%) and “Modeling” (59.5%) relative to other terms. About 50% or more of Survey respondents report spending “a lot of time”, or more, on these terms.

Pearson correlations between responses to these terms were performed to investigate whether there were relationships between the estimated quantities of time spent discussing the different terms.

Of particular interest was whether more time spent discussing whole language would mean less time spent discussing phonics. This was not the case; in fact, there were positive correlations among all these terms. Generally, the more reported time spent discussing Whole Language the more time spent on Phonics too (relative to others). See Table 11 for

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32There is evidence to suggest that repeated episodes of mild hearing loss during certain critical developmental stages may interfere with the acquisition of language processing mechanisms, which in turn effect the development of speech and language skills (Levine, 1999, p. 482).
the pattern of correlations. What cannot be known is how these topics were presented to Survey respondents.

Table 11
Correlations Between Various Literacy Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Language</th>
<th>In Context</th>
<th>Modeling</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
<th>Phonology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Language Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.392(**)</td>
<td>.418(**)</td>
<td>.456(**)</td>
<td>.472(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>209</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Context Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.595(**)</td>
<td>.314(**)</td>
<td>.316(**)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>210</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.372(**)</td>
<td>.414(**)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>210</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.812(**)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In a different section of the Survey a list that included effective literacy programs and/or activities and important professional development books that promote research-based best practices was presented. Students had the opportunity to indicate if they had heard of these programs and/or books in their literacy class. Embedded in the list, as well, were the names of some outdated programs and of some “made up titles” to ensure that students were actually responding to the individual terms and not just checking off titles. This procedure was modeled after Cunningham and Stanovich’s *Title Recognition Test* (1990).
Most Survey respondents reported having heard of the following commercial classroom instruction programs/series or instructional practices: “Guided Reading” (94.8%), and “Jolly Phonics” (75.8%). Seventy-three percent of Survey respondents reported having heard of “First Steps” (73.3%), another commercial classroom program. Interestingly, for some of these commercially available programs (e.g., First Steps) there is virtually no peer reviewed published research to demonstrate their effectiveness.

Table 12

**Did You Hear of These Literacy Programs in Your Faculty Class?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Yes, had heard of it (%)</th>
<th>No, hadn’t heard of it (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allstar</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms That Work</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distar Reading</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Phonics</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Steps</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Reading</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressions</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jolly Phonics</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journeys</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Circles</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Words</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscue Analysis</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphographic Spelling</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Court</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics they Use</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated Reading</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Literacy Diet</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Walls</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Survey respondents were familiar with the literacy instructional strategies of creating “Word Walls” (97.1%) and conducting “Literacy Circles” (88.1%). Survey respondents were generally not aware of the phrase “Literacy Diet” (88.1% had not heard this term) and
64.8% of students were unfamiliar with “Repeated Reading” which is an effective evidence-based strategy for developing reading fluency. “Miscue Analysis” was also a term many Survey respondents had heard in their faculty literacy class (66.2%), although, interestingly, not much time was spent on it in their classes as indicated in Table 10. Again, it is important to remember that being familiar with a term or having “spent time” discussing a particular program or strategy in class does not indicate whether or not the graduate had a working knowledge of it.

Familiarity with the various terms in the lists included in the Survey was not taken as an indication that graduates understood the terms or even that the practices represented by the terms were an indication of effective practice. Indeed, some of these terms do not represent evidence-based strategies per se. In cases such as “Guided Reading,” for example, the term simply refers to a context in which there is an opportunity to teach effective reading strategies. “Guided Reading” was a practice that most (94.8%) Survey respondents had heard of in their course. The highest number of Survey respondents specifically referred to “Guided Reading” as a strategy they wanted to know more about (6%).

One strong impression that came out of the self-reports in the Surveys regarding knowledge of terms and amount of class time spent on various topics is that specific word-level terms related to how the oral and written language work together (e.g., morpheme, phoneme, diphthong) received very limited coverage and in many cases were not addressed at all in the courses. Thus a majority of graduates appear to be lacking the terminology to be able to discuss key processes relevant to effective literacy assessment and instruction.
What was clear, however, was that many Survey respondents would have liked more exposure to different programs/strategies. One of the open-ended questions on the Survey asked students to describe what, if anything, they wish had been included in their faculty literacy program that was not. Responses were tallied and recorded in Graph 1.

Graph 1

![Graph 1](image)

Forty-four of the 210 Survey respondents (21%\(^\text{33}\)) wrote that they would have liked more exposure to and hands-on experience with various literacy programs. Many respondents wished that they had been given more opportunity to learn about literacy programs generally. Some Survey respondents knew of specific programs with which they wanted to

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\(^{33}\)Questions about what graduates wished had been included, left out and what was valuable in their faculty literacy courses were open-ended. This means that graduates could have written down any aspect of their program. Other graduates may have agreed but as they did not specifically report this they were not included in these percentages. It is likely then that these percentages are under-reported.
become more familiar: “Jolly Phonics”, “First Steps”, “The Four Blocks” were the most frequently cited.

Such programs were reported to be a very valuable component of their faculty literacy course by 12% of Survey respondents. See Graph 2 below, which displays Survey responses to another open-ended question: What were the most useful components of your literacy program? What will help you next year?

Graph 2

“Word Walls” and “Making Words” are strategies for teaching word sounds and patterns. “Word Walls” was one of the most recognized items that Survey respondents had heard
of in their course (97.1%); 11% of Survey respondents wished that their faculty program had included even more about these types of word play/spelling activities. A few Survey respondents also cited word play activities as a most valued part of their faculty literacy course (8 of the 210 respondents, or 4%).

b.) Courses’ Research Base

In the last 25 years a great deal of progress has been made in the understanding of how to best teach students to read and write. It is this research that underlies various literacy theories and teaching strategies.

The Ontario College of Teachers, the regulating body charged with reviewing and accrediting the various faculty programs, has recognized the importance of such research and recommended in their *Preservice Teacher Education: Initial Accreditation Handbook* (1999) that:

> Every effort be made to link research, theory and practice across the program of professional teacher education curriculum. Graduates and associate teachers told panels that they sometimes had difficulty seeing the relevance or application of courses on the curriculum. (p. 14)

A focus of this study was to determine if literacy research was finding its way into faculty literacy programs. To this end, interviewees were asked directly in the Interviews to describe the research base and theories covered in their literacy classes.
Surprisingly, only three graduates out of the 29 interviewed reported learning about any research evidence regarding how to best teach reading and writing to elementary students. These interviewees (11, 113, and 133) reported being introduced to research about language and literacy development in their required faculty literacy class. This finding is supported by Survey responses, course outlines, and to some degree, by course texts and reading lists.

Four interviewees (68, 111, 118, and 126) did not report covering underlying research but mentioned literacy components, in general, or specifically listed several components in their answers when discussing the research base of their course.

Four students (107, 121, 125, and 126) took elective courses that covered more specific aspects of language and literacy. One interviewee stated that,

I got a lot out of that class, more than the required course…the readings were always linked directly to what we actually discussed in class. The articles mentioned one theory or another and studies that had been done (125, l256).

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34 See Table 2
Eight of the 29 interviewees did not report being introduced to any research evidence regarding how to best teach students to read and write but they did report being introduced to theories of general human development such as Piaget’s stages of cognitive development, constructivism (Cambourne), Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and Bloom’s taxonomy. This finding is generally supported by Survey responses, course outlines, some course texts and reading lists.

The remaining 14 interviewed graduates\textsuperscript{35} (48\%) did not remember covering any research or theory at all. One stated that the instructor told the class that faculty students “don’t really like to hear a lot of theory because theory gets boring” (105, l433). In contrast, another student suggested that the instructor tried to teach more, but could not, because the other faculty students in her class lacked background knowledge. “When we were trying to talk a little more about morphology and syntax, she lost them” (131, l127).

Several interviewees complained about not learning enough theory:

I thought that we would [get] more real stuff. Stuff I can actually use. Not even practical instead of theory…theory that could be used and understood...Even theories about literacy I can use. I expected more theory that applied to literacy…. [Now] I have to take on the responsibility in a

\textsuperscript{35}One graduate (109) reported jigsawing an article about “phenomic [sic] awareness” in class but she did “not remember it”.
way to learn the stuff myself….Even if it was theory about literacy, I could have used it (120, l422).

Another interviewee suggested that a way to improve the faculty courses would be to “[Give] students’ theory before you dump them in the classroom” (131, l443).

Five interviewees talked about how the Phonics versus Whole Language debate had been discussed in class. Most mentioned that the pros and cons of both perspectives had been covered and that an approach somewhere between the two was best.

Interestingly, two interviewees were not sure if they had covered any research-based theory. This was because one had not read all of the assigned articles (114) and the other reported that her instructor “…probably [did discuss evidence-based research] but she [the instructor] was so all over the place…I had trouble following her sometimes…I’m sure she did hand out tons of things and explained what was good or bad but I don’t actually have or remember anything specific” (128, l94).

Seven percent\(^3^6\) of Survey respondents wrote that theory was a most useful component of their faculty course. Interestingly, the same percentage of Survey respondents said it was one of the components that should be left out.

\(^{36}\)It is important to remember that only about half of graduates reported covering any theory and the theory they refer to may be regarding general child development.
Interviewees mentioned “Balanced Literacy” in many of their responses to this question about literacy course content. This was a term participants were asked to define because it was important to know what respondents actually meant when they used the term. The general tendency was to define “Balanced Literacy” as an approach to literacy instruction that included different aspects of language: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

One student said that “[Balanced Literacy] …means to give students opportunities to work at their level and…Read Aloud, Guided Reading, Book-Listening Centres, Library Station, and Silent Reading…you could use the same for Writing” (104, l46). Others described it as, “the whole Independent, Shared and Guided Reading and Writing” (163, l192).

These explanations reflect a misunderstanding of the term which is defined as an approach to literacy teaching that combines the meaning and child-focused nature of “Whole Language” and the skills and explicit and systematic instructional base of the “Phonics” approach (Pressley, 2002).

On the Survey, several graduates mentioned the idea of Balanced Literacy as one of the most important things they learned in their literacy course; 7% noted that they would use this when planning their classes next year. Of course, it is important to keep the variety of interpretations regarding the term “Balanced Literacy” in mind when looking at the percentages reported here.
Of particular note with respect to the research basis of literacy courses is that coverage of theory and research explicitly related to literacy acquisition, instruction, and assessment was very limited in 23 of the 26 preservice programs.

c.) How to Do Long-Range Planning/Set up a Language Arts Program

Being able to do Long-Range Planning/Set up a Language Arts Program\(^{37}\) is an important skill. It requires an underlying knowledge of both the elementary curriculum and the components of effective literacy instruction. Graduates must be able to program so that their students develop a strong knowledge base and build necessary literacy skills and it must be done in a way that engages and motivates students.

A majority of interviewees (83\%) did report covering long-range planning in their literacy course. On the Surveys 15\% of those who had learned about this type of planning considered it valuable. Lesson Ideas were also considered valuable with 12\% reporting it as something they will use next year.

Several interviewees seemed overwhelmed when it came to answering questions about developing a Language Arts program. They had concerns about never having been shown how to develop units and long-range plans for their classrooms (117, 119, 124, 125, and 131).

\(^{37}\)Long-Range Planning/Setting up a Language Arts program involves the linking of intended student outcomes and the units/themes that will be taught over a year. Units or themes refer to a topic that will be used to teach the intended student outcomes. Each unit or theme is made up of a series of lessons or activities that are interrelated and linked to the unit or theme.
One interviewee reported that long-range planning, “…was one thing I found very discouraging about the course; there was no sort of guideline for this is what you should do [regarding program development]” (125, l203). Others reported how to develop program/units was, “something that was lacking… and [it would have been better to] get…down to covering the nuts and bolts of actually setting up the year” (117, l220). These comments are supported by the responses from the Survey in which 16% of respondents specifically referring to this type of planning (i.e., Long-Range Planning, Unit Planning, and How to Set up a Literacy Program) as something missing from their faculty literacy course.

I can remember that [developing Long-Range Plans] was a big complaint from people in the program. A lot of people complained that they [the instructors] were not teaching us how to do this. They were not sitting us down and walking us through (163, l175).

There was one three hour period where we were broken up into groups and each table was given a grade and the curriculum document for Language and we had …to plan for the year…how we would organize this for the year. There wasn’t really a whole lot of instruction on how to do it. It was just go and do it and then we presented it…there was no feedback (107, l145).
The use of resources, such as board, and curriculum documents, is one aspect to be considered when developing long-range plans for a class. According to the Survey, many graduates (18%) highly valued being introduced to these resources in their faculty classes.

**d.) Use of Teaching Strategies**

Effective teachers pull from their repertoire of strategies in order to engage and instruct their students. Strategies for teaching include the tools, specific ideas, and skills that are incorporated into lessons.

This is different from program development/long-range planning because it relates less to content, ideas, and skills to be taught, and more with the means by which they are taught.

Graduate responses on the Survey suggest that learning about “teaching strategies” was a most useful part of faculty literacy course (20%). The same percentage of graduates (20%), who reported not having learned “teaching strategies”, wished that they had been included in their course. This is displayed in Graph 1.

An overwhelming majority (86%) of graduates interviewed said that their faculty courses had provided some support in this area. Only four of 29 graduates felt that they had not been provided with any strategies for instruction (105, 109, 114, and 123).

Often, the strategies that were recalled were ones that had been role-played or modeled by the instructors.

He covered a lot of practical things, lots of ice breakers, energizers, and tips for teaching...He modeled a grade 1 or 2 printing lesson...
the steps...things like this I found very helpful...we went through the editing process...that was good too (127, l104).

[The instructor] was really good at modeling how she recommended that we instruct students ourselves...we had a lot of group exercises...we had a number of literature circles. We had some classes where we would practice doing running records (110, l23).

[We] would have opportunities to role-play different strategies we could use. For example, for reading comprehension, [we did]...literature circles.... how it would work...we'd try to practice it (118, l228).

Several interviewees appreciated when their instructors were overtly reflective about their teaching strategies. “The first thing he did was model it [the instructional strategy] and then we kind of debriefed it: Why did he do it this way? How else could we do it? Then we went back to our groups and did it ourselves” (133, l275). Another interviewee said,

She [the instructor] tried to...[be] step-by-step and...[she explained] if I were teaching this lesson this would be the first thing I would teach and this would be the second...[we reviewed her lessons to understand the steps]...introduction to development to conclusion...she usually did this after she taught the lesson so we could see...where certain things can be plugged into the lesson plan (104, l265).
e.) How to Assess Students’ Reading and Writing

How to assess students’ reading and writing is a critical skill for teachers to develop because recognizing when students are having difficulties is a prerequisite to providing effective remediation.

The Survey (N=210) allowed graduates to comment on how much class time they spent, on a scale from 1 to 5, learning how to assess reading and writing difficulties. More than two-thirds of the graduates (70.4%) reported spending “some time” or more learning how to assess a student’s reading abilities. About 45% of graduates reported spending “very little” or no time learning how to recognize/assess reading and writing difficulties (see Table 13).
When identifying what elements were missing from their literacy courses, 35% said how to assess students’ reading and/or writing skills. This was also an area, if included in their programs, which was valued by a large number of graduates. A notable proportion, 17%, referred to this as something they would use next year.

f.) How to Help a Student with Learning Disabilities

Research demonstrates that students with reading and writing difficulties benefit from early intervention. Early remediation of these difficulties offers the potential to reduce the effect poor reading and writing skills have on students’ self-concept and offers the potential to prevent school failure. Children that are at risk of experiencing reading and writing difficulties show signs early on. However, recognizing the early signs requires

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38-“How to tell if a child is reading or writing below grade level” was included in this count.
expertise. Elementary teachers can be taught to detect and begin treating reading and writing difficulties.

The Survey (N=210) allowed graduates to comment on how much class time they spent, on a scale from 1 to 5, learning about the causes of these difficulties and how to help these students.

**Table 14**

**Time Spent in Faculty Course Discussing Various Topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some Time</th>
<th>A Lot of Time</th>
<th>A Great Deal of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to help a student with specific reading difficulties</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to help a student with writing difficulties</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The causes of reading problems</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is displayed in Table 14 which is based on the Survey data from 210 graduates representing all of the 26 programs. For about half of the graduates, understanding and assessing students’ literacy skills and helping students who struggle was not a focus of their literacy course. Many graduates reported wishing that their programs had included more about these issues.

On the Survey, 9% of graduates wished that they had been provided with more information about learning disabilities and how to identify them in students. Additionally, a large
proportion of graduates (20%) said that they wished “how to help a struggling reader/writer” had been included in their program.

2.) Range of Required Texts Used in Faculty Literacy Courses

To some extent, content and variability is reflected in the choice of required texts used in the programs. For a detailed record of texts and assigned readings\textsuperscript{39} for each interviewed graduate please see Appendix J.

The texts and articles chosen for literacy courses can play important roles. Not only can they provide a foundational understanding, they can serve as a “stepping off point” for discussions about issues critical to teaching. Moreover, they are a permanent resource that can be referred to long after the course is finished.

This being the case, it is critical that texts and articles included in the faculty courses provide information about the components that make up a “good” literacy program for both Primary and Junior students. They must also provide guidance regarding how to apply this knowledge in the classroom. This includes information about program planning and lesson development, as well as how to organize and manage a class. For their future students who will struggle, the text must also provide insight into why a child might experience problems learning to read and write and how to modify instruction for these students.

\textsuperscript{39}Information regarding texts and articles was garnered from course reading lists, course topic schedules and interviewee reports.
a.) **Range of Required Texts**

The five principal texts used across the faculty programs are summarized in Appendix K. Texts ranged from being completely practical (e.g., *50 Literacy Strategies*), to containing a substantial amount of research-base (e.g., *Reading as Communication*). Most texts list essential components of a “good” elementary literacy program, although choices about what components to include were not necessarily research-based. One text had a decidedly Primary focus (e.g., *Reading for Meaning*). Most offered a general introduction to literacy instruction (e.g., *Language Arts: Content and Teaching*). Another text, (e.g., *Constructing Meaning*) was written from a constructivist point of view.

b.) **Impact of Readings**

The texts and articles assigned for reading, of course, have no impact upon graduates if they are not read. This discussion of course texts is not complete without noting that several graduates revealed that they did not do all of their readings. Many interviewees (104, 107, 109, 119, 121, 122, 127, 128 and 163) admitted to not having “really” read their required text. This is over 30% of interviewed graduates. This number may be an underestimation as others may have been reluctant to disclose that they had not read their textbook(s).

There were several explanations given regarding why they did not do the required readings. One student complained about the amount of work and said that she “…read a little at the start [of the faculty program] before I got so overwhelmed” (122, l153). Others seem to

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40This subject reported, “…honestly, I didn’t read anything” and only read the very beginning of the text because there was “a test” (104, l84 and l246).
have been baffled by the content of the articles. “I have to admit there were articles in here [the course pack] I didn’t even…read…and there were articles in here I didn’t know just what to make of” (110, l280). Similarly, another student said that some articles “…were so dry, with heavy vocab. They could have been written in another language” (114, l140).

Also it seemed important to some graduates that there be follow-through, regarding readings, in their faculty literacy classes. One reported that she and her classmates had given up on the readings “after the first month” because the readings were “not…discussed in class” (163, l300).

Interviewees’ responses have some implications for those selecting course readings in faculty Language Arts courses. Only five interviewed graduates reported having completed any of the suggested/supplementary/elective readings. This suggests that if the articles are relevant enough, they need to be assigned as required reading. Also, the articles that students reported finding most useful and would therefore, arguably, read more thoroughly were articles that contained practical strategies, and examples of students’ work.

The findings of this study would further suggest that if the readings are to be effective they must be discussed in class and shown to be relevant and that for some more complex texts, some pre-reading and vocabulary previewing is necessary.

3.) Variability Across and Within Faculties: A Summary

One goal of this study was to determine the variability of literacy programs across and within Ontario faculties. It was thought valuable to look specifically at several courses
offered at two universities to highlight some interesting findings. This was looked at in terms of content. Several general conclusions about the use of texts and Ministry documents can be drawn from materials collected.

The use of the same principal text appears to be fairly consistent across six of nine Ontario faculties. There were three faculties (D, E, and H) where course outlines indicated that there was a different principal text for various sections of the literacy class.

Within other faculties, various sections of the course listed the same principal textbook. However, the different sections did not necessarily require students to read the same chapters in that text. In fact, in one program, one section had chapters assigned each class and in another section there was no record of reading the text in the course schedule and a graduate from that class reported no assigned readings and that the text was not “referred to much” (112, l114). In another class, where three required texts were listed, the same principal text was listed but was reported to not have been “used very much” and that another required text was used a great deal of the time.

In some sections of the same program (K), the required text was one of several and in others it was the only required reading (except for curriculum documents).

Curriculum documents are referred to in almost all course outlines and/or class topic schedules, and by graduates. Assigned articles varied in number and content across programs. Two courses at different universities had extensive course packs of over 400 pages of articles. In some courses, no articles were assigned.
Several faculties included information about commercial programs in their course topic schedule. In one course, a particular commercial program seemed to be a focus of the course (The Four Blocks) and in others a variety of commercial programs were introduced but not in the hands-on way some graduates would have liked.

Several faculties appear to have a theme or point of reference from which all aspects of the program develop. These include “equity and diversity”, “subject integration”, “developing a philosophy of teaching”, “research”, “Language Arts and Drama”. These themes are included in the course learning expectations of their respective programs, and are apparent in the design of the course readings and assignments.

Regarding evidence-based literacy instruction, course topic schedules and required readings at some Ontario faculties (e.g., C, D, G, H, and J) suggest that there was little mention of it. This is supported by interviewed graduates. Certainly, this does not mean that research related to reading, writing, and teaching were never discussed but it does suggest that, if they were, they were not a major focus of the class. This was further corroborated by interviews with graduates from those faculties.

In terms of providing evidence-based theory and research regarding reading, and writing, a few programs appeared to include articles, or course topics, or interviewee responses that would suggest a more in-depth instruction in these complicated processes (programs at E, F, and K).

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41 Theory and research as it relates to evidence-based findings related to the teaching of reading and writing and not general theories of Child Development (e.g., Constructivism, Multiple Intelligences etc.).

42 Some sections of J appear to have had some research (see Materials from 42 versus 116).
Course materials from E, where there are a variety of programs, indicate that one course contained a tremendous amount of evidence-based research while others contained little. Again, this is supported by the course materials submitted. This was also the case, to a lesser degree, at another faculty (K).

One interviewee from each of two programs (at C and G) both reported covering research in their elective but not their required literacy course (this is supported by course outlines submitted for elective and required courses).

Many interviewees stated that they had been introduced to no research related to reading and writing but had been provided with theories of child development and learning (e.g., Constructivism, Multiple Intelligences etc.). This was also clearly reflected in the course outline and the reading list.

Many course topic schedules indicate that some important literacy components (e.g., Phonemic Awareness, Comprehension etc.) were discussed in class. Graduates from some sections of these programs also reported this. Many programs also discussed important literacy issues (e.g., The Great Debate), and terms (e.g., sight words).

a.) Differences: Concurrent versus Consecutive, Consecutive versus Consecutive

Where one may expect considerable difference between programs, like Concurrent and Consecutive, many similarities were found. For example, at one university (A), the faculty Literacy programs for both Concurrent (104) and Consecutive (76) were assigned the same
required and supplementary text, the same course title and number, the same assignments,
and virtually the same course topic schedule summarizing weekly class topics.\textsuperscript{43}

This was also the case at another university (K), however, only some Concurrent (e.g., 23)
and Consecutive (e.g., 112) programs had the same number of hours, the same required and
supplementary texts, the same course title and number, the same assignments, and the same
course topic schedule. Other sections of both the Concurrent and Consecutive program had
different hours and different course materials. The length\textsuperscript{44} varied from 32 hours and 40
minutes (146, 147) to 45 hours (53, 112).

One Concurrent student reported that her faculty literacy class contained both Concurrent
and Consecutive students. This interviewee reported that the section was very well
instructed, however, she was, “sad for my fellow students who had different programs
because they had different instructors” for their literacy class (113, l350).

Although the Concurrent and Consecutive programs are distinct, their language and literacy
instruction was more similar than was found across various sections of the same
consecutive program at some other universities.

One consecutive program used a different text in more than half of their sections (E).
Graduates from different sections of this program reported different items that were valued,
that were missing, or that could have been left out. Similar responses coalesced around
different sections of the program suggesting their relative content. For example, two

\textsuperscript{43}Out of 20 sessions described in the course topic schedule the only difference was a guest speaker on using computers
versus a guest speaker on putting a classroom together.

\textsuperscript{44}This was clearly indicated in the course schedule and by reports from graduates themselves.
sections reporting with the same outline and text reported an excessive amount of time spent doing Read Alouds (29 and 30). No one from the other sections of the program reported excessive use of Read Alouds.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this summary is that graduates from different sections of the same program may, in fact, have been enrolled in very different literacy courses.

**Summary: Theme One (Content): Literacy Course Content**

In summary, Survey respondents reported that more time was spent learning about pedagogical terms such as “scaffolding” than on specific language and literacy related terms such as “Onset/Rime”. The latter not being mentioned at all or only touched on in faculty literacy classes. Also, graduates were generally introduced to a few select commercial programs and teaching strategies. Many Survey respondents would have liked to develop more familiarity with these programs and strategies.

From extensive review of Interview responses, course topic schedules, and required reading lists, it is clear that about half of the graduates were not provided with evidence-based research/theories about literacy instruction. Of those who were, many (28%) were provided with theories about general child development such as Piaget, Halliday, Maslow, and Cambourne, but did not report learning any evidence-based research about literacy instruction. Four (13.8%) were able to describe learning about the components of effective literacy instruction in general, or specifically referred to several of them, when answering this question, but they did not report covering the research behind them. Only three
(10.3%) appear to have been provided with a research-based foundation regarding literacy instruction and the components of an ideal elementary Language Arts program in their required literacy course.

A majority of interviewees (83%) did cover long-range planning in their literacy course. On the Surveys, 15% of those who had learned about this type of planning considered it valuable. Those who did not cover how to set up an elementary literacy program were very concerned about their lack of skills in this area.

More than two-thirds of the Survey respondents (70.4%) reported spending “some time” or more learning how to assess a student’s reading abilities. Many Survey respondents wrote about this when noting the most useful aspects of their programs. Thirty-five percent of Survey respondents wished that they had received more instruction in this area.

Almost half of Survey respondents reported spending “very little” or no time learning how to recognize/assess reading and writing difficulties. Again, this was an area in which graduates would have liked more instruction.

The content of the primary text used in faculty literacy courses varied a great deal across the province. For example, *Reading as Communication* contained a substantial amount of research-based findings, however, *50 Literacy Strategies* was completely practical.

A surprising number of interviewees reported not completing their assigned readings. They were more likely to complete readings they felt were relevant and practical. Many reported
not doing readings because they were not discussed or referred to in class. Some did not understand the articles suggesting that some previewing of readings is necessary.

Finally, there is a tremendous variance in the content and focus across programs in Ontario. The content and focus covered in one literacy program at one faculty can be quite different from another. Indeed, different sections within the same program at the same faculty often cover very different literacy-related topics and materials.

Theme Two (Process): Graduates’ Perceived Value of Literacy Course

Several interviewees were enthusiastic about their faculty literacy course. “By far…it was the best class I had there [at the faculty] because of the whole package: the setting [which was in an elementary school], the instructor, and the cohesiveness of the group” (126, 168).
Another interviewee said that the course had affected her “dramatically…I didn’t realize that students are ready to learn and absorb a whole lot of information at such a young age, at a lot younger age than [I] previously thought” (117, l395).

By contrast, 10 (34%) of the 29 graduates interviewed felt that their literacy course was generally not helpful (107, 112, 119, 120, 122, 123, 124, 125 127, and 128). Interestingly, however, all but one of these interviewees, when probed by interviewers, were able to elaborate on their opinion by describing some aspect(s) of the course that was clearly helpful. For example, “We had a bit with the Exemplars but I was hoping for more” (122, l230). Another interviewee stated,

I don’t think [the course had] much [of an impact on my understanding of] how to teach literacy on me at all…It did a little…it exposed me to the resources…[like] websites links…knowing where to find the resources…[It helped] me get my feet wet towards finding my own understanding (120, l395).

A large proportion of graduates (18.6%), reported on the Surveys that their literacy courses contained “nothing” of value that they would be able to use next year (see Graph 2). An interesting aspect of this finding is that it came as a spontaneous response to an open-ended question: What were the most useful components of your literacy program? What will help
you next year? Twenty-one of these 39 Survey respondents actually wrote “Nothing”, or words to that effect, in the space provided and the remaining 18 left the space blank.45

These responses were not representative of all programs. All of the Survey respondents, from many programs, even larger ones from which there were many participants, were able to list things of value in their programs.

Six of the interviewed graduates believed that the course provided them with a thorough understanding of a Balanced Literacy approach to teaching. For example, one graduate reported that, “It really brought me on-board to understanding what Balanced Literacy is” (126, l505). For one graduate, the course helped address some of the negative things she had heard about Balanced Literacy. “I came out of my course thinking…it can work and it makes sense (110, l402).

Two talked about the value of an elective course they had taken at the faculty. One said, “my elective course, I liked it because it was really specific and very helpful because kids with special needs will be in the regular classroom” (125, l543).

Across and within programs there was a variability of response to this question. For example, all but one of the students enrolled in the various Concurrent programs reported learning something they will use next year from their literacy course. All graduates from Two-Year programs reported learning something.

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45 One other Survey respondent left the space blank but had also left another open-ended question spaces blank. It was considered misleading to include this subject in this tally.
1.) Time and Value-Added

Courses across the province varied greatly in many ways. It has been established through the use of Surveys, Interviews, and course documents that the hours of literacy instruction also vary greatly from one university program to another. However, little variability was found, in terms of number of hours, across sections of the same course within programs.\(^{46}\)

The number of literacy hours for the required course ranged from 21 hours and 20 minutes\(^{47}\) to 72 hours.

In Graph 3 faculty courses have been grouped by their length and the percentage of respondents indicating that they learned “nothing” in their required literacy course. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the programs that were shorter had a higher proportion of graduates (out of the 210 who completed the Survey) report having learned “nothing” from the course. As shown in the Graph 3, programs ranging from 20-29\(^{48}\) hours had nearly 40% of graduates report they had learned “Nothing”. For a breakdown of this calculation see Appendix L.

\(^{46}\)It was clear from course schedules, Surveys, and Interviews that at one university (K) the required literacy course varied from 32 hours and 40 minutes to 45 hours for both Concurrent and Consecutive students. At another faculty (H) the required literacy course varied from 21 hours and 20 minutes to 29 hours and 20 minutes.

\(^{47}\)Course outlines for this program from 2001/2002 clearly indicate that this course was 21 hours and 20 minutes (16 classes times 1 hour and 20 minutes). In 2002/3 the course was 29 hours and 20 minutes hours (16 classes times 1 hour and 50 minutes). At a different location of this faculty the course was 24 hours.

\(^{48}\)The 29 hour and 20 minute course was included in this range.
In a related finding from the Interviews, a number of graduates had a general feeling of being rushed in their Language Arts course, “There was very limited time. I wouldn’t have taken out anything from what we did do; I would have supplemented it with more” (132, 1483). Another felt that, “it seemed always that she was trying to rush to get so much in…we never really had time to concentrate on practical: this is how you do it” (118, 1/165). Several suggested lengthening the program to two years. For example, one said that, “the program should be two years. The program needs to be longer…and the course should have been both semesters” (131).
Table 15

Hours of Faculty Instruction in Literacy by Program and Reports of Having Learned “Nothing”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Number of Surveys</th>
<th>Number of Hours in Required Course</th>
<th>Percentage Reporting “Nothing” Learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H21</td>
<td>N=29</td>
<td>21.3/29.3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I22</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20</td>
<td>N=18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K25</td>
<td>N=11</td>
<td>32.6 to 45</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K26</td>
<td>N=22</td>
<td>32.6 to 45</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F19</td>
<td>N=25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8-16</td>
<td>N=22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J24</td>
<td>N=16</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J23</td>
<td>N=8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>N=5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>N=9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>N=7</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E17</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>68 to 72</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E18</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 shows Hours of Faculty Instruction in Literacy by Program and Reports of Having Learned “Nothing”. It can be seen from this breakdown by programs that very few respondents indicated that they had learned “nothing” in any of the lengthier programs whereas in the three courses of 30 hours or less (21.3/29.3, 24, and 30) all had an extremely high number of graduates report having learned “Nothing” (38%, 50%, and 44%).

Although there is not a perfect correlation between the number of course hours and reports of learning, there was a tendency for graduates from lengthier programs to be able to
describe something they had learned from the course. Only one graduate from a program of 50 hours or more reported learning “Nothing” (1/43 or 2.3%) whereas (20/49 or 41%) of graduates from programs of 30 hours or less reported having learned nothing in their literacy class.

Interestingly, one of the faculties (A: Concurrent and Consecutive), where graduates report having learned a great deal, had a good portion of graduates (25%) spontaneously state that they wished their course had been longer. In effect, they needed more time to learn what they needed to know. Their courses were already about twice as long as the shortest three programs. In contrast, in the three shortest courses, where a large portion of graduates reported learning “Nothing”, only one graduate stated that they needed more time (1/49 or 2%).

2.) How to Teach

One surprising comment that pervaded many of the Interviews was that the program failed to cover how to teach.

I didn’t really feel like we learned how to teach literacy to students...I think a lot of us ended up feeling like it was kind of useless (124, l297)...My expectations were that we would learn how to teach, especially reading...we didn’t get that. You think to yourself how do you get a child to read? We were told at the beginning that we would not be taught how to teach; we were all brought aback by that. [The instructor] pretty much said, “I’m not here to teach you how to teach reading and literacy.” She laid out

\[49\] The author’s italics.
the theory of…what children need to learn [like] grade levels and curriculum. We are obviously going to learn on our own how to teach literacy and reading and writing and grammar (124, l322).

In the required course…the modeling [the instructor did] was good because it reflected how you should speak to students to get them motivated…but it didn’t help me understand how to teach literacy (125, l491).

My expectation when going into a Language Arts [faculty] course was that we were going to learn how to teach Language Arts and I found the textbook, and the course itself, you did not really get at that (118, l323).

These findings were mirrored in the responses on the Surveys. A notable proportion (15%) of graduates reported that their faculty literacy course had not taught them how to teach reading and writing. This finding should not be taken as representative of all programs. This particular response coalesced around certain programs.

Some graduates no longer underestimated the complexities involved in the how of teaching:

I went in there expecting more of a how to, like a 1…2…3…this is what you should be teaching and…I expected it to be a lot more formally laid out and planned. But in a lot of ways, the way that I was taught, I learned things that I won’t forget rather than a 1, 2…you know: here’s your books…It actually made me think a lot more about my own philosophy (117, l411). [The
faculty course] gives you a lot of ideas about how to approach [literacy instruction] without telling you what to do. [This is] somewhat the way the curriculum is set up right now: this is what you have to teach but not how to teach (117, l390).

Another graduate agreed, “[I] was expecting it to be: this is how you teach kids to read, write, and understand…and I realize: it’s just not as cut-and-dry” (121, l425). Their course clearly enabled these graduates to come to a valuable realization.

Others wanted more practical instruction. Forty-two graduates (20%) had wished they had more hands-on, practical strategies and teaching tips related to literacy. Thirty-three (16%) wished they had had more instruction in how to set up a literacy program.

I just thought we’d get much more hands-on learning about reading and writing and how to develop these skills in these kids…Sure I can come up with 50 different metacognitive strategies, but if the child doesn’t know how to read, the child doesn’t know how to read…. [I expected it to be more practical like] how do you put that together for a program? [I was expecting things to be] …very hands-on and very practical (121, l420).

I don’t feel like I have a very strong knowledge base…I can’t just pull out of my hat [a new strategy] if I see one isn’t working (123, l246). When I went in [started the program] I had [already] volunteered a lot in classrooms with a lot of experienced teachers. It seemed to me that any time they were dealing with a student that had difficulty they had all of these “things” sort
of tucked in a pocket that they knew how to tie it in…how to make it work out. They just knew what to do when a child was having a problem. I guess I expected that when I went to the program I would come out with a pocket full of ideas of what to do but I don’t feel like I have those (123, l263).

Again, it is clear that, even after graduation, some interviewees underestimated the complexities involved in providing “good” reading and writing instruction.

3.) Surprises

Only two interviewees reported having no expectations regarding their faculty literacy course. And only one reported that the course corresponded to her expectations, “I expected to learn about language and how to teach language to students…and that’s kind of what I got out of it” (104, l301).

Several interviewees were surprised that their faculty Language Arts class was so heavily focused on teaching students in Grades 1 to 3. They felt that Junior students were left out. The course was, “geared toward young children, Primary and I don’t think we even touched on upon anything higher than a Grade 3 level” (112, l160). Another felt the same way,

“We didn’t get much in the way of Junior” (133, l211). I was expecting more of a balance. We never discussed anything to do with kindergarten. All our assignments were for Primary….There was very little information about what to do with grades 4-6 (133, l329).
4.) What Graduates Felt Should Have Been Left out of Their Literacy Courses

Graduates had strong opinions about what they feel should have been left out of their literacy course programs. Most interesting, was the most frequently made comment in response to the Survey question: *What aspects of your literacy course(s) do you feel could have been left out?* (see Graph 4). Eighty-nine (43%) said nothing they did could be left out. Many followed up their response by saying that everything they covered was important. Others wrote that they wouldn’t leave anything out and in fact needed more time or coverage. Still others, wrote that they had not learned much and they didn’t want to have the little they did learn taken out of the program.

Five graduates out of 210 reported that their programs were of such little value, that everything could have been left out (91, 162, 172, 194, and 204). Consequently, these graduates were not included in the total (denominator) when averages were calculated. Additionally, 21 graduates (10%) reported that a lot of class time was wasted. More than half of these graduates were from two programs (G, H).
A frequently cited activity the graduate’s felt should be left out was the Read Aloud/Book Share. Some graduates (7%) believed that this was done to excess. One graduate reported that the first 40 minutes of every class was spent listening to the instructor read picture books (90, Survey; classmate, 91, also reported excess time spent doing Read Alouds, Survey). Graduates who raised concerns about this were from two university programs. Many of these graduates felt that modeled reading and exposure to children’s literature could have been done in a more time-efficient manner.
Several graduates wrote that being introduced to picture books and other types of children’s literature was a most useful part of their programs. Interestingly, they were not from programs where there were reports of excessive class time spent reading them.

A high number of graduates from one program (G) had specific concerns about the on-line component, which many graduates felt was repetitive and meritless.

Others, from the various programs (3%) felt that doing all of the children’s work, or integrating drama in most activities (3%) should be left out of their programs.

5.) Course Assignments and Graduate Evaluations

All of the programs had some type of assessment rubric used to determine graduates’ final grades for the course. Arguably, the weight given to different assignments should reflect the importance of those components to the program. The manner of assessment for graduates in their Language Arts classes varied greatly both across and within faculties.

The assignment most commonly given was to complete a Language Arts Unit or lesson(s). These also tended to be a heavily weighted project. Most students talked positively about this assignment and saw it as both practical and worthwhile.

Interestingly, when Survey respondents were asked what should be left out of the faculty literacy program, 19 students (9%) said some of the assignments. A large proportion of these graduates were from one program (H) and had completed an extensive cross curricular unit which took up a lot of class time, which many felt could have been better used.
Some graduates had fairly harsh comments regarding their assessments in faculty classes. The instructor “…was not big on assessing us…[and the assignments were so small they were] almost a joke” (113, 1302).

Seven interviewees had an exam after their course based on course content and four had quizzes based on their course texts. Several had tests or exams, or take home tests or exams, on overall course content. Several graduates had to complete observations/evaluations of students in their practicum placements. Other marks were made up of introducing children’s books to faculty class, class attendance marks, class participation marks, reviewing an article, completing a reflection log, and at one faculty, participating in an online discussion of issues related to education.

Several of the graduates, who completed long-range plans and units, as well as those who completed a power point presentation for the parents of future students (describing their literacy program), reported that these assignments would be useful to them next year.

**Summary: Theme Two (Process): Graduates’ Perceived Value of Literacy Courses**

Many interviewees were enthusiastic about their faculty literacy program. Others, who reported not having learned something of value in their course, were still often able to indicate some learning when probed by the interviewer.

The length of literacy courses varied greatly, from just over 21 hours to 72 hours. Many graduates from the shortest programs reported having learned “nothing” from their literacy
course but only one graduate from a longer program (50 or more hours) expressed that view. Interestingly, it tended to be graduates from longer programs who spontaneously stated that they wished that their course had been even longer.

Some graduates, both on the Survey and in the Interview, complained that their faculty literacy course had not taught them *how to teach* reading and writing. Others had appeared to have underestimated the complexities involved in teaching children how to read and write and their course at the faculty had clearly helped them develop insight into how difficult it was to teach well.

Most graduates reported having covered Long-Range Planning/Set up a Language Arts Program in their faculty literacy course. Regardless, Long-Range Planning/How to Set Up an elementary program and using Practical Teaching Strategies were things graduates wanted more instruction in (16% and 20% respectively).

When asked what aspect could be left out of their faculty literacy program many reported no aspect could be left out. For some, this was because they felt everything was important, others added that what they had learned was valuable and they wanted more. Still others said that they had not learned much and they didn’t want to have the little they did learn taken out of the program.

Graduates were also concerned about the use of time in their classes. Time spent with the instructor doing Read Alouds, although considered a valuable teaching strategy, was thought to be excessive in two programs. Some graduates who felt that in-class group
projects, off-topic class discussions, and Read Alouds were taking up too much time, clearly became resentful.

Assignments that graduates felt were practical were considered more valuable.

**Context**

**Theme Three (Context): Range of Practicum Experiences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Theme Three: Range of Practicum Experience</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) Freedom to Plan: Activities and Lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.) Freedom to Plan: Language Arts</td>
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The goal of the practicum placement is to provide a model of good teacher instruction so that graduates can see lesson planning and more long-range planning in action, observe and practice classroom management and instructional techniques, and exercise formative and summative evaluation of students.

One issue that impedes ideal placement in classrooms is that sometimes faculties struggle to find practicum placements. On rare occasions, this makes it necessary to double-up on preservice students in one placement.
In all faculty programs there is an expectation that faculty students will gradually take on more and more responsibility in their placements as the school year progresses. The number and length of placements vary by faculty and program. Typically, graduates complete at least three placements. The number of total classroom hours range from 250 (G) to 900 (E-18).

On the Survey, graduates were asked if the amount of time they spent practice teaching was: Not Enough (1), Almost Enough (2), Appropriate (3), Too Much (4), or Excessive (5). Only one person out of 210 reported Too Much and no one reported Excessive. The average for 210 Survey respondents was 2.6 with graduates most frequently reporting that they had had an Appropriate amount of time (144/210).

Another question addressed in the Survey was *How Well Did Preservice Program Prepare You for Your Practicum?* (see Table 16). There was a wide range of feelings about how well prepared graduates had been for their placements by their faculty. They were asked to respond using a scale from 1 to 5: Poor (1), Satisfactory (2), Good (3), Very Good (4), and Excellent (5). As can be seen in the table, across the 210 respondents, scores range from the bottom of the scale (1.0) to the top (5.0) with the average score being 2.9. How well prepared preservice students felt to enter their practicum placements speaks to the linkage within the program between what is taught in the course work and what student teachers experience in their practicum settings. In one case this linkage was “excellent” in one “poor” and in most it was rated as “good”.
Table 16

How Well Did Preservice Program Prepare You for Your Practicum (Scale: 1-5)?

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<th>Average</th>
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<td>N=9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>C5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average across programs</td>
<td>N=210</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a.) Freedom to Plan: Activities and Lessons

The Ontario College of Teachers outlines one purpose of practicum placements. They state that:
Practicum experiences for graduates need to provide opportunities for them to apply knowledge and skills learned in theoretical courses.\(^{50}\)

Clearly, some graduates had more opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills than others. Only seven of 27\(^{51}\) interviewees reported having free-reign regarding what and how to teach in at least one of their placements. One graduate noted that this was an anomaly. “I was free to do what I wanted…although it was not like that for…[my] classmates” (121, 1540).

The overwhelming majority (17/27\(^{52}\)) found that their hosts were generally open to new ways to teach skills and concepts but the particular skill or concept to be taught was dictated by the host teacher. “We were given the topic that had to be covered, the text to use and we were given free-reign to present it in any way that we wanted” (124, 1410).

Host teachers usually complete evaluations of the graduates’ teaching in the classroom. One interviewee felt pressure to restrict the desire to design new lessons,

She [the host teacher] taught out of workbooks every day. I ended up [doing what the host said] because that is what would get me the passing grade.

When I stood up for myself the third day she said, ‘No, don’t make any unnecessary work for yourself’…So I said ‘Okay’ and I would follow the

\(^{50}\)Ontario College of Teachers’ Preservice teacher education: Initial Accreditation Handbook (3rd Ed.) p. 14

\(^{51}\)Twenty-seven interviewees were asked about their practicum experiences. The two graduates who had completed one year of teaching were asked questions about their first year teaching experiences rather than about their practicum experiences.

\(^{52}\)Questions related to practicum placements were not asked of the two participants who had completed their first year teaching so the denominator for these questions is 27 rather than 29.
workbook…and have them [the students] go and do a worksheet and that is
definitely not how I would do it… (105, l570).

2.) Freedom to Plan: Language Arts

Several graduates reported that having the freedom to plan Language Arts activities was a
particular problem when teaching Language Arts in their practicum classrooms.

Three reported being prescribed both what and how to teach during all of their practicum
placements. One graduate noted that her Language Arts practicum teaching allowed no
room for her own ideas and teaching style: “Language periods were set in stone” (104,
l373).

Graduates who experienced this level of restriction complained about their host teacher
being reluctant to give up control. One teacher graduate said that eventually, she “gave up
planning activities”. Another summarized her experience with more cynicism stating that,
“Basically, when you went into a classroom you had to do what the associate [host] wanted” (119, l149).

Regarding Language Arts, several noted inconsistencies between what was covered in the
faculty program and what was being done at the placement. My host “was more direct
instruction and curriculum driven” (e.g., learning grammar rules), “She [the course
instructor] would have freaked out if she saw that” (107, l460).
**Summary: Theme Three (Context): Range of Practicum Experiences**

Graduates across the province had a wide range of experiences in their practicum placements. Depending on their program, graduates completed between 250 and 900 hours. Most felt they had had an appropriate number of hours (144/210).

Few host teachers gave graduates free-reign to teach what and how they wanted. However, the majority (17/27) found that their hosts were generally open to new ways to teach skills and concepts, but the particular skill or concept to be taught was dictated by the host teacher.

Enthusiasm waned for graduates whose hosts were too controlling regarding what and how they should teach. A few graduates reported that their hosts guarded their literacy instruction time more than they did other subject areas. The fact that host teachers graded their performance also led some to conform to ways of teaching that were contrary to their own philosophies and/or were not consistent with what was taught at the faculty.
Theme Four (Impact): Perceived Value of Practicum

Impact of Practicum on Graduates’ Understanding How to Teach Literacy

Graduates unanimously placed enormous value on their practicum experiences. Many reported learning a myriad of things at their placements:

Oh my God…if I did not have a practicum I’d have literally no clue. It was integral! It is essential…You learn so much from your host teachers, more than any instructor could tell you…You learn flexibility. You learn things that you can’t be taught…It’s unbelievable how much more, as a teacher, you need to do than the curriculum (115, 1404).

There is no comparing the difference between sitting in a classroom and having someone telling you about it instead of being in there and actually seeing how it happens…it doesn’t seem as huge as it seems when you’re sitting in a classroom and there are eight different things you should be doing…(113, 1397).

Nothing in a book could compete with what I saw in those classes…I saw [one host in particular doing a great job of], incorporating grammar and
other stuff in a novel study lesson…It was amazing. I can’t even put it into words (114, l386).

Even one graduate, who had had a less than ideal placement, felt that she had learned something very important: “How not to teach literacy to students” (163, l487).

Ten out of 27 interviewees described how their practicum placements had given them an opportunity to see the level of diversity among students. “The practicum gave me a better understanding of what students could achieve at different levels…the different ways students learn, and how to accommodate for certain students” (112, l292).

When you’re learning theory you’re thinking of the ideal situation, but when you are actually in the classroom not every child fits the mold. There are like 15 varying levels of understanding…of literacy. It was like a reality check…as a teacher I need to be aware of that and program accordingly. Whereas when I was in the classroom [faculty] I thought ‘Oh yeah this would be great. I’ll just do my lesson plans and everyone would learn right away’ (111, l421).

Another Interviewee, “realized how much more difficult it can be than what the textbook says to do….The kids have different needs. In reality, different kids need different things at different levels. I learned more how to adapt” (133, l340).

The practicum not only gave graduates an opportunity to see diversity within classrooms. Due to placements at the same grade level one interviewee gained insight into differences
Another who, more typically, had placements of varying grades learned that observing students at different ages in her various practicum placements had taught her valuable things that could be applied from students in one grade to students in another grade. “When you get a Grade 4/5 student you can place them and say, you know what, I saw that in a four-year-old student. [The older child had still] not grasped the concept of reading…but I remember how I taught that in that [earlier] grade. So it can be helpful” (163, l492).

Another gained a more realistic view of the daily distractions: “It is not the ideal situation in the classroom, as they [the instructors] would like you to think it is. [Things get in the way like]… schedules, timetables…announcements…an assembly…”(113, l410).

Several interviewees appreciated the chance to act out different styles of teaching in different practicum placements in order to see which ones worked for them.

You learn your style of teaching…you begin with no style. Am I going to be a hard ass or really passive? And you feel yourself out and you see from different styles of teaching at the school that you are placed at…you end up using a bit of what you see that you like then you end up coming into your own (115, l424).

Completing practice teaching also appears to be confidence building to graduates. When asked to complete a Likert Scale indicating how well they did in their practicum placement,
most reported that they did a Very Good (4) or Excellent (5) job. The average of the five point scale was 4.3 (N=210).

**Summary: Theme Four (Impact): Perceived Value of Practicum**

The impact of practicum placement experiences on graduates was profound. In terms of how to teach literacy, graduates described how their practicum placements had given them an opportunity to see the level of diversity among students, opportunities to experience the realities of teaching in a school day filled with distractions, as well as the chance to try different teaching personas to see what worked best.

**Theme Five (Impact): Demonstration of Pedagogical Knowledge and Application of Skills**

_A ton of reading does not equal one good teacher._

_Chinese Proverb (Columbia World of Quotations, 1996)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Theme Five: Demonstration of Pedagogical Knowledge and Application of Skills</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1.) Program Planning | a.) Interviewees’ Description of a “Good” Primary/Junior Literacy Program  
 b.) Building Comprehension Skills  
 c.) Building Fluency/Automaticity Skills |
| 2.) Adapting and Modifying Programs | |
| 3.) Assessment | a.) Strategies to Evaluate Future Students  
 b.) Identifying “Poor” Readers and Writers |
| 4.) Students Who Struggle | a.) Identifying Reasons Why a Student Might Struggle  
 b.) Helping a Struggling Reader  
 c.) How to Help a Child Struggling to Read a Word |
| 5.) Application of Skills | a.) Assessment of Students’ Ability to Read Nonsense Word  
 b.) Assessment of Students’ Inventive Spelling  
 c.) Junior Spelling Instruction |
Another important question this study attempted to answer was how well graduates could apply what they had learned about literacy instruction to the classroom.

1.) Program Planning

a.) Interviewees’ Descriptions of “Good” Primary/Junior Literacy Programs

The classroom teacher is primarily responsible for program planning. The teacher is expected to use Ministry curriculum documents, Ministry Exemplars, board documents, and commercial programs purchased by boards and prepare a year’s lessons while making adaptations and modifications for students with special needs. It is a challenging task. Graduates were asked to describe a “good” elementary literacy program. Their responses varied greatly.

This time, it is the new teacher, and not the faculty instructor, who must choose between breadth and depth regarding what to include in their students’ program. Answering this question required graduates to make informed decisions about what to cover superficially and what to cover in a more thorough manner.

Interviewees’ descriptions of a “good” program were charted to see how they compared with what research indicates should be included in an effective elementary literacy program.
Some responses were short with graduates only mentioning two or three things they would include and spoke about these items in a very vague manner. In these cases, interviewers politely prompted graduates to provide more thorough answers.

In Table 17 the components that research has shown to be important for effective literacy instruction are displayed across the top and the literacy components that were mentioned as part of a “good” literacy program by each of the 29 Interviewees are shown with check marks. It is important to note that in order to be assigned a ✓ for Comprehension\(^{53}\) and Written Expression graduates needed to include at least one strategy. For example, “guided reading” is a teaching strategy for building reading comprehension. If the graduate mentioned building reading comprehension by using “guided reading” they were given a ✓. If they mentioned Comprehension but no strategy they were given a (✓). Simply mentioning the other components (e.g., Phonics) was assigned a ✓. Percentages represent the proportion of graduates who included that component in their answer (N=29).

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\(^{53}\)The graduates’ knowledge and instructional skills regarding Comprehension were probed in another question later in the interview. Those results will be discussed later in this chapter.
### Table 17

**Tally of Interviewees’ Components of a “Good” P/J Literacy Program**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Phonemic Awareness</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Comprehension (Reading)</th>
<th>Written Expression (Writing)</th>
<th>Spelling/Word Walls</th>
<th>Printing and/or Cursive</th>
<th>Motivating</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Tailor for Student Needs</th>
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Sources of Literacy Components: Put Reading First, 2001; LFA, 2000; NRP, 2000.

Clearly, there was great variability regarding the frequency with which various components of a “good” literacy program were mentioned. Less than one in four mentioned: *Phonemic Awareness* (3%), *Printing/Cursive* (7%), *Assessment* (10%), *Fluency* (14%), *Modifying/Adapting Program* for student needs (17%), and *Vocabulary* (21%).
Comprehension (90%) and Written Expression (79%) were two components mentioned by most graduates. Around half of interviewees included Working with Words/Spelling (52%) and providing Motivating (48%) activities. The most any graduate included in their answer was six components out of 11. Interestingly, these were the only two graduates (11 and 68) who were interviewed after their first year of teaching.

On average, graduates came up with 3.7/11 of the important components needed to create an optimal literacy program for elementary students.

b.) Building Comprehension Skills

An overwhelming majority (90%) of graduates interviewed included Comprehension as an important component of a “good” literacy program. Comprehension is understanding what is read. Interviewees were asked for ways to help students improve their comprehension skills.

Evidence has shown that comprehension is improved by teaching strategies such as: self-monitoring, using graphic/semantic organizers, answering and asking questions, recognizing text structure, summarizing, and activating prior knowledge. Teacher modeling and guided/shared reading are common ways to improve comprehension. Table 18 tallies the approaches listed by the 29 interviewees’ for improving students’ reading comprehension against the instructional strategies that research has shown to be most effective.
Table 18

Tally of Interviewees’ Strategies to Improve Students’ Reading Comprehension

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<th>#</th>
<th>Self-Monitoring</th>
<th>Graphic/Semantic Organizers</th>
<th>Answering and Asking Questions</th>
<th>Recognizing Text Structure</th>
<th>Summarizing</th>
<th>Activating Prior Knowledge</th>
<th>Teacher Modeling</th>
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Source of Comprehension Strategies: *Put Reading First* (2001)

Fifteen interviewees planned on using class discussions and/or follow-up activities to improve comprehension. Eight said that they would incorporate prereading activities into
the lesson (like predicting what the text would be about). Eight said that reading a lot would improve reading comprehension.

On average, interviewees were able to come up with only 1.6/8 of the evidence-based strategies proven to be effective in improving students’ reading comprehension.

c.) Building Reading Fluency/Automaticity

Only 14% of interviewees included Fluency as an important component of a “good” literacy program. Fluency is about reading with expression: words flowing together to make sentences. Automaticity is fast, effortless word recognition in isolation.

Research shows that Fluency can be improved using various strategies. They include modeling fluent reading, having the student repeatedly read passages orally with assistance, and selecting books that are at their level of reading ability (i.e., with 95% accuracy). Choral reading, tape-assisted reading, reader’s theatre, and partner reading are examples of activities that build fluency. Table 19 displays the evidence based strategies for building fluency across the top and tallies the responses of the 29 interviewees against these.
Table 19

Tally of Interviewees’ Strategies to Improve Students’ Fluency/Automaticity

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<th>Model</th>
<th>Repeated Reading</th>
<th>Text is at the right level</th>
<th>Choral Reading</th>
<th>Tape Assisted</th>
<th>Reader’s Theatre</th>
<th>Partner Reading</th>
<th>Automaticity Activities (e.g., Sight Word Charts)</th>
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Source of Evidence-Based Fluency Strategies: *Put Reading First* (2001)

The most common answer given by graduates regarding how to improve a students’ reading fluency/automaticity, was to have the child read (8/27). This by itself was not assigned a check. If graduates noted that the book must be at the “right level for the child” they were assigned a check.
Several graduates did not know what fluency/automatic reading was. On average, interviewees were able to come up with only about one activity each.

In order to describe the components of a “good” P/J literacy program well, graduates must be aware of these components and be able to talk about them in the context of a real classroom program. Most graduates were not able to display this skill when answering this question.

2.) Adapting and Modifying Programs

Possessing the skills to adapt/modify programs for students with special needs has become a requirement in the province’s schools. Classrooms in Ontario have changed a great deal over the last two decades. The influx of high numbers of ESL/ELL students, especially in the Greater Toronto Area, has brought new challenges to teaching generally and most acutely to teaching Language Arts.

Moreover, there has been a push to integrate more students who have special needs into the “regular” classroom. These include students with Pervasive Developmental Disorders such as autism, or learning disabilities, or severe behavioural problems. Often times, these are students that, at one time would have been placed in a contained classroom with a smaller student to teacher/teacher assistant ratio.

Presently, the expectation is that the classroom teacher, along with some support from the ESL/ELL and the Special Education teacher, will adapt and modify programs in order to meet the needs of this diverse population.
The responsibility of tailoring programs for ESL/ELL and Special Needs students weighed heavily on many of the graduates. Many talked about the demoralizing effect continual failure to meet program expectations would have on these students and how important it was not to isolate or embarrass these students.

Several interviewees were concerned about being able to adapt/modify programs for students with special needs. “This is exactly where I think I am not prepared enough” (123, l432). Regarding students with special needs, another said, “That kind of worries me…and if I have ESL children, I’m just going to have to rely on the resource teacher because I really don’t know” (113, l530).

Several stated they would do their best to make all the children feel included. One teacher graduate said he would try to incorporate aspects of student’s culture,

I would learn a little bit of it [their language]…and bring in some of their cultural stuff…[for example] things they ate…and bring in their parents…and help the child see the similarities between their language and English…and draw them in and make them feel a part…[provide] transition for them [to the classroom] (120, l800).

By contrast, another teacher graduate appeared naively unconcerned: “There are no ESL in [Name of Town] ….we didn’t discuss that at all [at the faculty]” (133, l510).

Four interviewed graduates were relying on school support staff (ESL/ELL, Special Education) to help the student. “That would be a tough area for me…I would…make sure
that he or she had the support from the ESL teacher” (105, /722). Given the high number of students ESL teachers are required to support, a significant level of assistance from the ESL teacher is unlikely. Others hoped to have an adult volunteer and/or teaching assistant to help (117, 118, and 104) these students. Considering the availability of teaching assistants in Ontario schools this also seems an unlikely scenario.

Only two interviewees mentioned reading the IEP\(^4\) for identified students in order to see what recommendations had been suggested to help the student succeed (109, and 122). Only two mentioned incorporating assistive computer technologies into their program to support students with special needs and five graduates were planning on using peer tutoring to help this population (125, 114, 115, 132, and 105).

A typical graduate’s response was:

Be as inclusive as possible with kids that are in the class…adjusting follow-up activities…You just need to put things at their level. It’s just trying to include them as much as possible because they have ideas too…Obtaining different resources if they need it., like getting easier readers…ensuring small successes for them (119, /836).

Although several graduates had a somewhat idealized view of the amount of assistance they would be receiving from support staff, they generally expressed a desire to create a welcoming classroom for all students, and to be as helpful to them as possible. Other

\(^4\)An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student. They are kept in the OSR (Ontario Student Record) file at the student’s school.
graduates were clearly aware of their own need to become more able to adapt and modify program for all learners.

3.) Assessment

a.) Strategies to Evaluate Future Students

In order to make the necessary changes to programs, and in order to meet the needs of all students, a teacher must have a precise idea about the strengths and weaknesses of their students. This involves being able to accurately gauge where children are functioning and the skills to devise the best strategies to ensure optimal progress. It was the number one item Survey respondents (35%) wished had been included in their literacy program (see Table 1).

In order to gauge graduates’ assessment skills, interviewees were asked to think about assessing students’ literacy skills. Some shared their concerns, “Now that’s something I’m really worried about” (127, 1490). “I honestly don’t even know…I haven’t even been thinking about anything…I'll use rubrics I guess” (128, 1450).

Others outlined a variety of tools and strategies that they planned on using with their own classes. One graduate reported planning to use,

...some exercises so I can assess where they are...so formative assessment. And some tests...spelling...grammar...and have them write an essay or write a reader response and grade it...[and] give them an example of what I would be looking for: a Level 4 paper...or maybe even as a class develop
one…I would also have them do…book reports and do book talks for their classmates…maybe, have them act out part of a story that they read with a classmate who read the same story. There are so many ways you can assess them…and lots of…observation, anecdotal notes and teacher-student conferences (117, l602).

There was great variability in the levels of preparedness. Answering this question about assessment elicited feelings ranging from anxiety to empowerment depending on graduates’ readiness to deal with it.

**b.) Identifying “Poor” Readers and Writers**

Interviewed graduates were asked specifically how they were going to identify students who are functioning below level. A majority (19/27)\(^{55}\) reported that they would use documents provided by the Ministry of Education. Some made specific reference to grade level curriculum documents or Ministry Exemplars\(^{56}\). One interviewee remarked that Exemplars were good for reading and especially for writing…it’s good because it backs you up for what you say to parents” and that showing the leveled exemplar papers to parents would help them understand that their, “…child should be doing this” (113, l640).

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\(^{55}\) This question was not asked explicitly on the Interview for the two graduates who had just completed their first year teaching so these graduates are not included in this calculation.

\(^{56}\) The former outlines the knowledge and skill expectations for each grade level by subject and the Exemplars document provides subject specific activities with a collection of student work exemplifying the five levels of achievement (R: extensive remediation is required, Level 1: well below level, Level 2: approaching grade level, Level 3: at grade level, and Level 4: exceeding grade level expectations).
Other interviewed graduates assumed that assessors and assessment materials would be provided at their schools. “I guess just having them tested [or]...even have another teacher come in [to hear the student read]” (128, l470). “I was just counting on the school having some kind of testing available” (107, l700). Another said that they would ask a colleague at the school to offer advice about writing and spelling: “I would have a consultation with the resource teacher,” and “I don’t know if I would feel confident in determining it [the student’s abilities] by myself” (125, l800).

One interviewee said, “I’m sure there are some programs for that too, I don’t know what they are...there are probably some assessment things...I haven’t done it before” (120, l853). Another felt that, “Some of this [testing would be]...hard because I have never had to assess kids” (121, l745).

Ten interviewees said that they would look at the student’s work and compare it to their expectations for the assignment and several said they would use rubrics they designed for a particular lesson. Ten also specifically referred to using a Running Record or Miscue Analysis\(^{57}\) to assess a student’s reading ability. Six said that they would use one other specific test (e.g., PM Benchmarks, DRA, Dolch, and Gates-MacGinitie).

Overall, there was tremendous range in graduates’ abilities to articulate what assessment strategies and tools they would use and how they would identify when a child is struggling to read and write.

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\(^{57}\)These are records of how a child orally reads a passage. Using shorthand and a copy of the passage being read, the teacher makes note of the errors the child makes. These records are then looked at by the teacher to determine the frequency and nature of the errors made.
4.) Students Who Struggle

a.) Identifying Reasons Why a Student Might Struggle

Understanding the reasons why a student is struggling is an important beginning step towards helping to fill any gaps or remediate any learning problems the child may have. For this reason interviewees were asked why students might be struggling in their Language Arts class.

Many interviewed graduates were able to generate several reasons why students might be struggling in class. Twenty-three interviewees talked about a child’s lack of previous exposure to language being a possible cause of difficulties at school. Most suggested that not enough exposure to aspects of language at home was a causal factor. This widely held view was expressed by one interviewee as not having any books at “home or…parents who read to them” (113, 906).

Other explanations for a learning lag, stated by graduates, included limited instruction at school, a student’s lack of confidence, a lack of willingness to learn, not enough phonics instruction or alphabetic training, or a learning disability.
b.) Helping the Struggling Reader

An overwhelming majority of graduates (23/27) were aware that suggesting a struggling reader *read more* would not be the best way to remediate a reading problem. Even those who said that reading more would be a helpful strategy for a student with a learning problem cautioned that, “…they need to read a lot but I don’t think just reading a lot will overcome a reading problem. I think they need to be given the strategies to read properly. They need some guidance as well” (107, l1001).

Another stated that reading a lot is,

> …one good way to help overcome a reading problem but you can’t just do that alone. If a child is struggling with reading…they probably need more than just practice…[like] some phonics or decoding strategies or comprehension strategies (113, l970).

Several recognized that reading more would likely increase a child’s level of frustration (104, 105, and 163). “Reading a lot doesn’t…overcome the problem, reading might help you discover the strategies of how to read but it doesn’t necessarily mean you are going to overcome the problem, for example, it could be dyslexia so reading a lot would just frustrate you” (105, l1055).

Generally speaking, most interviewed graduates knew that strategies were necessary to remediate the challenges struggling readers face. However, several expressed frustration and a sense of helplessness in not knowing what they can do to assist these students.
We didn’t talk enough about what to do with students who have difficulties with reading. I know I will have students with difficulties but how do I deal with them? I don’t think we talked about that. We learned strategies for teaching and strategies for activities but they weren’t…strategies specifically for children that were having difficulties (123, l245).

Many Survey respondents wrote about this “missing” component of their faculty programs. Twenty percent (see Graph 1) reported that their course should have included instruction on how to help a struggling reader. Nine percent of Survey respondents felt that they should have been provided with more information about learning disabilities in general.

c.) How to Help a Child Struggling to Read a Word

Research has determined that good readers process the letters of each word in detail. This is done unconsciously and quickly (Adams, Trainman & Pressley, 1998). Suggesting the alternative, in effect, that words are skipped, led to the idea that “context ruled” in reading. Based on that widely-held assumption, if a child struggled to read a word it was deemed appropriate to encourage them to guess using context. In fact, this is a less effective strategy when helping a struggling reader.

Even skilled adults are unable to guess correctly more than 25% of the time (Gough, Alford & Holley-Wilcox, 1981). Adams and Bruck (1995) also suggest that it is the reliance on context that drains cognitive processes from the normal process of comprehension. In fact, it is the poor less-skilled reader who relies on context to identify words (Bruck, 1990).
Interviewees were asked what strategies they would use if they were listening to a child struggle to decode a word. A majority of graduates (18/29) reported that the first strategy they would encourage the child to use would be to sound out the letters of the unknown word. Many of the 18 who suggested sounding out the word said that they would then ask the child to look for patterns, help chunk the word into sections, and blend the letters in order to help the child read the word.

Five graduates said that the strategy they would use first would be to encourage the child to use context clues in order to read the unknown word. Five graduates said that first they would encourage the child to use picture clues in order to read the unknown word.

5. Application of Skills

a. Assessment of Students’ Ability to Read Nonsense Words

One question asked of interviewees involved the following nonsense words: thip, slithy, and chupping. Graduates were asked what they had learned in their preservice class that would help them identify the strengths of a Grade 1 student who can read these nonsense words.

It is useful to know if a child can read nonsense\textsuperscript{58} words because it is an indication of how quickly and accurately they associate letters with sounds. Good readers can do this well. Good readers can decode new words accurately, providing them with a chance to attend to

\textsuperscript{58}Sight words are ones that tend to be high frequency words that are identified automatically. These are words like “the” and “and”. This type of automatic recognition does not interfere with the reading of nonsense words because they are not real words to which the child could have been exposed. These words are given in isolation so context cannot be used to influence how quickly and accurately they are read.
the meaning of the text they are reading. Poor readers decode slowly, inaccurately, and comprehend less well.

Five interviewed graduates reported not having discussed nonsense words in class. Another reported hearing the term in class but could not remember anything about it (104, l571).

The responses to this question also revealed another confusion of terms. Several graduates (7/29) used the term “phonemic awareness” when they really meant “decoding”. They stated that in reading the nonsense words the child displayed strong phonemic awareness skills. However, phonemic awareness is an aural skill involving the ability to hear, identify and manipulate sounds in spoken words (e.g., identifying the same sound in the spoken words: fall, fix, and fun). For a Grade 1 student to read these nonsense words they need decoding skills involving both alphabetic knowledge and phonemic awareness in order to blend the sounds together to pronounce the nonsense word correctly.

Some answers revealed that graduates did not know what a nonsense word was or what can be derived from its use about a child’s understanding. For example, one thought students had written the nonsense words and that the child must know that you double the p before adding ing.
b.) Assessment of Students’ Inventive Spelling

*It is a damn poor mind that can think of only one way to spell a word.*

*Andrew Jackson*

In the Survey, 11% of graduates reported wishing that there had been more coverage of word play/spelling instruction in their faculty literacy course. Two related Interview questions involved graduates looking at the written word.

The first Interview question involved looking at an example of a child’s inventive spelling. Graduates were asked if they would be worried if a Grade 1 student wrote: *yer is mi ty djruk* (Where is my toy truck?). They were asked, “What this child knows and what does he/she need to learn?”

This writing is an example of early phonetic/semi phonetic spelling. In this writing, the child has shown evidence of the alphabetic principle, has segment words into component phonemes, has used letters to provide some partial representation of phonemes, has used a letter-name strategy, has grasped the left-to-right sequence of words in English, has shown mastery of some letter formations, and has segmented words. This child has also spelled the high frequency word *is* correctly.

The child who wrote this needs to be taught how to read and spell single consonants, diphthongs, blends, and regular word patterns, as well as a few high-frequency sight words.
Responses were varied but indicated that many interviewed graduates had a flawed understanding of early spelling stages. Beginning writers often substitute *dj* for *tr* because of the location of pronunciation. Several graduates were concerned that this child was suffering from a speech impediment rather than simply working through a developmental stage. I would be “a little concerned [about this child] because phonetically it doesn’t make sense…I mean you have *dj* and that sound is nothing like for *tr*… I would be concerned if maybe that child has some kind of speech issue” (115, l848). Another interviewee said, “I’d be concerned because I think there may be some sort of speech problem here…saying words is affecting how they are spelling them.” (68, l788) And another said, “It looks like the child might have some kind of articulation problem and they are spelling the way they speak” (133, l834).

Other interviewees thought that the substitution of *j* for *tr* was absurd. “I am not sure about the *j* in truck. I can’t imagine any child using a *j* for anything. It is such a bizarre sound” (163, l439).

The other concerning feature many graduates referred to in their answers was the *w* in *where*. Only two graduates (113, 110), noted that the similarity between the letter-name *y* and */w/* explained why the child had spelled *yer* instead of “where”. Five graduates explained that this substitution was a problem because a *y* doesn’t ever make the */w/* sound.

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59Before reading the */r/* in truck, the reader puckers their lips. This is a different location of pronunciation than when reading a *t* that is not followed by an *r* (such as in *tale*).
One interviewed graduate thought aloud while answering this question, revealing some insecurities:

They are um, sounding things out the way that they think it sounds when they are saying them…[Now] what would I do? Um, see this is one of my concerns about teaching: that I’m not really sure where to go from there (107, l860).

Another graduate had a more confident approach:

This is where you would use phonics…and practice some of the Jolly Phonics because they don’t know the /w/, /t/…I wouldn’t be worried so much as I would note it and watch their development because this indicates that they do need some work with their phonemes …They do know how to spell some words and they’ve got syntax correct and they do know…how to sound out words but have a little difficulty getting the letters right…(117, l883).

Here again, as with the question about assessment, there is a response revealing one graduate’s insecurities juxtaposed with a confident proactive response coming from another graduate. Overall, nine interviewees said they would be concerned at the end of Grade 1 but not at the beginning.
c.) Junior: Spelling Instruction

In a more Junior level spelling question, interviewed graduates were asked how they would explain the spelling of *deceive* and *magician* to a Grade 5 student. The word *deceive* has two meaningful parts or morphemes (the prefix *de* and the root *ceive*). The word is related to *deceit* and *deception* and the spelling pattern is used in *receive, conceive, and perceive*. The word follows the “i before e except after c” rule. The word ends with an *e* because no word in English ends in a plain *v* spelling for the */v/* sound. When pointing out any of these features in a lesson the teacher deepens the student’s word knowledge.

Four graduates could not draw on an underlying knowledge of English when answering this question. “I have no idea. I thought about these for a really long time. I really don’t know…The English language is strange so you just have to remember them. I don’t know what I would say” (113, l925). Two others suggested telling the student to sound out the word. This, of course, would likely result in an incorrect spelling of the word.

An overwhelming majority (24/29) did suggest teaching the “i before e except after c” rule. Fourteen cited this as the only strategy they would use. Others also did suggest drawing the student’s attention to the */s/* spelled with a *c*, and the silent *e*.

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60 Also, the */s/* phoneme is spelled with a *c* followed by *e*; and the accent of such Latin-based words is almost always on the root morpheme (*Teaching Reading is Rocket Science*).

61 Another interviewee suggested that teaching students the “i before a after c rule” would be effective.
Six graduates reported not knowing how to instruct students regarding the spelling of *magician*. One suggested telling students they need to memorize all irregularly spelled words in English.

Other interviewees gave confusing and incorrect explanations such as:

> When two vowels go talking, blah, blah, blah go walking…If you use that principle that the *a* in *magician* should really be a long *a* but it is a short *a*.

> [Actually] I don’t know how I would explain to them [the students] (121, l1066).

Another said to tell the student about the silent *c* in *magician*. This is also a problem because, in *magician*, the *c* is pronounced */ʃ/ and is not, in fact, silent. Similarly, three graduates referred to the */ʃ/ sound in *magician* as a soft *c* sound.

Five did suggest teaching the child that the root word is *magic*. Two did state to just add the *ian* suffix to the root.

Many graduates struggled when asked to apply their skills to identify students’ literacy-related strengths and weaknesses. Some also had trouble providing wise instructional support. Some answers revealed a misunderstanding of the underlying structures of the language.
Summary: Theme Five (Impact): Demonstration of Pedagogical Knowledge and Application of Skills

Interviewed graduates’ descriptions of a “good” elementary literacy program lacked many key components. Although Comprehension and Written Expression were mentioned by most interviewees, Working with Words/Spelling and providing Motivating activities were mentioned by only half.

Even fewer, included Phonemic Awareness (3%), Printing/Cursive (7%), Assessment (10%), Fluency (14%), Modifying/Adapting Program for student needs (17%), Vocabulary (21%) and Phonics (31%). On average, interviewed graduates came up with 3.7/11 of the important components needed to create an ideal literacy program for elementary students.

When asked to describe specific strategies to use to improve students’ comprehension skills, graduates were not able to come up with many (on average, 1.6/8). They did even less well when describing ways to improve students’ fluency/automaticity (on average, 1.2/8).

Although some graduates had not given much thought to assessing future students, a majority (19/27) reported that they would use documents provided by the Ministry of Education. Some made specific reference to grade level curriculum documents or Ministry Exemplars. Over one-third of graduates listed a specific program and/or strategy they would use to determine how well their students were reading and writing.
Clearly many interviewed graduates wanted to do their best to help students who were struggling. Several intended to rely on other teachers at their schools to help these students. Although seeking the advice of colleagues is often a valuable strategy for teachers, it is also important to build one’s own repertoire of tools to assess students’ skills. Only a few mentioned using valuable resources for information and support such as the student’s IEP and the computer.

An overwhelming majority (23/27) were aware that suggesting a struggling reader read more would not be the best way to remediate a reading problem. Many, however, did not know what strategies would help. Many Survey respondents wrote about this as a “missing” component from their faculty programs. Twenty percent reported that their course should have included instruction on how to help a struggling reader. Nine percent of Survey respondents felt that they should have been provided with more information about learning disabilities in general.

When it came to working with a child struggling to read a word, many graduates (18/29) did say that the first strategy they would use would be to encourage the child to sound out the letters of the unknown word.

Not surprisingly, many graduates struggled to apply basic understandings of language structures when looking at examples of student work. Some answers revealed that graduates did not know what a nonsense word was or what can be derived from its use about a child’s understanding. Many did not know what to make of an example of a sample
of early phonetic/semi phonetic spelling. They did not understand the reasonable letter substitutions the child was making.

Graduates did better when looking at spelling words for older students. A majority were able to come up with at least one helpful strategy to give to a student when spelling specific words. However, some of the other graduates’ suggestions were confusing and incorrect, showing an underlying misunderstanding of English orthography and morphology.

**Theme Six (Impact): Knowledge Base**

**Impact Theme Six: Knowledge Base Regarding Language**

1.) Knowledge and Application

a.) Knowledge of Literacy-Related Terms

b.) Basic Language Knowledge

1.) Knowledge and Application

a.) Knowledge of Literacy Related Terms

Expert teaching requires a knowledge of language structure. Without it, teachers are less likely to recognize, understand and respond insightfully to student errors. One goal of this study was to determine what graduates knew about language and the teaching of literacy skills.
Interviewees were provided with a copy of the Interview questions prior to their scheduled Interview so that they would have time to review questions. During the interview, they were asked to examine literacy terms and state whether they recognized them. Then interviewees were asked to define the recognized terms and provide examples in order to fully clarify them. (Appendix M provides definitions and scoring criteria for the literacy-related terms, question #24).

Their answers were rated on a 5-point scale. It is clear from their responses that most interviewees were unable to define the majority of these key terms. See Table 20 for the percentage of scores for each term at each level for the 29 interviewees.

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62 A “1” was assigned if a response was not given or if it was entirely incorrect. A “5” was assigned to complete definitions (see Appendix L).
### Table 20

**Definitions of Key Literacy Terms: Percentage of Interviewees' Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>1 Point Response</th>
<th>2 Point Response</th>
<th>3 Point Response</th>
<th>4 Point Response</th>
<th>5 Point Response</th>
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<td>13.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
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<td>Blends</td>
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<td>29.7</td>
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<td>10.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
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<td>24.3</td>
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<td>2.7</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>90</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Fluency</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schema Development</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscue Analysis</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewees demonstrated a weak ability to define most terms. Even terms that graduates reported hearing about in class such as “Whole Language”, which 77.2% reported spending some or more time discussing in class, were not well defined. More than half of interviewees were able to provide a definition containing at least some key elements for
just three of the terms: “Prior Knowledge” (64.8%), “Inventive Spelling” (51.3%), “Reading Fluency” (54%).

Specific terms regarding language and how sounds go together were the least well-defined terms. Scores for word knowledge terms are presented in Table 22. A high percentage had no concept or just a vague or flawed concept of the following terms: “Grapheme” (91.9%), “Phonemic Awareness” (88.9%), “Morpheme” (81.1%), “Onset” (94.6%), “Rime” (97%), “Phonics” (70.2%), “Orthography” (94.6%), “Phoneme” (75.7%), “Digraph” (97.3%), “Diphthong” (90%). Overall, almost 90% had no concept or just a vague or flawed concept of word knowledge terms.

Table 21

Word Knowledge Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Point Response</th>
<th>2 Point Response</th>
<th>3 Point Response</th>
<th>4 Point Response</th>
<th>5 Point Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grapheme</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic Awareness</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rime</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthography</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digraph</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphthong</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Knowledge Terms</td>
<td>74.98%</td>
<td>13.15%</td>
<td>5.98%</td>
<td>5.61%</td>
<td>0.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scores for literacy instruction terms are presented in Table 22. A high percentage of interviewees were unable to provide better than vague or flawed definitions for “Reading Readiness” (81.1%), “Blends” (89.2%), “Concepts of Print” (83.8%), Sight Words
(78.3%), Whole Language (70.2%), Cloze Passages (56.7%), and Miscue Analysis (56.7%). Overall, almost 70% had no concept or just a vague or flawed concept of literacy instruction terms.

Table 22

Literacy Instruction Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms related to literacy</th>
<th>1 Point Response</th>
<th>2 Point Response</th>
<th>3 Point Response</th>
<th>4 Point Response</th>
<th>5 Point Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Readiness</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blends</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts of Print</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight Word</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Language</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloze Passage</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventive Spelling</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Fluency</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscue Analysis</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Instruction Terms</td>
<td>45.03%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms related to educational psychology (see Table 23) were defined better by interviewees than terms related to literacy instruction, and the least well defined, were word knowledge terms.

Table 23

Educational Psychology Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Psychology Terms</th>
<th>1 Point Response</th>
<th>2 Point Response</th>
<th>3 Point Response</th>
<th>4 Point Response</th>
<th>5 Point Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive Strategies</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Disabilities</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schema Development</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational/Psych Terms</td>
<td>38.92%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>20.52%</td>
<td>15.12%</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several of these terms were not defined well: “Scaffolding” (75.7%), and “Schema Development” (70.3%), and Reading Disabilities” (72.9%). Overall, just over 60% had no concept or just a vague or flawed concept of educational psychology terms.

b.) Basic Language Knowledge

In order to more accurately gauge the basic language knowledge of graduates two more questions\textsuperscript{63} were asked concerning knowledge of the structure of language (i.e., phonetics, phonology, orthography and its relationship to sounds and meaning).

As outlined in the Literature Review, a knowledge of morphemes, syllable structure, and historical aspects of English spelling are key to helping students tackle spelling. This is particularly important when spelling multi-syllabic words “given that the rules governing English orthography are fundamentally morpho-phonemic, rather than purely phonemic” (Venezky, 1970).

Virtually all interviewees were able to indicate how many syllables were in the words: teacher, unhappily, and coffee. The average score for 29 interviewees was 2.9 out of three. They were generally unable to identify the number of morphemes in those words (0.9/3).

Another Interview question looked at the interviewees’ ability to identify individual speech sounds (i.e., phonemes) in words. Words such as thought were chosen because they are

\textsuperscript{63}These questions were drawn from Moats’ (1995), and Moats & Lyon’s (1996) Informal Survey of Linguistic Knowledge.
particularly challenging. Knowledge about how the word is spelled actually makes isolating individual speech sounds more difficult. Participants were asked how many individual speech sounds were in the words: no, thought, piano, know, and taught. Interviewees also had difficulty identifying the number of phonemes; the average score for was 3.2/5 (N=29).

**Summary: Theme Six (Impact): Knowledge Base Regarding Language**

Interviewees demonstrated a weak ability to define most literacy-related terms. Even terms graduates reported hearing about in class such as “Whole Language”, which most reported spending some or more time discussing in class, were not well defined.

Specific terms regarding language and how sounds go together were the least well-defined terms. Terms related to educational psychology were defined better by participants than terms related to literacy instruction.

Results are consistent with those of Moats (1995), and Moats and Lyon (1996). Ontario faculty graduates are also generally confused about structure of language and how this influences reading, spelling, and writing.
Theme Seven (Impact): Self-Efficacy

1.) Graduates’ Perceptions of Their Own Abilities

When asked to complete a Likert Scale indicating how well they did in their preservice program, most reported that they did a “Very Good” (4) or an “Excellent” (5) job. The average of the five point Likert Scale was 4.4 (N=210). This being the case, did they then feel that they were sufficiently prepared to teach reading, writing and assess literacy skills?

Interviewees were asked to discuss any concerns they had regarding teaching their own class the next year. Responses have been organized to present the findings regarding teaching in general and then teaching literacy specifically. The two main concerns, mentioned by 10 interviewees each, were classroom management worries, and concerns about organizing their programs.

“Classroom management” was the term used by 10 interviewees. This included, for example, two who were worried about dealing appropriately with students who have behavioural issues. Specifically, they were concerned about what to do with “misbehaving children” and students who, as one stated, “just don’t want to read, just don’t want to write, just don’t want to do their homework, that really just don’t want to be at school (131, l760).
Others were concerned about “commanding the respect of students” (121, l568) and how to get students to understand and follow “routines” (134, l555).

Some worried about the difficulties of keeping all, “groups on track. You have to have your eye in three places at once and keep your finger on top of everybody” (110, l519).

Another area of concern reported by many graduates involved the ability to program effectively. Interestingly, concerned interviewees seemed to approach this worry from opposing points of view. While several were anxious about being, “…unable to cover all of the curriculum within the year” (115, l486) and stated that “running out of time” was their “number one…worry” (111, l497), others seemed uneasy about the idea of filling up the nearly 200 days that make up the traditional academic year.

With regards to the former,

I’m never going to feel 100% ready [to teach] until I am actually doing it…I’m still going to be worried about: Oh my gosh, how am I going to fit all of this [curriculum] in in one day, in one year?…It’s going to do no good to have 10 minutes of a subject. You need to have an appropriate amount of time (113, l450).

In contrast, another graduate stated that, “My biggest concern is how am I going to plan a whole year? How am I going to fill all that time? (128, l400).

Ten were worried about time and organizing the literacy program. An additional four were uneasy about the prospect of keeping track of the paperwork. Others were worried about
having the time to grade, and organize, and keep track of everything. They feared becoming, “overwhelmed with the workload with coordinating everything” (124, l480).

Arguably, these are survival skills required by teachers. Being able to manage a classroom of 25 or more students, co-ordinate activities in order to keep all of the “plates spinning”, and keep track of everything is a daunting task. It is, however, a prerequisite for effective teaching.

Interviewees were also troubled about their abilities to manage a classroom, organize programs, and keep track of everything because a lack of these skills would not go unnoticed. Even untrained observers, and sometimes the students in the class, recognize when a teacher struggles in these areas. To make matters worse, several participants were concerned about being observed teaching lessons by administrators at the school where they are hired to teach.64

At the time the interviews were conducted several graduates had yet to be hired. Two of them were anxious about being “hired at the last minute and scrambling to make it happen and being prepared” (126, l713).

Several of these graduates reported being aware that because they were new teachers their teaching packages may be less than ideal. For example, one may be hired at one school to teach Kindergarten in the morning and then teach Language Arts and French to Junior students at another school in the afternoon.

64 New teachers are evaluated several times during their first two years of teaching in order to earn their permanent contract and according to the Teacher Evaluation procedure: Classroom Management Skills et cetera. are skills they are expected to display.
Other wide-ranging concerns included having a lack of resources to teach with, dealing with parents in general, explaining student-assessment to parents, and dealing with bureaucracy and school politics.

Interviewees were then asked to reflect upon and share any concerns they had that were specifically related to literacy instruction. Only three participants reported having no literacy-related concerns (117, 109, and 128). The remaining graduates’ concerns were many and varied. Even the most frequently stated literacy worry was reported by only eight interviewees. This group was anxious about meeting the needs of all students including those with special needs such as learning disabilities, behaviour problems, second language learners, and other students who struggle.

I don’t know if I feel confident about the different learning disabilities concerning literacy and knowing how to identify them. That I will overlook any problems students might be having with literacy. I’m hoping that experience will help me see the red flags (111, 1502).

My biggest concern? That I missed a kid. That I pass the child on having taught him or her nothing over an entire year because he fell through the cracks. Because the reality now is that it is so easy for a child to fall through the cracks. And this relates to literacy because if you’re not literate all the rest is garbage…literacy has to be first and foremost. They are not going to be able to do the rest without it (163, 1584).
The next most frequently stated literacy concern was related to assessment. Several graduates were anxious about developing their language programs. They questioned whether they knew enough to make it work. Several more worried that they would not be able to fit in the entire required curriculum. Three hoped that they would be able to make the program interesting enough to engage all students.

Others were worried about dealing with parents. “I know parents are going to want some objective data… I’m going to have to find some tools that…I can believe in and will help the kids” (133, l420). Also,

Yeah, definitely…for dealing with parents. Most parents are very concerned with…reading, writing, Language Arts. I am concerned about my ability to teach Language Arts…to do it effectively and to have that reflected in students’ marks so that if there is a problem I can report exactly what it is (125, l718).

Interestingly, when responding to this question, six graduates shared their thoughts about feeling pressured to be a “good” literacy teacher. The fact that similar statements were not made by any graduates when answering the previous question, about general concerns, indicates that many hold being a literacy teacher up to higher standards than being a teacher in a general sense. As one graduate put it: “you have to make sure that they can read by the end [of being] in your class…it is…daunting” (118, l603). Also, Language and literacy are the paramount in our society…therefore there is a certain amount of pressure to excel as a
teacher in that area more so than [other subjects] because it is the cornerstone of learning (115, 495).

**Preparedness to Teach Literacy**

On the Survey, graduates were asked to reflect upon and gauge their level of preparedness to teach literacy in their own classrooms next year (1=Not at all, 2=A Little, 3=Adequately, 4=Well, and 5=Completely). Their responses are summarized in Table 24. On average, graduates felt they were Adequately prepared to Teach Reading (3.1), Teach Writing (3.1), and Assess Students’ Literacy Skills (3.0). There was, however, considerable variability in their feelings of preparedness across respondents to the Survey, ranging from respondents who felt little prepared to those who felt well prepared. It is also clear from the table that there is a considerable degree of correspondence between how prepared respondents feel in the three areas of literacy.
Table 24

How Prepared do You Feel to Teach Reading, Writing, and Assess Students’ Literacy Skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Program</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Teach Reading?</th>
<th>Teach Writing?</th>
<th>Assess Students’ Literacy Skills?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E13</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E18</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E11</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>N=5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>E10</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>N=9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J24</td>
<td>N=16</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E15</td>
<td>N=3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>N=7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8</td>
<td>N=9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>N=13</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>F19</td>
<td>N=25</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K26</td>
<td>N=22</td>
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<td>D7</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J23</td>
<td>N=8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H21</td>
<td>N=29</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20</td>
<td>N=18</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E16</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E14</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H22</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E12</td>
<td>N=3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average across programs$^{65}$</td>
<td>N=210</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{65}$Total scores were added and averaged for all respondents across programs /5.
Summary: Theme Seven (Impact): Self-Efficacy

Graduates rated themselves highly when considering how well they did in the faculty program. Despite this fact, many had worries about teaching their own classes the next year. The two most frequently noted concerns were classroom management and organizing programs/keeping track of everything.

Almost all had specific concerns about teaching literacy. These most frequently included: meeting the needs of all students, assessing students, covering the curriculum, and motivating students. Interestingly, over 20% commented about how important it was to be a "good" Language Arts teacher.

On average, graduates also rated themselves as only "Adequately" prepared to teach reading, writing, and assess the literacy skills of their future students.
This study was also interested in graduates’ pedagogy and philosophy of teaching. To this end, graduates were asked about the literacy teaching philosophies of their instructors and host teachers. Graduates would have gauged their instructors’ and hosts’ philosophies from not only what they said but also by how they organized classes. However, it is questionable as to whether the graduates’ perceptions of their instructors’ and hosts’ philosophies are accurate. It is possible that some graduates misinterpreted the messages of their instructors and hosts. Nevertheless, their perceptions themselves are of interest.

1.) Teaching Philosophies of Instructors and Graduates

Interviewed graduates were provided with the opportunity to agree or disagree with some literacy teaching philosophies and offer an opinion as to whether their professors would agree or disagree with these philosophies. Table 25 summarizes the responses of the interviewees with respect to *Teaching Philosophies of Instructors and Survey respondents*. It was encouraging that, in most cases, the graduates’ professors appeared to be conveying literacy philosophies that agree with research findings.

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66 ‘Philosophies’ refers to underlying beliefs regarding what and how to teach literacy.
Specifically, 90% of graduates felt their professors would disagree with the philosophy that reading instruction should not be necessary after the third grade and the same proportion of graduates themselves disagreed with that philosophy.

The vast majority of graduates (91%) felt that their professors believed that phonics instruction should begin in Junior and/or Senior Kindergarten. For some reason, however, only 62% of graduates themselves agreed with the philosophy that reading instruction should begin before Grade 1.

Most graduates (82%) felt that their professors would agree or strongly agree with the philosophy that ‘teaching phonics, word attack skills, and spelling explicitly to students is good’. However, only 61% of graduates themselves agreed or strongly agreed with that philosophy.

Only approximately 30% of graduates felt that their professors would disagree or strongly disagree with the philosophy that reading a lot is the best way to overcome a reading difficulty and only about 18% of graduates disagreed with this philosophy themselves. This opinion is at odds with research which has demonstrated that reading a lot is not sufficient treatment for students with reading difficulties. These students require targeted reading instruction to overcome their reading problems.

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67 One common misconception is that teaching phonics, word attack skills, and spelling skills directly to children is harmful and that skills must always be taught in the context of literature Teaching Reading is Rocket Science, p. 23.
About 40% of graduates felt their instructors would encourage children to guess at words on the basis of meaning and syntax *only* after they are encouraged to decode the word. A similar percentage of graduates agreed.

Table 25

**Teaching Philosophies of Instructors and Survey respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>25.7</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>Explicit (Instructors)</td>
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<td>Guess (Instructors)</td>
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<td>31.4</td>
<td>28.1</td>
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With regards to how instructors organized their classes, seven graduates (7/27) reported that their instructor’s own philosophy did not correspond to their approach to teaching the Language Arts class at the faculty. “She probably thought she was, was trying to say: be fun, use drama in your classes, be creative, try to make literacy something interesting for children; but at the same time I was just struggling to stay awake while she was lecturing and lecturing” (107, l337).
Most interviewees reported that their instructor did practice what they preached. The instructors “[told us to] appeal to different learners and he had lots of visuals…” (127, l320). Another said strategies they were encouraged to use in their classrooms next year were practiced in class. “She [the instructor] not only taught us verbally…she actually had us work in groups, consistently, to reinforce different things like different types of [reading strategies]…a lot of it was hands on…a lot of peer teaching and scaffolding” (117, l339).

2.) Philosophies of Instructors and Host Teachers

All but one teacher graduate stated that during their several placements they had at least one host teacher whose approach to teaching Language Arts was very similar to their instructor’s approach. “Her [the host teacher’s] class was the classroom the professor was talking about…she had the word walls, the library…” (128, l370), and another said, “The instructor introduced the Four Blocks and my host used it” (131, l573). Nine graduates reported that all placements had generally put into practice what was being taught at the faculty.

There were some exceptions. For example, one interviewee described how she had been presented with a balanced approach in her faculty literacy class but one of her host teachers “…clung to her old style…none of her [grade 1 and 2] kids were reading. She did not believe in teaching the kids to sound out words. Every word was a sight word they had to learn by rote…” (133, l383).

Three interviewees (112, 104, and 125) stated that their hosts were caught up in teaching the curriculum. My host “was more direct instruction and curriculum driven” (e.g., learning
grammar rules), “She [the course instructor] would have freaked out if she saw that” (107, l460).

3.) Graduates’ Philosophies: Direct-Teaching vs. Child-Centred

Another open-ended question given to Interview subjects asked for more details about their stance on explicit instruction versus discovery approaches to literacy instruction.

There was a reluctance to answer this question with most graduates taking the time to explain the value in both approaches.

I think that discovery learning is really important. I think that students should have some sense of independence in their reading and spelling and writing. But they can’t learn it all on their own. They need somebody to be more direct. If you leave students to do all of that through their own experiences they are going to miss out on the special rules that are involved. For instance, different words don’t meet the rules. I just think it is very important that they have somebody teach them that stuff and then they can see how it relates to their own experience. But I don’t believe in taking away their experiences with print (123, l810).

Twenty-two of the 29 graduates68 leaned towards an explicit instructional approach69. Generally, they sided with this philosophy because they were concerned that not all

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68One interviewee reported being right in between approaches, and one reported direct teaching for Primary only.

69This is inconsistent with Survey responses, where only 61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the philosophy that “teaching phonics, word attack skills, and spelling directly to students is good”.

children will discover what they need to discover on their own and that there were some things that needed to be taught.

Reading, spelling, and writing: these are skills and...[students] need some guidance to acquire and develop and perfect them. I think they need someone to guide and teach them. I think they need a teacher to encourage and support and scaffold...providing the next logical step (133, l1024).

Five said that they supported a more “child-discovery” philosophy and their choice seemed to stem from a desire to foster intrinsic motivation.

I think you can help them to learn and read and learn to write but ultimately it’s on their own that they will learn, that they’re excited to learn, that they want to like explore. If they will find a topic that they are interested in they’ll be excited in it and will apply that excitement to writing. As a teacher you can assist them, give them suggestions. You don’t always learn best by what someone tells you to do (121, l1099).

Summary: Theme Eight (Impact): Philosophies of Teaching

A teacher’s underlying beliefs about literacy instruction are important because they influence practice. Many graduates interpreted their faculty instructors’ underlying philosophies about literacy instruction as ones that do have a basis in research. This is the case regarding teaching phonics, word attack skills, and spelling to students explicitly, and
beginning phonics instruction before Grade 1. Interestingly, the graduates themselves agreed less strongly with these foundational beliefs.

This was the case even though all but one graduate stated that during their several placements they had at least one host teacher whose approach to teaching Language Arts was very similar or similar to their instructor’s approach.

Somewhat concerning was the interpretation of graduates that only about 30% of their instructors would disagree or strongly disagree with the philosophy that reading a lot is the best way to overcome a reading difficulty and only about 18% of graduates disagreed with this philosophy themselves. This is inconsistent with interviewee responses where an overwhelming majority (23/27) were aware that suggesting a struggling reader read more would not be the best way to remediate a reading problem. One possible explanation is that interviewees were required to explain their responses and the required reflection resulted in a more considered answer. Survey participants had only to circle a number indicating (1-5) how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement.

Also concerning was that only about 40% of graduates felt their instructors would encourage children to guess at words on the basis of meaning and syntax only after they are encouraged to decode the word. A similar percentage of participants agreed with their instructors. This is inconsistent with interviewees’ responses where 18/29 reported that the first strategy they would use to encourage a child, who was struggling to decode a word, would be to sound out the letters. Again, one possible explanation is that having to explain
their response forced interviewees to provide a more considered answer. It is also possible that the way in which the question is worded on the Survey was confusing to participants.

Twenty-two interviewees (out of the 29\textsuperscript{70}) leaned towards the explicit instruction approach. Generally, they sided with this philosophy because they were concerned that “not all children will discover what they need to discover on their own” and that there were some things that needed to be taught.

\textsuperscript{70}One graduate reported being right in between approaches, and one reported direct teaching for Primary only.
Chapter 6: Discussion

Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to provide a snap-shot, in terms of content, and variability, of Ontario faculties’ Primary/Junior literacy programs; determine the degree of correspondence between what is taught and what research indicates should be taught; and describe the programs in relation to new teachers’ knowledge, abilities, confidence, and philosophy regarding literacy instruction. There were five specific research questions posed at the outset of the study that will be addressed in light of findings outlined in Chapter 5.

1.) What is being taught at Ontario faculties regarding P/J literacy instruction?

Quite simply, it depended on the program and section in which one was enrolled.

This study indicated that the variability across the province in terms of course length and course content, was tremendous. A few sections covered research and literacy concepts well; most, only touched on them or did not appear to cover them at all.

Most faculty literacy courses introduced graduates to Ministry documents. Some covered organization, and classroom management well, and others did not.

What was more surprising was the degree to which this variability extended across sections of the same university programs. At one university (K), the number of course hours ranged from 32.6 to 45 for both Concurrent and Consecutive programs.

71The total hours of faculty literacy courses ranged from 22.3 to 72 hours.
Graduates, themselves, were aware of the range within program sections at their faculty. One interviewee was happy about having a particular instructor. This interviewee said that “overall there were four different teachers teaching the language course [at K] and they all had very different programs… It was really different across the board” (113, l56).

Another interviewee from another faculty felt there were things students in the faculty literacy class had, “…missed out on…My roommate was in another section and she kept on raving about her Language Arts instruction” (121, l384). And at yet another university, another graduate said,

I felt that by January I had learned so much in my Language Arts course already…I knew most of what they were saying in the [elective]…but other people [preservice students] hadn’t even heard of half the stuff. I felt very fortunate that we had her [the instructor] (126, l372).

This variability was evident in graduates’ descriptions of their faculty literacy courses. The interviewee quoted above felt the required literacy course she had taken at the faculty was, “By far it was the best class I had [at the faculty]” (126, l168).

By contrast, an interviewee from another faculty described the required literacy course as “really disappointing”, and just a “hodgepodge of ideas” (125, l525).
In fact, nearly 20% of Survey respondents reported that they would use “Nothing” that had been covered in their faculty literacy course in their own classrooms the next year.

Much of the variability resulted from the myriad of expertise of the faculty instructors. For example, where one instructor (at K), who was a retired classroom teacher focused on more practical aspects of teaching and “handed out her own daily plan [from] when she was teaching” (112, l140), another instructor (at J) centred their faculty literacy program around her obvious passion for picture books (144, l334). The interviewees in Kosnik and Beck’s 2009 study made similar observations regarding their respective instructor’s area of expertise.

Variability, in and of itself, was not a problem. Teaching from one’s passion has advantages. It was clear from graduates that the instructor’s enthusiasm was sometimes contagious. Many graduates appreciated the “love of books” (152, Survey: D) and “love of reading” (87, Survey: E) that they had “caught” from their instructor.

Caution must be exercised, however, so that focus on these passions does not exclude other essential components of faculty literacy programs. For example, graduates from sections of one program complained that the first 40 minutes of each class was taken up with the instructor reading them picture books (I).

A discussion regarding what was taught in preservice literacy courses is not complete without noting that the duration of some courses impacted on their ability to be effective.

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72In fact, at some faculties the variability was by design. Some courses are tailored to focus on a specific theme (such as “equity and diversity” at J). These themes are the lenses through which the rest of the program is filtered.
This relates to the Coverage Versus Mastery Dilemma outlined in the *Six Dilemmas in Teacher Education* (presented in Table 1 in the Literature Review). Instructors must make wise decisions about the breadth of coverage and the depth of mastery. They are mutually exclusive; the more time devoted to one leaves less time to devote to the other. However, the time allotted to literacy instruction at some faculties was clearly too little to address either side of the dilemma effectively.

2.) *How closely does what is being taught correspond to what research indicates should be taught?*

Effective preservice instruction in literacy requires preservice students to build both a depth and breadth of literacy-related knowledge. They are key elements of exemplary programs (IRA, 2007).

**Depth**

From extensive review of Interview responses, course topic schedules, graduates’ estimations of time spent on various literacy term/topics, and required reading lists it was clear that most of graduates were not provided with evidence-based research/theories about literacy instruction. Moreover, of those who did report being introduced to research (28%) were actually referring to theories about general child development such as Piaget, Maslow, and Cambourne.

Only three interviewees (10.3%) appeared to have been provided with a research-based foundation regarding literacy instruction and the components of an effective elementary Language Arts program in their required literacy course. Walsh, Glaser, and Dunne Wilcox
(2006) came to similar conclusions when reviewing the research-based content of faculty programs. They found that only 15% of programs covered the science of teaching reading.

Of the three interviewees reporting a research-based program, one was a graduate of a research-based course, another was introduced to some research in class and took the initiative to complete research-based readings from the class library set up by the instructor. The third graduate had a background in linguistics and arguably had the background knowledge on which to hang her new learning.

Four other interviewees (13.8%) were able to describe learning about components of effective literacy instruction (such as phonics, comprehension strategies, fluency) in general, or specifically referred to several of them, when answering this question, but they did not report covering the research behind them.

What can account for these results? It is possible that research and components were discussed in class but graduates did not remember and report this and it was not clear from course materials that they were discussed. In any event, one can infer from this that research and components were not a focus of the course.

In other courses it was clear that, in some sections, some efforts were made to include some research. However, it was not done in a manner accessible to most graduates. Sometimes it was covered in assigned reading from the textbook but these readings were not, as graduates reported, “discussed in class”. Or concepts were only “touched on” but not thoroughly enough for the graduate to remember.
It is clear from the findings of this research that if preservice teachers are to develop an understanding of the processes involved in literacy acquisition and of the causes of reading and writing difficulties, then this information must be a focus of their required literacy course. The key research-based components were summarized in the table of *Essential Components of Effective Literacy Instruction* in the Literature Review section. Including instruction in all of these components is required if graduates are to be prepared to create effective elementary literacy programs in their classrooms.

It is also clear that course content concerning essential literacy components and their research underpinnings cannot be overlooked or relegated to the part of the course that instructors tell their graduates to read on their own. Nor can they be covered in a superficial manner. They must be made a more integral part of the faculty literacy course.

This conclusion is supported by a surprising finding of this study: that many graduates did not complete their assigned readings. Nearly one-third admitted to not reading the primary required text. Many said this was because assigned readings were not discussed in class. Others said they did not understand them. In one program where more challenging articles were included in a course pack, an interviewee said, “I have to admit there were articles in here [the course pack] I didn’t even…read…and there were articles in here I didn’t know just what to make of” (110, /280).

Some graduates did not understand the articles, suggesting that some previewing of readings is necessary. More effort must be made to help graduates understand these concepts. This can be done through the use of graphic/semantic organizers, answering and
asking questions, recognizing text structure, summarizing, activating prior knowledge, and using teacher modeling and guided/shared reading. Thus they can model effective evidence-based strategies for teaching reading comprehension at the same time as scaffolding the learning of the preservice students in the literacy courses. This is supported by the research findings of Risko et al. (2008) in which changes in preservice students’ beliefs, pedagogy, and knowledge took place when they worked with actual student data, and when they were provided with explicit explanations and examples, as well as modeling of good practice and focused feedback.

From interviews, it was clear that graduates were more likely to complete readings when they felt they were relevant and practical. Thus, it is imperative that conceptual articles be linked to both activities that can be used in elementary classrooms, and to ways of assessing student skills. This was effectively done in one faculty class where videos of exemplary elementary classroom programs were shown.

Bringing in real student writing was one way an instructor made instruction/assessment more relevant and practical. Linking elementary students’ work to concepts helped graduates connect real life to Language Arts instruction and assessment. This would improve the coherence within the faculty program and between the program and practica. Coherence was something that has been found lacking in faculty programs (Kosnik & Beck, 2009).
**Breadth**

Faculties fared better when providing preservice students with the breadth of knowledge required to set up their own elementary Language Arts program. This involved ensuring that graduates were prepared to set up and teach an elementary Language Arts program. This required the use of Ministry of Education documents, organizational skills and classroom management strategies.

Most faculty literacy courses did, to varying degrees, introduce graduates to Ontario Ministry of Education documents (e.g., Language Arts 1-8, Writing Exemplars). They were listed on virtually every required reading list and were mentioned by most graduates.

A large majority of interviewees (83%) did learn how to set up an elementary literacy course. On the Surveys, 15% of those who had learned about this type of planning considered it most valuable. Those who did not cover how to set up an elementary literacy program were very concerned about their lack of skills in this area. Organizing programs, remained one of graduates’ most frequently voiced concerns about teaching next year. Ten of 27 interviewees expressed this concern.

“Classroom management” was the other most frequently voiced concern. Survey respondents (20%) wished that there had been more coverage of practical teaching strategies in their courses. For those who were enrolled in courses where these strategies were discussed 20% said they were a most useful part of their faculty program.
3.) How well can graduates define basic literacy terms and identify the structural components of English?

Interviewees demonstrated a weak ability to define most literacy-related terms. This is true even for terms that graduates reported spending some, or even considerable time discussing in class such as “Whole Language”. Just over 70% had no concept or just a vague or flawed concept of this literacy term.

Terms regarding language processes and how sounds combine in oral language and in print were the least well-defined terms. Overall, almost 90% had no concept or just a vague or flawed concept of word-knowledge terms. This lack of understanding is consistent with the findings of Moats and Lyon (1996). Terms related to educational psychology were defined better by graduates than terms related to literacy instruction. In sum, just over 60% had no concept or just a vague or flawed concept of educational psychology terms. Overall, almost 70% had no concept or just a vague or flawed concept of literacy instruction terms.

The findings of this study suggest that Ontario faculty graduates are generally confused about the structure of language and how this influences reading, spelling, and writing. For example, graduates also had difficulty identifying the number of phonemes in words; the average score being 3.2/5 (N=29). As well, most were unable to identify the number of morphemes in those words (0.9/3). Understanding the meanings of such word-level literacy terms is key to well-informed instruction, assessment and remediation of reading and spelling in the elementary grades.
Results also indicate that literacy terms that are commonly used such as Whole Language, Reading Readiness, Blends, Concepts of Print, Sight Word, Cloze Passage, and Miscue Analysis were defined in a vague or flawed manner by more than half of graduates. Moreover, from Interviews, it was clear that most interviewees misunderstood the terms Balanced Literacy and Phonemic Awareness. So even these familiar literacy terms require more in-depth coverage in order that faculty graduates will be able to use them appropriately in planning and implementing their literacy programs.

4.) How well are graduates able to apply their knowledge about teaching literacy to questions of curriculum planning, instruction, program modification, and assessment?

Curriculum/Long Range Planning

Graduates’ descriptions of a “good” elementary literacy program lacked many key components. Although Comprehension (26/29) and Written Expression (23/29) were mentioned by most interviewees, Working with Words/Spelling and providing Motivating activities were mentioned by only about half of interviewees.

Even fewer, included Phonemic Awareness (3%), Printing/Cursive (7%), Assessment (10%), Fluency (14%), Modifying/Adapting Program for student needs (17%), Vocabulary (21%) and Phonics (31%). On average, interviewees came up with only 3.7/11 of the important components needed to create a comprehensive and effective literacy program for elementary students.
Instruction/Program Modification

When asked to describe specific strategies to use to improve students’ comprehension skills, interviewees were not able to come up with many (on average, 1.6/8). Their knowledge was even weaker with respect to describing ways to improve students’ fluency/automaticity (on average, 1.2/8).

An overwhelming majority (23/27) of interviewees were aware that suggesting a student read more would not be the best way to remediate a reading problem. Many, however, did not know what strategies would help. Many Survey respondents wrote about this as a “missing” component from their faculty programs. Twenty percent reported that their course should have included instruction on how to help a struggling reader, 9% of Survey respondents felt that they should have been provided with more information about learning disabilities in general.

When it came to working with a child struggling to read a word, many interviewees (18/29) did say that the first strategy they would use would be to encourage the child to sound out the letters of the unknown word. They did not however elaborate on how to implement the strategy effectively. For example, such a strategy would be helpful if the child had knowledge of letter sounds, had the phonemic awareness ability to blend sounds together into words and if the words that the child was attempting to decode contained predictable patterns (such as onsets and rimes) or rule-governed spelling patterns.

Not surprisingly, many interviewees struggled to apply basic understandings of language structures when looking at examples of student work. Some answers revealed that
graduates did not know what a nonsense word is or what insights can be derived from its use in assessing children’s word-level processes in decoding and encoding words. Many graduates did not know what to make of a sample of early phonetic/semi phonetic spelling. They did not understand the reasonable letter substitutions the child was making.

Interviewees did better when looking at spelling words for older students. A majority were able to come up with at least one helpful strategy to give a student for spelling specific words. However, some of the other graduates’ suggestions were confusing and incorrect, showing an underlying misunderstanding of English orthography and morphology.

Assessment
Assessment was the element most frequently reported “missing” from literacy programs by Survey respondents (35%). Although some interviewees had not given much thought to assessing the literacy skills of their future students, a majority (19/27) reported that they would use documents provided by the Ministry of Education. Some made specific reference to grade level curriculum documents or Ministry Exemplars. Over one-third listed a specific program and/or strategy they would use to determine how well their students were reading and writing.

Clearly many graduates wanted to do their best to help students who were struggling. Several intended to rely on other teachers at their schools to help these students. Although seeking the advice of colleagues is often a valuable strategy for teachers, it is also important to build and rely on one’s own repertoire of tools to assess students’ skills. Only a few
mentioned using valuable resources for information and support such as the student’s IEP and the assistive computer technologies.

5.) How confident are graduates regarding literacy instruction and what are graduates’ philosophies of literacy instruction?

Confidence

On average, graduates also rated themselves as only “Adequately” prepared to teach reading, writing, and assess the literacy skills of their future students. Almost all had specific concerns about teaching literacy, including: meeting the needs of all students, assessment, covering the curriculum, and motivating students being the most commonly mentioned concerns. Interestingly, over 20% commented about how important it was to be a “good” Language Arts teacher.

There was a big range in levels of confidence. Generally, a lack of knowledge led to anxieties and competence led to confidence as is indicated by the following interviewees. When asked about assessment one said, “…that’s something I’m really worried about” (127, l490). Another said, “I honestly don’t even know…I haven’t even been thinking about anything…[I’ll] use rubrics I guess” (128, l450).

Another interviewee was concerned because she did not understand terms related to literacy, “A lot of terms were not explained and I almost didn’t want to be in that [faculty literacy] class anymore and I would get really down on myself…when I did not understand” (105, l605).
One interviewee revealed insecurities when struggling to answer a question about a child’s reading of nonsense words “…[Now] what would I do? Um, see this is one of my concerns about teaching: that I’m not really sure where to go from there” (107, l860).

By contrast, when answering a question regarding a child’s inventive spelling, another graduate had a more confident and proactive approach: “This is where you would use phonics…and practice some of the Jolly Phonics because they don’t know the /w/, /t/…” (117, l883).

Another interviewee was also able to answer questions outlining a variety of tools and strategies that she planned to use in her own class.

[I will include]…some exercises so I can assess where they are…and some tests…spelling…grammar…and have them write an essay or write a reader response and grade it…[and] give them an example of what I would be looking for: a Level 4 paper…or maybe even as a class develop one…maybe, have them act out part of a story that they read with a classmate who read the same story…and lots of…observation, anecdotal notes and teacher-student conferences (117, l602).

One can see from this answer that this interviewee can articulate valuable instructional strategies. This interviewee, later reported not having any literacy-related concerns. Similar
observations about competencies leading to feelings of confidence were found in a related study by Heredia (2010).

Knowledge leading to confidence and a lack of knowledge leading to anxieties was not always the case for all graduates. For example, some graduates who did not answer questions well still gave themselves high scores for their own level of preparedness to teach reading, writing and to assess students (e.g., 104, 128). Heredia observed that self-agency skills and being confident in ones’ own abilities to “figure it out” boosted general levels of confidence about teaching. It is also a possibility that some interviewees reported being confident because they were unaware of what they did not know, as well as underestimating the complexities of teaching reading, writing and assessing students.

**Philosophies**

A teacher’s underlying beliefs about literacy instruction are important because they influence practice. Many Survey respondents interpreted their faculty instructors’ underlying philosophies about literacy instruction as ones that do have a basis in research. This was the case regarding teaching phonics, word attack skills, and spelling to students explicitly, and beginning phonics instruction before Grade 1. Interestingly, the Survey respondents themselves agreed less strongly with these foundational beliefs.

This was the case even though all but one interviewee stated that during their several placements they had at least one host teacher whose approach to teaching Language Arts was very similar or similar to their instructor’s approach.
Many interviewees (22/29\textsuperscript{73}) leaned towards an approach that entailed explicit instruction. Generally, they sided with this philosophy because they were concerned that “not all children will discover what they need to discover on their own” and that “there were some things that needed to be taught”.

Responses to various questions posed in this study suggest that even though most graduates favoured direct teaching at times, they lack the knowledge and skills to do so effectively. For example, they lack strategies to build students’ reading comprehension and fluency skills.

In light of the findings concerning these five key research questions, several recommendations will be made. These recommendations are presented in the final chapter.

\textsuperscript{73}One graduate reported being right in between approaches, and one reported direct teaching for Primary only.
Chapter 7: Conclusions

Recommendations, Contribution, Limitations, and Future Research

The primary conclusions of this thesis come in the form of recommendations: suggestions – in light of the present research – of ways to enhance the quality of literacy education in elementary preservice programs in the province of Ontario. In addition this chapter discusses both contributions and limitations of the research and goes on to offer some potential future directions.

Recommendations

This study has provided a “snap-shot” of faculty literacy programs across Ontario. This project has revealed a great deal about what and how preservice students learn about instructing their future elementary students. These insights point to changes regarding program content and delivery. This chapter will outline recommendations, contributions of the research, limitations of the study, and future directions.

Although courses varied greatly across and within programs, based on what was learned from the present study some general recommendations can be made toward providing exemplary teacher preparation in elementary literacy. The following five recommendations are offered:

1.) Increasing depth and breadth of coverage in required literacy course;

2.) Monitoring of literacy programs by the Ontario College of Teachers;

3.) Lengthening all teacher education programs to two years;
4.) Restructuring programs so that practicum placements are scheduled throughout; and
5.) Improving practicum placement experiences.

These recommendations are elaborated below.

1.) Depth and Breadth of Coverage in Required Literacy Course

There is no doubt that teaching reading and writing well in elementary classrooms is a challenge. Improving the depth and breadth of coverage in faculty literacy courses would better prepare graduates for this challenge.

**Depth**

Over the last 15-20 years there has been a convergence of compelling evidence pointing to a set of essential components that need to be included in elementary Language Arts programs. It was clear in the present study that most graduates had little or no understanding of this evidence and they did not include many of the key components when they described a “good” elementary literacy program.

From course materials, and reports of the graduates themselves, it was clear that some sections of faculty literacy courses did not cover research and covered only some of the components of literacy instruction. This was troubling and could be rectified by more vigilant overseeing of courses by faculties and the Ontario College of Teachers. This will be discussed further in Recommendation #2.
Also troubling was that although many graduates reported no instruction in research-based findings and did not report covering literacy components, one or both of these were referred to in the course topic schedule (or in assigned readings). This would suggest that these issues were not covered enough to be impactful.

Listening to what the graduates have said about their teacher education experiences can be used here to improve the faculty programs. First, one must realize that understanding the terminology and the concepts necessary for “good” literacy instruction is a challenge. Some graduates found the terminology and concepts covered in class baffling. Being confused by terminology can result in feelings of alienation.

Clear in-class explanations, modeling of evidence-based strategies, and video demonstrations could go a long way toward demystifying concepts and supporting their application in the classroom. Two areas that also require much greater attention in preservice programs are assessment and evidence-based special education strategies for students with reading/writing difficulties, both of which are areas where graduates wanted more coverage in their faculty courses.

One interesting finding of this study was that almost one-third of interviewees admitted to not “really” reading their principal textbook. Many more did not read assigned articles. Reinforcing understanding is crucial and assigned readings can help to do this. However, faculty instructors need to use their skills to assess their students’ understanding and adapt

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74 More coverage of assessment was the most frequent wish of graduates (35%) when reflecting on their program and 20% wanted more coverage of how to help a struggling student.
and modify instruction around these readings so that all graduates gain the required instructional knowledge and skills.

This requires a previewing of the readings. Additionally, instructors can use evidence-based comprehension strategies and in doing so, again, model expert teaching. Research has proven the effectiveness of the following comprehension teaching strategies: self-monitoring, using graphic/semantic organizers, answering and asking questions, recognizing text structure, summarizing, and activating prior knowledge. It is important that instructors explicitly explain the relevance of readings. Connecting concepts to the real world would address the issue of perceived lack of relevance of assigned readings. As one interviewee said their required text was “shrink wrapped with the 50 Strategies [another text] but it was so boring…I don’t think I will ever sit down and read it” (123, l171).

In setting aside class time to preview and discuss assigned readings instructors validate their importance. This would address the frequent dismissal of readings by graduates.

**Breadth**

Faculty literacy courses also need to cover a breadth of topics including Ministry curricula, long range planning, student instructional strategies, assessment procedures, and teachers must be ready to adapt/modify instruction and assessment to meet the needs of all students.

Ontario faculties did a better job covering aspects of breadth than depth in teacher preparation. However, there was a vast range of opinions regarding how well aspects of breadth were covered in faculty literacy courses. One interviewee described her course as,
“lack[ing] hands-on…practical learning. I think a lot of us ended up feeling like it was kind of useless” (124, l302). Another interviewee described her literacy course as a “complete waste of time…. I would have liked to learn about recognizing reading and writing difficulties, how to set up a language program, teach students how to read et cetera”. (194, Survey).

These critical comments coalesced around certain sections/programs. Ensuring these important “breadth” issues are covered in all programs also requires more careful oversight by faculties themselves and by the Ontario College of Teachers.

The findings of this study also reveal that graduates can be resentful if they found their faculty literacy programs lacking in these breadth and depth areas.

2.) Monitoring by the Ontario College of Teachers

As stated in Chapter 3: Background and Purpose of the Research, the Ontario College of Teachers’ Accreditation Committees did not, at the time of this study, examine the degree to which research is informing the instruction in elementary literacy preservice programs, nor did the Committee include any literacy specialists. Both a review of the current Ontario College of Teachers website and a telephone call to the present Accreditation Administrator confirmed that there has been no significant change in policies and procedures relevant to preservice literacy programs (Personal Communication, May, 2011). Given the centrality of literacy instruction in elementary education it is concerning that the College does not present specific expectations for either the content of literacy education courses to be
offered by faculties of education or for the amount of time that faculties should allocate to preparation for literacy instruction.

The findings of this study would support the need to include a literacy expert on the Ontario College of Teachers Accreditation Committee and a requirement that faculties ensure coverage of the key components of literacy instruction (e.g., phonemic awareness, vocabulary fluency and other components summarized in Table 2: Essential Components of Effective Literacy Instruction). There is also a need to ensure that the components of effective preservice education teaching are included (e.g., depth of literacy knowledge, experience with student diversity, opportunity to observe expert modeling, as well as other teaching components outlined in Table 3: What Research Says Effective Preservice Education Looks Like). It is also imperative that Ontario College of Teachers ensure that there are enough course hours to cover these components effectively.

3.) Lengthen Programs to Two Years

The findings of this study indicate that faculty literacy courses need to be lengthened. Communicating the complexities of literacy instruction is much too difficult to be done quickly. A widely cited booklet published by the American Federation of Teachers described this complexity in its title: Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able to Do (Moats, 1999). Moreover, preservice students require real-life observation and practice in order to comprehend this material well. This observation can be done, to some extent in faculty literacy courses but
does not carry true weight until it is seen and practiced in a real elementary classroom. Both coverage of content and practicum experience takes time.

[Some stuff was talked] about at the faculty in passing but not enough for me to totally understand it. And at the time, because it was only in passing, I didn’t realize how important it was until I got out into the practicum…I realized that I needed to know more… (123, l391).

Time was an issue that surfaced again and again in the comments of graduates. It was important to listen to exactly what they said. Those who enrolled in courses that they perceived to be useful wanted more.

On a cautionary note, those who were enrolled in courses that they perceived to be useless reported that their courses were a “waste of time”. Again these tended to be from courses that were a fewer number of hours. However, lengthening these courses would be of no benefit if the quality of the content was not improved.

4.) Schedule Practicum Placements Throughout

Nothing in the faculty literacy course drove home the importance of “good” literacy instruction more than being in a real classroom. Restructuring practicum placements throughout the faculty course would make what was covered in the faculty course more meaningful. As one interviewee explained,
[The practicum] sparked my interest in what was being taught at the faculty because...there was so much that I was seeing that we hadn’t learned about yet in theory...The two things kind of worked back and forth [things that I wondered about in the practicum] and then I went back to the faculty and got the theory...and there were things we learned at the faculty, that you hadn’t seen, and then you would [go back to the practicum] you would say ‘Hey, I know what’s going on’ (110, l410).

It would also allow for the instructors to address real-life issues that graduates saw in their placements. This would provide invaluable support and guidance to the graduates as they transitioned toward becoming teachers.

It would also allow the instructor to respond to issues around theory and the practical demands of teaching. It was interesting to pay close attention to the language some interviewees used when talking about this. Several felt that both their instructors and their textbooks oversimplified the challenge of teaching.

It is not the ideal situation in the classroom, as they [the instructors] would like you to think it is: when you are sitting at the faculty of education and they are telling you, ‘You need to do this, this, and this in your classroom everyday’ and it just doesn’t happen. [Things get in the way like]...schedules, timetables...announcements...an assembly...(113, l401).
It is so different….students are not textbooks…[the textbook tells you] students are supposed to develop one way and [is not supposed to be able to do something] then you see a child who can. You have to adapt your teaching to benefit them (134, l465).

Another Interviewee stated, “In reality kids need different things in different levels, I learned how to adapt. [I] realized how much more difficult it can be to teach kids than just doing what the textbook says” (133, l352).

It was clear that for many, the practicum was where the diversity of the learners hit home. For example,

“…not every child fits the mold. There are like 15 varying levels of understanding…of literacy. It was like a reality check…as a teacher I need to be aware of that and program accordingly. Whereas when I was in the classroom [faculty] I thought oh yeah this would be great. I’ll just do my lesson plans and everyone would learn right away (111, l421).

Scheduling practicum placements throughout an extended two year program would provide more opportunities for preservice candidates to think about programming and instruction in the more meaningful context of their real practice teaching classrooms.

5.) Improve Practicum Placements

Although the participants generally felt that the practicum was the most important component of their faculty program, the potential for learning was compromised by two
important factors. First, there was a lack of exemplary modeling by hosts. Secondly, several teacher candidates reported that they were not given an opportunity to teach literacy-related lessons. These were serious problems.

The lack of exemplary modeling by host teachers is an issue of supply and demand. A recommendation of this study would be to recognize excellence in expert modeling of literacy instruction and build a bank of exemplary host teacher names and endeavor to ensure that students are placed with one of these teachers for at least one placement.

Host teachers could also be coached in how to supervise well. A host’s feedback can be impactful,

I watched them [the host teachers] and when it was my turn to teach…. [I prepared and taught a lesson] and after I would teach something we would go over…the strong points, and say so-and-so wasn’t getting it so how could you accommodate next time for that person. It affected me strongly (107, 1399).

With regards to the second problem, research convincingly argues (Fullan, 1985; Guskey, 1986) that experienced teachers receiving in-service professional development in order to improve practice do not change their attitudes, beliefs and understandings until they have implemented some of the changes and seen that they work. If teacher candidates were not given the opportunity to teach how could they generate the student successes necessary to assimilate good instruction?
When host teachers were reluctant to allow teacher candidates to teach language arts, or were severely limited regarding their literacy teaching time or freedom to plan literacy activities then the opportunity for them to develop skills in this area were lost.

**Contribution**

At the time this study was undertaken, there were, in fact, few published studies looking at Ontario faculties and their preparation of teacher candidates. These studies did not focus on faculty course content or literacy instruction. This study was an attempt to provide some insight into teacher preparation programs across Ontario with a particular focus on the teacher candidate’s language and literacy instruction.

The breadth and depth of this study has provided an historical context for future teacher preparation research in the province.

This study also strived to listen to the perceptions of graduates themselves and that is why their voices permeate this report. Wherever possible, attempts were made to allow participants to speak for themselves.

**Limitations**

This research captured a snap shot of faculty literacy programs across the province for only a short period of time eight years ago. It is possible that in the interim, and at the present time, more evidence-based components (phonics and decoding, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, text comprehension, written expression, spelling and handwriting, motivation for reading and writing, and assessment) are included in Ontario’s literacy programs. It is possible that more time was needed for research findings to be assimilated.
into programs. It is possible as well that preservice literacy programs have changed in other significant ways.

However, there are recent data to suggest that the patterns observed in this older study may still be valid. For example, in the United States, where the major research syntheses that formed the foundation for what constitutes best practice in early literacy were funded and carried out, recent findings indicate that very few teacher preparation programs cover these components (NCTQ, 2006). Moreover the recent report by the International Reading Association (2007) states that faculties “must examine seriously the content and structure of their teacher preparation programs” (p. 2) in light of research findings.

Moreover, recent publications such as Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) qualitative investigation of several preservice literacy programs suggests that many of the concerns raised here, such as a lack of program coherency, are still characteristic of current Ontario preservice programs.

A second limitation of the study is that no interviews were carried out with instructors themselves. Much insight can be inferred regarding their priorities through studying their course outlines/goals, topic schedule, assigned readings, and assignments. However, their actual opinions and voices are only included filtered through the perceptions, or misperceptions, of their graduates. Future studies should include these informants.
**Future Directions**

As previously stated, this study has provided an historical context for future research into teacher preparation programs in this province. Indeed, the landscape has changed a great deal since the data for this study were collected.

The following are teacher preparation programs that have been established since the data for this study were collected: Brock (aboriginal), Charles Sturt (consecutive), Lakehead (aboriginal), Laurentian (concurrent: English, consecutive: French), Niagara University (consecutive), Nipissing (concurrent, and aboriginal), OISE/UT (concurrent), Redeemer University College (consecutive, and concurrent), State University of New York (consecutive offered in Ottawa), Trent (consecutive), Tyndale University College (consecutive), University of Ontario Institute of Technology (concurrent, and consecutive), University of Ottawa (aboriginal: English), University of Western Ontario (concurrent), University of Windsor (concurrent), and Wilfrid Laurier University (consecutive).

In light of the dramatic expansion of teacher preparation providers in the province one future direction for research would be to determine what effect this expansion has had on literacy program instruction. With such a proliferation of programs it seems even more imperative to have common standards for the literacy component of teacher preparation programs that are based on what research shows is the most effective practice.

It would also be of value to follow the graduates who participated in this study and interview them now that they are “experienced” teachers. Has what they found useful from
their programs changed over time? For example, what they valued, thought was missing, and wished had been included in their literacy courses would certainly be influenced by their own subsequent teaching experiences. Would there be commonalities across programs?

Sometimes profound insights only occur upon reflection, over time and with the benefit of experience. Indeed, what would graduates think about the opinions they themselves voiced so soon after their graduation?
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Appendix A


Brock University, Faculty of Education, St. Catharines

Lakehead University, Faculty of Education, Thunder Bay

L’Université Laurentienne, Faculté d’éducation, Sudbury (French)

L’Université d’Ottawa, Faculté d’éducation, Ottawa (French)

Nipissing University, Faculty of Education, Nipissing

Queen’s University, Faculty of Education, Kingston

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education, Ottawa

University of Toronto, Faculty of Education, Toronto

University of Waterloo Ontario, Faculty of Education, Waterloo (no P/J)

University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Education, London

University of Windsor, Faculty of Education, Windsor

York University, Faculty of Education, Toronto
Appendix B

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: _____________________________________________________

*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 next two years).

Section 2: Educational Background/Experience

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

7. 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.
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

8. Do you have any children? Yes ☐    No ☐    If yes, what are their ages? ____________

Section 3: Faculty of Education
9. B. Ed.  Program, Section, and Year
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
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<th>Indicate Section Number or Option Name (if any)</th>
<th>Indicate Dates Attended</th>
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<td>Hamilton</td>
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<td>Lakehead</td>
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<td>Nipissing</td>
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<td>OISE/UT</td>
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<td>Western</td>
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<td>Windsor</td>
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<td>York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queen’s</td>
<td>B.Ed</td>
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10. Division: P/I □ J/I □ other specialty: ____________________________
11. At this time I do intend to teach next year (circle one): Yes □ No □
12. The division I hope to be teaching next year is: Primary □ Junior □ No preference □

13. 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:
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

14. The amount of time I spent practice teaching was:
Section 4: Early Literacy Education

21. In total (hours per week x weeks per year) how many hours did you spend in literacy related classes in your faculty program? (If unsure, please give your best estimate): _______

22. 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

inventive spelling  1 2 3 4 5
whole language  1 2 3 4 5
dyslexia  1 2 3 4 5
onset/rime  1 2 3 4 5

teaching in context  1 2 3 4 5
digraph  1 2 3 4 5
diphthong  1 2 3 4 5
modeling  1 2 3 4 5
the “schwa” sound  1 2 3 4 5

1=NONE  2=VERY LITTLE  3=SOME TIME  4=A LOT OF TIME  5=A GREAT DEAL OF TIME

phonics  1 2 3 4 5

phonological awareness  1 2 3 4 5
phoneme  1 2 3 4 5
23.) Please indicate how much time was spent in your literacy course(s) discussing each of the following topics:

- how to help a student with specific reading difficulties
- how to help a student with writing difficulties
- how to assess a student’s reading abilities
- how to recognize when a child is not reading at grade level
- how to recognize when a child is not writing at grade level
- the causes of reading problems
- how to assess reading difficulties

1=NONE  2=VERY LITTLE  3=SOME TIME  4=A LOT OF TIME  5=A GREAT DEAL OF TIME

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

1 2 3 4 5

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

1 2 3 4 5

Phonics instruction should not begin until first grade.

1 2 3 4 5

I would describe myself as a whole language person.

1 2 3 4 5

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.

1 2 3 4 5

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

1 2 3 4 5

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

1 2 3 4 5

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

1 2 3 4 5

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

1 2 3 4 5

Phonics instruction should not begin until first grade.

1 2 3 4 5

I would describe myself as a whole language person.

1 2 3 4 5

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>
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<tr>
<td>All Star</td>
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<td>Classrooms that Work</td>
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<td>Making Words</td>
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<td>Distar Reading</td>
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<td>Miscue Analysis</td>
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<td>Embedded Phonics</td>
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<td>Morphographic spelling</td>
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<td>The Literacy Diet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journeys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word Walls</td>
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</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 31, 32, and 33.

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? 1 2 3 4 5

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 C

Faculty Year Interview Questions

1. “Do you have a copy of the interview in front of you?” (It is necessary) “Just to make sure you have the complete document, could you tell me the number of pages you have?”

2. “Before we begin, I would just like to remind you that this interview will be recorded on tape, as explained in the e-mail you received. The tapes will then be transcribed and destroyed.”

3. “Your confidentiality is assured. Your name and your university and program of study will be replaced with codes and then removed from this survey”

4. “I am interested in everything you have to say about your program and your teaching experiences…things that were good, things that were not. It’s all helpful in making me understand.

Section 1: General Information

1.) Name: __________________________ email__________________________________

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)? (if necessary: # hours/week and # of 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.
(After letting them answer, prompt if any of these were not mentioned: research base/theory, program development, strategies, and assessment).

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
9.) Please think about what readings were assigned for your literacy class. Were there articles or texts that gave you a background in literacy theory or in teaching literacy? What did you learn from them?
Title/author: __________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
Required: ____ Elective: _____ Chapters:________________ Whole text:______________
Title/author: __________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
Required: ____ Elective: _____ Chapters:________________ Whole text:______________
Title/author: __________________________________________________________
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Required: ____ Elective: _____ Chapters:________________ Whole text:______________
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Required: ____ Elective: _____ Chapters:________________ Whole text:______________
Title/author: __________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

10.) How were you assessed in your literacy classes?
11.) Were the ways in which the literacy classes taught consistent with the instructional strategies promoted in class? Please explain.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Section 3: Practice Teaching

* What Boards did you complete your practice teaching in? 

* How many total hours of practice teaching did you complete in your faculty program?

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

15.) Did your host teacher share the same philosophy regarding literacy instruction as your program instructor? In what ways were their philosophies similar/different?

16.) 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

17.) Do you feel that you were well prepared, at the faculty, 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:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Section 5: Planning

20.) What do you believe are the essential components of a good elementary literacy program?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
21.) How would you change your literacy program to meet the needs of your wide range of students (special needs, ESL/ESD etc.)?
22.) What assessment tools/methods do you plan on using next year to assess student’s literacy development?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Section 6: Early Literacy Education

“This section is about early literacy education. Some of the questions are challenging...do not worry if you don’t know all of the answers. Some programs covered most of them others didn’t. Please just do your best.”

24.) Please state the terms with which you are familiar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts about print</th>
<th>Whole language</th>
<th>Onset/rime</th>
<th>Digraph/diphthong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>Reading fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular words development</td>
<td>Cloze passages</td>
<td>Inventive spelling</td>
<td>Schema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapheme</td>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>Orthography</td>
<td>Miscue analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantics</td>
<td>Metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>Phoneme</td>
<td>Reading readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight words</td>
<td>Reading disabilities</td>
<td>Prior knowledge</td>
<td>Blends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25.) Please describe the terms you recognized above to the best of your ability (Give examples where you can.) Where/how did you learn about this term? (Some knowledge may have come from in-service PD, from the board, the ministry or elsewhere.)
concepts about print


scaffolding


regular words


grapheme


semantics


sight words


whole language


phonemic awareness


cloze passages


morpheme
metacognitive strategies  

Where: ________________

reading disabilities  

Where: ________________

onset/rime  

Where: ________________

phonics  

Where: ________________

inventive spelling  

Where: ________________

orthography  

Where: ________________

phoneme  

Where: ________________

prior knowledge  

Where: ________________

digraph/diphthong  

Where: ________________

reading fluency  

Where: ________________

schema development  

Where: ________________
Where: _____________________

miscue analysis

Where: _____________________

reading readiness

Where: _____________________

blends

Where: _____________________

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 fluent/automatic reading.

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

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

31.) 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, _________________________________________________________________

then, _________________________________________________________________

then, _________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

34.) Why might a student’s comprehension development start to decline around the fourth grade?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

35.) How would you explain the spelling of the following words to a Grade 5 student?
deceive:__________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
magician: __________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Unhappily</th>
<th>Coffee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

37.) How many individual speech sounds in the words below?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Thought</th>
<th>Piano</th>
<th>Know</th>
<th>Taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

38.) Please indicate if the following statements are true or false:
a.) Reading a lot is the best way to overcome a reading problem. T F
Why?
b.) Reading instruction should be necessary only up to the end of the third Grade.  T    F

Why?  ________________________________________________________________

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 through discovery during their own personal experiences with print.”
B/ “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.”

If participants say they are neither A nor B, ask them if they lean toward one side. If they still are unable to choose between A or B, just ask them to explain their answer.
Please explain your choice:
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

*Thank you for your help with our study…good luck next year!
*Confirm mailing address for voucher.
*When is the best time to reach you if I need to clarify something
_____________________________________________________________________
Please let us know where you found out about the study:

☐ internet (please specify: ______)   ☐ newspaper (please specify: ______)
☐ poster                           ☐ friend
☐ other (please specify: ______)   Thanks again ☺
### Appendix D

**Graduates’ Estimations of Literacy-Instruction Hours at Faculty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate #</th>
<th>Required Course Hours</th>
<th>Elective Course Hours</th>
<th>Language Related Focus in Other Courses (Hours)</th>
<th>Total Number of Hours of Faculty Instruction in Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>124</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>50*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>54*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>57*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>72?</td>
<td></td>
<td>72?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>72?</td>
<td></td>
<td>72?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>72*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Recruitment Materials

1.) Posters/Newspaper Advertisements

2.) Email message

P/J PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

We want to know what you think!

*About your program and practicum
*About your concerns, successes and challenges
*About your preparedness to teach

This study is designed to investigate teacher preparedness programs across the province in order to improve effective teaching practice.

*Book voucher(s) ($25) sent to P/J students who complete and submit all required information

*Visit www.teachereducation or call 1 (800) 123-4567 for more details
How prepared are you to teach? If you are a P/J Faculty of Education student and hope to teach at the primary level *we want to know what you think:*

*About your program and practicum*
*About your concerns, successes, and challenges*
*About your preparedness to teach*

This study is designed to investigate teacher preparedness programs across the province in order to improve effective teaching practice.

*Book voucher ($25) sent to P/J students who complete and submit all required information*
*Visit [www.teachereducation](http://www.teachereducation) or call 1 (800) 123-4567 for more details*
P/J Preservice Teachers

We want to know what you think!

*About your program and practicum

*About your concerns, successes and challenges

*About your preparedness to teach

This study is designed to investigate teacher preparedness programs across the province in order to improve effective teaching practice.

Book voucher ($25) sent to P/J students who complete and submit all required information. Visit www.teachereducation or call 1 800 123-4567 for more details.
We want to know what you think!

*About your program and practicum
*About your concerns, successes and challenges
*About your preparedness to teach

This study is designed to investigate teacher preparedness programs across the province in order to improve effective teaching practice.

*Book voucher ($25) sent to P/J students who complete and submit all required information

*Visit www.teachereducation or call 1 (800) 123-4567 for more details
P/J Pre-service Teachers

*About your program and practicum
*About your concerns, successes, and challenges
*About your preparedness to teach

How prepared are you to teach? If you are a P/J Faculty of Education student and hope to teach at the primary level we want to know what you think:

This study is designed to investigate teacher preparedness programs across the province in order to improve effective teaching practice.

*Book voucher ($25) sent to P/J students who complete and submit all required information

*Visit www.teachereducation or call 1 (800) 123-4567 for more details
Recruitment Material: Email to Survey Participants

Dear Faculty of Education Student,

I am writing with regard to your request to participate in the Primary/Junior Pre-service Teacher Study. The time for B.Ed students to graduate is approaching, and I wanted to let you know that we will be mailing out the Surveys very shortly. I will also take the opportunity to thank you for your interest in our study and to remind you to let me know if your address has recently changed.

Furthermore, since we need to get a large number of participants, we would appreciate it if you could tell any B.Ed students at U of T about the study. Perhaps you could forward this e-mail to your friends or tell them about the opportunity to receive a $25 gift certificate for teaching resources. (They can contact Kim at: @oise.utoronto.ca or visit www.teachersed.com). We would really appreciate your help.

We especially still need participants from the following U of T options:
- Central
- East
- North
- GTA Catholic
- South
- Crosstown
- Mid-Town

Thanks again for your participation!

Sincerely,

K. C., Research Co-ordinator
@oise.utoronto.ca
Appendix F

n.b. use *67 if you do not want the number from which you are calling to be accessed.

Telephone Introduction

Hello, I’m following up on a Survey ________ filled in for a University of Toronto study. May I speak with ________?

My name is ___________________. I want to thank you for filling out a Survey for our study about teacher programs this past spring. I’m calling to see if you are interested in participating in a telephone interview at some time in the near future. The interview would last about one hour -- and there would possibly be a brief follow up. In appreciation for your help we will send you a $50 voucher for educational materials.

Yes →

I will be the person interviewing you. In order to conduct a telephone interview most effectively we’ve found it’s important to have a quiet place. Will you have some time available? What time works best for you? ________________

I will be sending you a short message for you to read before the interview along with a copy of the questions that I will be asking (so that you can follow along as we go through the interview). Can I confirm your email address: ____________________?

We would also like to know how you found out about the study. Can you remember where you first heard about this study? ____________________ (If this was from a friend who was in the same section please ask for their initials).

I look forward to talking to you on ____________________@____________. If you have any questions or concerns before then please contact me at ____________________.

(If they do not have email and want a phone number you may choose to use the lab # 416 923-6641 x452)

Thank you

© Please change any wording so that your conversation is as natural as possible.
Email Message

Thanks again for your continuing interest in our teacher education study. Interviews are being conducted across the province and because of this they are all being done over the phone. Since we can’t meet personally I would like to tell you a little about myself.

I am a graduate student at the U of T and have been helping with this study for almost two years. I was a classroom teacher for 12 years but am now on maternity leave….and expecting again next month!

As you know the interview is about one hour long and requires some reflection on your time at the faculty and your experiences teaching. We hope that you have selected a quiet spot where you will feel most comfortable. I will be calling you on ________________@_____. Please feel free to have a snack or coffee/tea at hand and be sure to let me know if you would like a break during our conversation.

Please know that your confidentiality is assured. Your name, your university, and program of study will be replaced with codes. In order to collect your responses as accurately as possible I will be audio taping the interview. The interview will then be transcribed and the tape will be destroyed.

I have included a copy of the Survey in the attachment. Please have a copy of it in front of you during our interview as it necessary to look at some of the questions in order to answer them.

Please know that we are not examining your performance nor are we evaluating faculty programs. Our goal is to find out what knowledge, skills, and experiences have prepared you for your role as teacher.

Feel free to email me with any concerns or questions ______________________

Thank you again,
____________________

Attach Survey ☺☺
Appendix G
Codes

- Epiphanies/Hitting home
- Honing Skills
- Value of practicum
- Survival
- Roadblocks
- Assessment (of students)
- Surprises
- Incompatibilities (instructor/host/theory/beliefs)
- Life experiences
- Expectations
- Concerns about capabilities
- Literacy instruction fears
- Teaching challenges
- Motivating students
- Resentment (practicum, course)
- Commercial Programs
- Awareness of need to learn skills as a teacher
- Diversity of students
- Time
- Content
- How to teach
- What was useful
- Variability across programs
- Confusion
- Influence of background knowledge/philosophy
- Relationship with hosts
- Linking theory and practice
- Modeling (instructor, host, doing student activities)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process of Teacher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix H**

Scan of Matrix #104
### Process of Teacher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Practicum</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Knowledge: Content**
- Language arts divided into visual, oral, and written components
- Research related specifically to language
- Program development was not related to language
- "Our professor likes physics so he doesn't really like assessing them in any way, like that"
- Need for meaning in elementary school D.E.R.I. (research-based)
- Scaffold/child development stages
- Positive assignment breakdown related to language/teacher
- "My past teacher to keep a lot of theory in class"
- Similar to faculty instructor
- "Two were very hands on with, faculty, standard 2, in the class."
- "Faculty, standard 1, which was taught by me"
- Literacy terms: "word knowledge"
- Psycho terms: ",

**Appendix H**

Scan of Matrix #117

---

**Pedagogical Skills (General)**
- Based on own development philosophies & cognitively
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life" cabin
- "I'm not interested in brain development, a lot of kids want to learn"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"

**Curriculum Knowledge**
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"

**Pedagogical Skills Application: Literacy**
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"

**Knowledge of the Learner**
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"

**Educational Context**
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"

**Ends, Purpose and Value**
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"

**Attitudes and Feelings**
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"

**Self-Efficacy**
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
- "I'm a grounded in constructivist theory, I'm social life"
## Process of Teacher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge: Content</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Practicum</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Skills (General)</td>
<td>- instructor didn't go over theory at all - reading assigned but not necessarily followed up on</td>
<td>- reading was similar in philosophy at faculty</td>
<td>- literacy terms:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Knowledge</td>
<td>- introduced to the reading-writing developmental curriculum</td>
<td>- didn't focus on developing thematic units</td>
<td>- word knowledge:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Skills Application: Literacy</td>
<td>- developed a novel study + unit using weeks lesson plan</td>
<td>- reading was different from what was taught in class</td>
<td>- psych terms:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the Learner</td>
<td>- did not cover assessment tools in class</td>
<td>- students scored poorly on different tests</td>
<td>- reading:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Context</td>
<td>- pretest - step by step instruction in how to read a decoding activity was missing</td>
<td>- students scored poorly on different tests</td>
<td>- math:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and Feelings</td>
<td>- practical lessons were helpful but we were not very engaged</td>
<td>- students scored poorly on different tests</td>
<td>- science:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>- struggled constantly with the thought of what to ask out of assignment</td>
<td>- students scored poorly on different tests</td>
<td>- social studies:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix H**

Scan of Matrix # 127

*Practicum: 300 hrs, Course: 54 hrs*
Appendix I

Primary/Junior Pre-service Teacher Survey Consent Form

Dear Faculty of Education Student,

We want to know more about the differences and the similarities among the nine English-speaking faculty programs in Ontario. It is our hope that 300 faculty of education students will help us by sharing what they have learned in their classes.

Included in this package is a Survey, which will take about an hour to complete. As a thanks for your time we will send you a $25 certificate for teaching resources from a major educational supplies company soon after we receive your completed Survey.

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” particular programs 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. Willows, a professor at the U of T, and her research assistants will have access to the data. We are looking for general trends in education programs so the information you provide will be grouped with other information collected from student teachers across 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 60 of those who complete the Survey after the end of their faculty year, 40 at the end of their first teaching year, and 20 at the end of their second teaching year. 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. Payment for your participation will be provided.

My name is Elizabeth and, as one of Dr. Willows’ research assistants, I am involved in setting up this study. I am also a classroom teacher and a graduate student at the University of Toronto. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have (ehaas@oise.utoronto.ca). You can also contact K. C., the project co-ordinator (@oise.utoronto.ca).

I agree to complete the survey described in the above letter at my convenience during June—July 2003. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name: ___________________________ Signed: ___________________________ Date: ________________
(please print)

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

Signed: ___________________________ Date: May 14, 2003
I will code names and faculties of education upon receipt of surveys and after interviews so that confidentiality is assured.

Signed: _______________________________________  Date: May 14, 2003
(Elizabeth Haas-Barota, B.A., B.Ed., M.A, Doctoral Candidate OISE/UT)
## Appendix J: Required Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Prg</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Required Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Phenic, J., & Scott-Dunn, D (1991). *Spelling instruction that makes sense.* Markham, Ontario Pp. 5-21 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 68   | E8   | Nothing written on handout regarding course hours. Student estimated 50 hours. | (From interview and Survey)  
|      |      | Ontario Curriculum for Language Arts Grades 1-8 (1997)  
|      |      | Green, Judy, The Ultimate Guide to Classroom Publishing  
|      |      | “Lots of articles that were given (e.g., literature circles, finding materials, discrimination with regard to reading and writing) – some of them were helpful” (68, f530). |
| 104  | A1   | 20 classes times 2.5 hours = 50 hours. | Primary/Junior  
|      |      | Language Arts  
| 105  | B3   | 20 classes, length of class not noted. Student estimated 40 hours. | Primary/Junior  
|      |      | Language Arts  
| 107  | B4   | 20 classes, length of class not noted. | Primary/Junior  
|      |      | Language Arts  
| 110  | D7   | not on course outline. Student estimated 72. | Curriculum Studies (Primary/Junior)  
|      |      | Language Arts and Literacy  
|      |      | Tompkins, Gail et al. (2002). *Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies*. Scarborough: Prentice Hall [outline states that candidates are responsible for reading all chapters]  
| 111  | K26  | 16 sessions times 2.5 hours, student estimated 32.5 | Course outline states 72 (not broken down though). Student estimated 68 hours.  
|      |      | Language Arts  
|      |      | Tompkins, G. (2002). *Language Arts, Content and Teaching Strategies*. Canadian Ed.: Prentice Hall Allyn and Bacon: Scarborough, ON ["readings are suggested as they coincide with course topics"]  
|      |      | Course Pack (of articles) including ones about: confusing English spelling patterns, grammar, printing, What is reading?, and the reading stages.  
|      |      | Allington, Richard. Excellent reading teachers. *International Reading Association*  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Code</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Language and Literacy: Development and Practice</th>
<th>Text References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>Estimated Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H21</td>
<td>16 classes (each class is 1 hour and 50 minutes)</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29.3 hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student estimated 38 hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language-Arts (Primary-Junior); Language Arts-General Methodology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20</td>
<td>15 dates are listed (length of lecture/workshop not indicated)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 dates are listed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student estimated 24 hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Training. (1998) <em>The Ontario Curriculum: Grade 9 &amp; 10</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(more readings listed in the course outline—mostly articles)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Articles posted online:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snow, C.E., Burns, S. &amp; Griffiths, P. (1999) Language and literacy environments in preschools <em>ERIC</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chihak, J. (1999). Success is in the details: Publishing to validate elementary authors. <em>Language Arts</em>. 76, 6, 491-498</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>17 classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student estimated 36 hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum and Instruction in Language Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>Student estimated 54 hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum and Instruction in Primary/ Junior Language Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>18 sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>times 3 hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student estimated 54 hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education in the Primary/ Junior Division— Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We read lots of handouts but no research studies. They were articles on how to run a guided reading lesson and [answering] what is balanced literacy. We did not get copies because there were too many students” (128, l234)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F19</td>
<td>Sessions and hours not listed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student estimated 45 hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education in the Primary/ Junior Division— Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twenty-five of 29 interviewees submitted their course materials. Two sent in handwritten materials (119, 133) which were cross-checked with others from the same course. Two did not send in course materials or hand-written copies (111, 128). For these interviewees, information was taken from their Surveys and interviews regarding required text(s), course hours et cetera.
Appendix K

Summary of Faculty Literacy Courses’ Required Text

Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies (2002)

(Tompkins, Pollard, Bright & Winsor)

This was the most frequently used text across the province. It was a required text at five of the nine faculties. It is a comprehensive text targeted for both pre-service and in-service teachers with the goal of presenting “the content of the language arts curriculum and the most effective strategies for teaching this content” (p. XV) for Kindergarten to Grade 8.

The text reflects a Constructivist approach to teaching and learning while highlighting the six language arts: listening, talking, reading, writing, viewing and visually representing. The book is organized into 13 chapters which include: Learning and the Language Arts; Teaching Language Arts; The Reading and Writing Processes; Emergent Literacy; Looking Closely at Words; Listening, Viewing and Representing; Sustaining Talk in the Classroom; Using Drama in Teaching Language Arts; Reading and Writing Stories; Reading and Writing Information; Reading and Writing Poetry; Language Tools: Spelling, Handwriting and Grammar; Putting It All Together. Each chapter begins with a real-life scenario (that relates to the chapter topic) called a PRO-File and ends with a review of key concepts, extensions for readers to engage in and weblinks related to the chapter topic.
The chapters also include special features such as thorough charts that summarize key terms and ideas, step-by-step guides for implementing literacy strategies (e.g. guided reading, writer’s workshop), mini-lessons, and suggestions and ideas for adapting instruction to meet the needs of every student. There is some information about how to meet the needs of students who are ESL or LD. The text is well-sourced.

*Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies* is a comprehensive text providing practical information on unit planning and lesson development for both Primary and Junior classrooms.

The text covers most of the components of a “good” literacy program and offers an outline of the underlying structures of English. However, one might argue that the components are presented in a disjointed way. For example, an introduction to Phonological Awareness begins on page 142, Vocabulary (called Word-Study) begins on page 203, and Comprehension begins on page 345. This is a long text (606 pages) and it contains a great deal of information about other things in between these sections. Some of the most important parts of the text may be lost to the reader because of its vast coverage and substantial size.

Sixteen of the 29 interviewed graduates reported this book as their primary required text. All but two graduates (131, and 133) from these five faculties reported using this
text regardless of their program or section. However, the text was used to varying degrees both across sections and universities. For example, representatives from three different sections of the same faculty program noted being assigned “the whole text” (124), “the first three chapters” (120), and “five chapters” (122).75

Some criticisms of this text include that one graduate “didn’t find that it was very practical” (124). This may be more a reflection of the text’s size rather than its content. Several had positive things to say about the text: it provided a balanced approach (134), and gave suggestions about developing thematic units and offered information about the writing process and listening (127). Another said that she “learned more from the text than from the class” (121).

**50 Literacy Strategies: Step by Step (1998)**

* (Tompkins)*

The second most used required reading across the province was another book by Gail Tompkins entitled *50 Literacy Strategies: Step by Step*. This text is best viewed as a companion book to *Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies*. This book contains black line masters to be copied and used with students when teaching various

---

75 Not surprisingly, the amounts *actually* read and the graduates’ feelings of this texts’ usefulness differed tremendously. Two interviewees said that they had never opened the book and another said that she just skimmed parts of it because they were tested on its content. Two said that it was an easy read but very boring.
skills like webbing, KWL charts and character analysis grids. It also includes a template for making anecdotal notes and a guide for preparing cloze passages. Each of the 50 activities/strategies includes a checklist at the top indicating what grade levels, group sizes, and purpose (e.g., thematic units, reading-writing) they are most suited for. Ideas for adaptation are included as are some examples of student work.

Seven graduates from two different faculties were required to have this text (it was optional reading for other students from one of those faculties and from another faculty).

Graduates generally found 50 Literacy Strategies: Step by Step very practical and a “great resource”. One subject noted that they had already used it extensively, “I’ve used more than half of these activities already” (132).

Constructing Meaning: Integrating Elementary Language Arts (1996)
(Bainbridge-Edwards & Malicky)

Constructing Meaning: Integrating Elementary Language Arts was another frequently used text. It was the main text used at two faculties. It was the required text for all interviewees from one faculty but for only one of two graduates from different sections at the other faculty.
This text is an introduction to teaching elementary language arts from an integrated, holistic, and constructivist perspective (p. xi). The textbook is divided into 11 chapters with an accompanying preface and glossary. These chapters address issues surrounding literacy instruction and they explore the following topics: the teacher; the child; the process view of literacy cultivation; writing development; reading fluency and guided reading; developing reading vocabulary; teaching decoding skills: phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, and phonics; a Constructivist approach to concept and vocabulary growth; developing reading comprehension; using literature and informational text; assessing reading and literacy abilities; and motivating young readers: the affective domain. At the end of each chapter, the authors’ provide an overview of content and a summary of main ideas.

They also list ways for readers to further extend their learning and understanding from the chapter, which they label as “application” (e.g., discussion, review) and “field experiences” (e.g., activities to try in the teaching field). Within the chapters, the authors mention research supporting certain topics and provide helpful “toolboxes” highlighting issues such as teaching ESL learners and readers with special needs.

This text discusses some components of a “good” literacy program. One may argue that the components are disjointed. It is possible that the most important ideas become lost in the rest of the text. It clearly favours experiential learning over teacher-instruction. Some suggestions are likely to be ineffective for unskilled readers, for example, it
suggests using blocks of time for Sustained Silent Reading (p. 240) in classrooms in order to develop students’ reading Fluency/Automaticity.

Graduates appreciated the practical aspects of this text such as, “how to assess a child with reading difficulties and how to implement [a] print rich environment” (113). Another said, “I refer to it when planning for my Grade 3s” (111).

(May & Rizardi)
All four interviewees from one faculty were assigned the text: *Reading as Communication 6th Ed* (May & Rizardi, 1998/2002).

The text is organized into 12 chapters. It includes both direct and indirect teaching strategies in order to teach literacy well. The authors of the textbook state that their goal is to provide readers with the “absolute latest research on how to create an effective balanced reading program”. To this end, evidence-based research is presented frequently throughout the text. This includes providing summaries of the National Reading Panel’s findings regarding phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary building. It includes strategies for teachers to use to teach the components.
Reading as Communication describes various activities and strategies that can be used in the classroom. The text also covers the theories of Vygotsky, Piaget, and the Constructivist approach et cetera.

One graduate reported that the book provided an “overview of the reading process…top down versus bottom up versus using both to pull meaning from the text…and cuing systems” (105).

Reading for Meaning (1998)
(Rich)
Reading for Meaning by S. J. Rich (1998) was required reading by all three interviewees from one faculty and it was recommended reading at another faculty. The book Reading for Meaning is written for preservice students and for novice practicing teachers. The book recognizes a literacy continuum with a focus on reading in the elementary years and states that the book will “take you on a journey through reading development” (p. xiii). Although the book’s primary focus is reading, Rich touches on writing and oral language. The book is divided into eight chapters entitled: What is Reading?; Learning to Read and Reading to Learn; What Do You Do When You Come to School? Learn to Read; Discovering Text: The Reader Centred Classroom; Buddy Readers and Community Projects: Developing Communities of Readers and Learners; Strategic Reading Across the Curriculum; Assessing Reading: Portfolios and Potholes; and Maintaining and Extending Professional Growth in Literacy Teaching.
Chapter objectives are provided at the beginning of each chapter and a summary is provided at the end. Each chapter also includes reflection boxes, scenarios (e.g., case studies), discussion questions and activities, references, and resources for teachers’ professional libraries. Rich identifies that a single text on reading cannot provide a teacher with all of the necessary information to teach reading and utilizes the last chapter to discuss ways for teachers to maintain and extend their professional development.

This text is very Primary focused and provides an overview of the “Great Debate” and Chall’s Stages of Reading Development but does not include information about Phonemic Awareness or Fluency. Few strategies are provided for teaching Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Phonics.
Appendix L

Hours of Faculty Instruction in Literacy by Program and
Reports of Having Learned “Nothing”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs (Grouped by total hours)</th>
<th>Number of Hours in Required Literacy Course</th>
<th>Number of Surveys</th>
<th>Number who said “nothing learned”</th>
<th>Percent based on number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage Reporting “Nothing” Learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H21</td>
<td>21.3/29.3</td>
<td>N=29</td>
<td>11+1=12/31 39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>N=18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K25</td>
<td>32.6 to 45</td>
<td>N=11</td>
<td>8+0+8+2=18/ 24%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K26</td>
<td>32.6 to 45</td>
<td>N=22</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F19</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>N=25</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td>0+4+1+1 50</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8-16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>N=22</td>
<td></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>N=16</td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J23</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>N=8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>N=5</td>
<td>0+0+0+0 22</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>N=1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>N=9</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>N=7</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A17</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>0+1=1/15</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td>68-72</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E18</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix M

Definitions and Scoring Criteria for Interview Question #24
(Definition of Literacy-Related Terms)

24.) Please state the terms with which you are familiar:

concepts about print: determining a student’s basic understandings of conventions around the written word. In effect, “What is the child attending to as he looks at print on the page?” (Clay, 1985, p. 23). This includes putting the book the right way up, sweeping left to right, attending to letter order, distinguishing between a letter and a word et cetera.

scaffolding: in learning, the gradual withdrawal of adult (e.g., teacher) support, as through instruction, modeling, questioning, feedback, et cetera., for a child’s performance across successive engagements, thus transferring more and more autonomy to the child. (Harris, IRA, 1995)

regular words: Words that follow predictable spelling patterns (an exception to a linguistic pattern or rule, (Harris, IRA, 1995).

grapheme: A written or printed representation of a phoneme, as b for /b/ and oy for /oi/ in boy (Harris, IRA, 1995). 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, p, s, or several letters, such as ch, sh, th, -ck, ea, igh (Put Reading First).

semantics: The study of the meaning of language, as the analysis of the meanings of words, phrases, sentences, discourse, and whole text (Harris, IRA, 1995). 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.

sight words: a word that can be immediately recognized as a whole and does not require word analysis for identification (Harris, IRA, 1995).

whole language: a professional movement and theoretical perspective that believes that all language systems are interwoven, they avoid the segmentation of language into component parts for specific skills instruction (condensed from Harris, IRA, 1995). 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. Phonics would only be used sparingly within the meaning based context (Chall in Adams (1990) p. 23.

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 Harris, IRA, 1995). 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 students 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 (Levine p. 339).

morpheme: a meaningful linguistic unit that cannot be divided into smaller meaningful elements, as the word book, or that is a component of a word, as s in books (Harris, IRA, 1995).

metacognitive strategies: an awareness and knowledge of one’s mental processes such that one can monitor, regulate, and direct them to a desired end (Harris, IRA, 1995). Using games or tools to monitor and improve one’s learning.

reading disabilities: reading achievement that is significantly below expectancy for both an 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 reasonably be expected of a person; a marked ability-achievement discrepancy (Harris, IRA, 1995). One or more dysfunctions that result in poor performance in reading (Levine, p. 4).

onset/rime: an onset is that 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 (Harris, IRA, 1995). They are parts of spoken language that are smaller than syllables but larger than phonemes. An onset is the initial consonant(s) sound of a syllable (the onset of bag is b-; of swim, sw-). A rime is the part of a syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it (the rime of bag is ag; of swim, -im).

phonics: a way of teaching reading and spelling that stresses symbol-sound relationships, used especially in beginning instruction (Harris, IRA, 1995). Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds of spoken language) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language) (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 (Harris, IRA, 1995). When a child creates their own spellings of a word based on their knowledge of letters and sounds. Each invented spelling is a snapshot of how the mind conceives of spelling (Gentry, p. 39). For example, wns for once and KT for Katie.

orthography: The spelling patterns and rules of a language. The English language is variable and complex but follows predictable orthographic principles (Teaching reading is RS).

phoneme: a minimal sound unit of speech that, when contrasted with another phoneme, affects the meaning of words in a language, as /b/ in book (Harris, IRA, 1995). 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. Most words, however, have more than one phoneme: The word if has two phonemes (/i/ /f/); check has three phonemes (/ch/ /e/ /k/), and stop has four phonemes (/s/ /t/ /o/ /p/). Sometimes one phoneme is represented by more than one letter (Put Reading First).

prior knowledge: Knowing that stems from previous experience (Harris, IRA, 1995). The background knowledge a student brings to a lesson. For example, a child who spends a lot of time at the zoo may have some prior knowledge about animal habitats.

digraph: Two letters that represent one speech sound, as ch for /ch/ (Harris, IRA, 1995). A digraph is a pair of letters expressing one sound (e.g., th, sh, ch). It is not a blend (e.g., sl, pr) in which both letter sounds continue to be heard.

diphthong: A vowel sound produced when the tongue moves or glides from one vowel sound toward another vowel or semi-vowel (Harris, IRA, 1995). A diphthong is a compound vowel sound produced by combining two simple ones, such as oi in point, ou in loud.

reading fluency: is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They read aloud effortlessly and with expression. 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 (Harris, IRA, 1995). A set of concepts that together form a framework of knowledge about some specific area (Perfetti 1985, in Levine).
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 (Harris, IRA, 1995).

reading readiness: Looks at the knowledge and skills a child brings to the text when beginning to read. This includes alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary et cetera.

blends: To combine the sounds represented by letters to produce a word; sound out. The joining of the sounds represented by two or more letters with minimal changes in those sounds (Harris, IRA, 1995). 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 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.

### Benchmark Samples of Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>blends</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>I’ve heard of it but I have no idea.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Don’t know…unless it’s like blends of letters together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Two consonants go together; there are different categories of them and rules that go along with them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>When two consonants go together but they are still two separate sounds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It is two consonants flowing together as in /bl/ for blend and you still hear two separate sounds as compared to a digraph where there is one sound.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>inventive spelling</strong></td>
<td><strong>metacognitive strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Don’t remember.</td>
<td>1 I’ve heard of it but don’t know them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 It’s for kids when they learning to write. That’s all I know.</td>
<td>2 The ways kids can think about things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 How children will put down different letters to form a words but the words are not spelled right.</td>
<td>3 Knowing what you know and things to help you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 It’s when a child uses what they know about letters and sounds to spell a word.</td>
<td>4 These are strategies applied to how a person learns. Learning how to learn, teaching yourself how you learn best</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 When a student doesn’t know the real conventional spelling of a word but uses what he or she knows about phonics, sounds and words to break it down and write it. It is helpful to see what a child knows about sounds and letters and what he needs to learn (like <em>Et</em> for <em>eat</em>).</td>
<td>5 It is knowing how to check how you are processing information and learning things. It’s kind of being aware of how your mind works. For example, you can use certain tricks to remember things: if that is how you remember things best.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>