NEGOTIATING MULTIPLE LITERACIES: STUDENT TEACHERS’ CONCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND PRACTICES

by

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This longitudinal and qualitative study makes an important contribution to literacy teacher education because it highlights the need for more systematic research to examine how the concept of multiple literacies is engaged in teacher education to prepare beginning teachers for the demands of contemporary literacy teaching. This study examined how a group of middle school student teachers constructed conceptions of literacy, enacted literacy pedagogy, and negotiated their role as teachers of literacy, over two years of teacher education studies. Data collection methods included questionnaires (n=22), four stages of semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of eight student teachers (32 interviews), and document analysis. Findings suggest the student teachers entered teacher education with restricted notions of literacy due in large part to their school literacy histories. While the student teachers participated in a rich array of literacy practices in their out-of-school interactions (e.g., home, community, peer), their initial conceptions of literacy were largely grounded in the autonomous model of literacy they encountered in their prior schooling (Street, 1984). However, as the student teachers entered into conversation with the broader field of literacy (e.g., multiliteracies, critical literacy, out-of-school literacies) in their literacy methods courses, their conceptions of literacy steadily broadened and they developed a more nuanced understanding of literacy.
pedagogy. They came to recognize the need for contemporary literacy pedagogy to foster students’ critical navigation of diverse texts and digitally mediated technologies.

Moreover, the student teachers who had the opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching sought to translate their expanded conceptions of literacy to the middle school classroom. This research identified several factors that facilitated student teachers’ expanded conceptions of literacy including: specific course content (e.g., understanding literacy as a situated social practice), particular pedagogies (e.g., integration of digital technologies), and having ample opportunity to observe and enact a multifaceted approach to literacy teaching during practice teaching. This research contributes to our understanding of the role literacy teacher education plays in the lives of beginning teachers.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Given the changing demographics of the teaching and teacher education workforce, the changing populations of young people, and the changing nature of literacy, what counts as essential pedagogical knowledge is increasingly open to question (Comber, 2006, p. 59).

Calls to Integrate Multiple Literacies in Teacher Education

In recent years literacy scholars have suggested that contemporary literacy pedagogy must engage with the complexities of our globalized society wherein knowledge and social relationships are constructed amidst collaborative platforms and digitally mediated technologies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; 2000; Gee, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 1996; Street, 2005). The contemporary landscape of communication offers novel spaces for social interaction and knowledge generation, from facilitating the instant broadcasting and tracking of information (e.g., Twitter) to enabling collaborative content generation on a massive scale (e.g., Wikipedia). The proliferation of such technological tools and the shifts in communication practices provoke questions around how the concept of literacy comes to be defined and engaged within teacher education.

Increasingly, there have been persistent calls to integrate a multiple literacies approach in literacy teacher education (Ajayi, 2011; Cervetti et al., 2006; Comber, 2006; Luke, 2000; Rowsell, Kosnik & Beck, 2008). A multiple literacies perspective recognizes "that there are many forms of literacy that vary across time and communities – that
literacy is a social practice, rather than a set of reading and writing skills to be acquired” (Cervetti et al., 2006, p. 380). Indeed, it has been suggested that, “teacher education should be reconceived in response to the demands of multiple literacies and the new information age”; however, “little has been written about the program that might prepare future teachers for multiple literacies” pedagogy (Cervetti et al., 2006, p. 379). Further research is needed to fully understand student teachers’ experiences with multiple literacies during their teacher education studies, and their sense of preparedness to teach from a multiple literacies perspective.

Within the context of this research I use the term multiple literacies to represent the various literacy concepts and frameworks (e.g., multiliteracies, out-of-school literacies, literacy in the content areas, critical literacies) the student teachers who participated in this study engaged with in their literacy methods courses. My engagement with the concept of multiple literacies is informed by the work of both New Literacy Studies (NLS) scholars (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Gee, 1996/2012; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Street, 1984) and the New London Group’s (NLG) multiliteracies framework (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; NLG, 1996). Dimensions of both the New Literacy Studies and the New London Group’s framework have encouraged me to recognize the plurality of the literacy experience, and to consider how literacy practices vary according to context, use, and social function (Street, 2009). Key tenets of the NLS and NLG’s theoretical frameworks will be discussed in further detail in the literature review chapter of this document (Chapter 2).

I engage with literacy as an embedded social practice situated in time, place and culture, wherein access to a variety of representational resources facilitates the active
construction of knowledge and enactment of identities (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2012; Luke, 2000; New London Group, 1996; Street, 2003, 2005). This socially situated approach to literacy “attempts to capture and recognize the multiple forms, multiple sites and multiple purposes of communication, to show them in their social/cultural environment” (Kress, 2000, p. 142). A multiple literacies perspective complicates, in productive ways, the consideration of what counts as literacy within the social world of the classroom.

Literacy education has traditionally privileged textual modes, taught through a singular standard grammar and literary canon, while largely neglecting how the inherently different logics of various representational modes operate to convey meaning (e.g., the grammar of the visual) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; New London Group, 1996). Literacy scholars point out, however, that the navigation of contemporary communication channels is increasingly mediated by multiple and integrated modes of representation (e.g., textual, visual, audio, spatial, gestural) (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 1996). Jewitt (2008) suggests, the “physical, material, and social affordances affiliated with each mode generates a specific logic, and provides different communicational and representational potentials” (p. 247). Literacy education should engage students in the consideration of how particular modes of representation (e.g., linguistic, textual, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural) are often mobilized to accomplish specific epistemic goals and to distinctly inform the construction of meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2012; New London Group, 1996).

A multiple literacy approach positions reading and writing as dynamic processes that people engage with to accomplish particular communicative goals (Barton &
Hamilton, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; New London Group, 1996; Street, 2005, 2003). Literacy, in this sense, is not conceived as a static entity or a neutral set of skills that one either acquires or does not; rather, literacy is positioned as inherently situated practice embedded within socio-cultural contexts (Street, 2005, 2003, 1984). When literacy is viewed “as a dynamic, organic fluid phenomenon, constantly shaped and re-shaped by those who speak and write it every day in accordance with their needs and wishes, then the educational task becomes different” (Kress, 1997, p. 151).

Contemporary literacy pedagogy should assist children and youth to strategically navigate the diverse text structures, terminologies, and modes of representation they will encounter as they participate in different domains of knowledge. Accordingly, the conventional boundaries of literacy education should be extended to assist students to critically navigate a multiplicity of communication technologies, amid increasing local diversity and global connectedness (Brandt & Holland, 2002; Cope & Kalantzis, 2006; Jewitt, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Kress, 2010; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006).

The consideration of what student teachers need to know to enact a multiple literacy approach to literacy teaching and learning raises some fundamental questions. For instance, what notions of literacy and literacy pedagogy are presented to student teachers throughout their teacher education studies? What changes when student teachers are invited, through their teacher education studies, to consider literacy as a situated social practice? How might teacher education take into account the diverse experiences with and perspectives on literacy that student teachers bring with them to their studies? The implementation of a multifaceted approach to literacy teaching and learning will
likely require student teachers to conceptualize and enact literacy in ways they did not experience during their prior schooling.

Connecting with Student Teachers’ Literacy Autobiographies

Student teachers’ previous years of schooling and rich lived experiences have a substantial impact on how they define their teaching priorities (Britzman, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Dewey, 1938/1997; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Lortie, 1975). Britzman (2003) suggests, “implicitly, schooling fashions the meanings, realities, and experiences of students; thus those learning to teach draw from their subjective experiences constructed from actually being there” (p. 27). The “educational biographies” student teachers bring to teacher education substantially inform their conceptions of a teacher’s work (Britzman, 2003).

Accordingly, this dissertation research is guided by a central premise: student teachers come to teacher education with a rich array of literacy experiences gained both inside and outside of school contexts. Student teachers’ previous years of schooling have socialized them into literacy practices and discourses which, to an extent, shape their conceptions of what counts as literacy and what they expect to encounter in literacy teacher education (Edwards, 2009; Gee, 2012; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Le Fevre, 2011; Leland, 2013; Norman & Spencer, 2005; O’Neil & Geoghegan, 2011; Penn-Edwards, 2011; Street, 1984). That said, student teachers’ diverse experiences with literacy outside of school (e.g., home, community, peer) also inform how they make use of the concepts and pedagogical strategies encountered during teacher education (González, Moll, Amanti, 2005; Hull & Schultz, 2002). A pedagogy of teacher education that strives to
prepare student teachers for the demands of contemporary literacy teaching should take into account the diverse experiences with and perspectives on literacy that student teachers bring with them.

Learning to teach involves a complex process of both continuity and change, wherein “one’s past, present and future are set in dynamic tension” (Britzman 2003, p. 31). Teacher education should invite student teachers to consider how their own “temporality” informs the process of learning to teach (Huebner, 1967; Pinar, 2004). This endeavor necessitates “raising questions about learning how to learn,” and “tying together the future and the past into the present,” so that student teachers recognize their “own active participation as an ingredient” in the structuring of knowledge (Huebner, 1967, p. 177). Huebner (1967) calls upon educators to engage with and “encourage moments of vision, when the past and future become horizons for the individual’s present” (p. 177). Throughout their teacher education studies student teachers should have ample opportunity to question how the educational encounters they engaged with, over diverse moments of time, have contributed to how they define what counts as literacy.

Student teachers enter teacher education with their own literacy biographies; however, they often are not fully aware of how their literacy histories inform their conceptions of literacy and expectations for literacy pedagogy (Edwards, 2009; Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Le Fevre, 2011; Leland, 2013; Norman & Spencer, 2005; O’Neil & Geoghegan, 2011; Penn-Edwards, 2011). Britzman (2003) suggests that due to years of experience as students in “compulsory education” student teachers’ “sense of the teacher’s world is strangely established before they begin learning to teach” (p. 1). In a
sense, student teachers are somewhat “beholden to their own years of being a student and the image of education they made and continually make from that” as they negotiate the process of learning to teach (Britzman, 2003, p. 20). To what extent do student teachers’ schooled literacy histories shape their conceptions of what it means to teach literacy?

In the case of literacy pedagogy, a dissonance is likely to exist between student teachers’ prior schooling experiences, their on-going literacy practices, and what they recognize as relevant literacies. Student teachers’ previous school literacy experiences were often delivered through an “autonomous model of literacy,” which advanced a decontextualized notion of literacy and placed emphasis on the structural mechanisms of language acquisition (Street 2005, 2003, 1984). This autonomous model positions literacy as a neutral set of skills, rather than as a social practice which is always embedded within culturally constructed systems of knowledge that set the parameters for what counts as legitimate literacy practices and relevant knowledge (Street, 1984). In contrast to the autonomous model of literacy, student teachers’ daily literacy practices (e.g., home, community, peer) draw upon a range of resources and are facilitated through multifaceted networks of communication. Student teachers bring their own complex literacy histories to teacher education.

This potential dissonance can, however, serve as a catalyst provoking teacher education to situate student teachers’ relationship to literacy within autobiographical, historical, cultural, and social spheres of experience (Pinar, 2004). Pinar (2004) encourages “teachers to appreciate the complex and shifting relations between their own self-formation and the school subjects they teach, understood both as subject matter and as human subjects” (p. 24). Literacy teacher education should invite student teachers to
engage with literacy curriculum as a “complicated conversation,” in which “academic knowledge, subjectivity, and society are inextricably linked” (Pinar, 2004, p. 11). Indeed, conscious attention should be focused on the complex ways in which student teachers weave together their past and present educational experiences as they construct and enact an approach to literacy teaching.

**My Research Study**

My dissertation research seeks to deepen our understanding of the role teacher education plays in the lives of beginning teachers; in particular, the points of intersection between student teachers’ conceptions of literacy, their literacy histories, their personal literacy practices, and their evolving literacy teaching practice. More specifically, this research considers the ways in which student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy shift (or not) as they enter into conversation with the broader field of literacy (e.g., multiliteracies, out-of-school, literacies, critical literacy) during their teacher education studies. This research engaged with student teachers as “theorizing agents” who routinely theorize and enact literacy pedagogy within the practical realities of the classroom (Britzman, 2003). This research invites us to consider the kinds of opportunities teacher education can create for student teachers to explore literacy in their lives, in their classrooms, and in the lives of the children and youth they will be teaching.

This longitudinal qualitative research examined how a group of junior-intermediate (J/I) student teachers constructed conceptions of literacy, engaged with personal literacy practices, and enacted literacy pedagogy over their two years of teacher education studies. The term junior-intermediate (J/I) student teachers refers to those
individuals who are learning to become classroom teachers of pupils in grades four through ten. The research questions that guide this study include:

1. What are J/I student teachers’ conceptions of what constitutes literacy and relevant literacy practices?

2. In what ways do J/I student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy shift over the course of a two-year teacher education program?

3. How do J/I student teachers see their role as teachers of literacy?

Background to this Research Study

My dissertation research was inspired by my work with student teachers. For the past four years, I have worked as a teaching assistant for both Primary/Junior (P/J) and Junior/Intermediate (J/I) literacy methods courses. As a literacy teacher educator I encourage student teachers to think broadly and deeply about literacy, question their assumptions, connect theory and practice, and look at teaching and learning from different perspectives. Initially, my plan was to focus my dissertation research on P/J student teachers’ experiences with literacy and literacy pedagogy, as I had trained and worked as a primary/junior teacher. However, early on in my work with student teachers in the literacy methods courses the focus of my research shifted to Junior/Intermediate student teachers, largely due to two observations.

Upon entering the literacy methods course many of the J/I student teachers noted they were surprised to learn they were required to complete literacy courses as part of their teacher education studies. They expected as J/I teachers (e.g., grades 4-10) they
would not be responsible for literacy teaching, for they assumed their students would have already mastered the reading and writing skills necessary to participate in middle school, in the primary grades (e.g. grades K-3). In other words, they initially assumed literacy teaching was the domain of primary school teachers. Additionally, the student teachers enrolled in the J/I teacher education program must select a subject specialization (e.g., science, mathematics, English, drama, physical education), which leads many to believe they will secure a teaching position in which they will teach that subject exclusively. Many of the student teachers with a content specialization in an area other than English (e.g., science, history, art, physical education) had the initial impression that literacy would not be a part of their pedagogical practice. That is, they did not seem to recognize literacy as relevant to teaching and learning in the content areas. These observations captured my attention and provoked me to consider how J/I student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy and expectations for literacy teaching might shift (or not) as they entered into conversation with the broader field of literacy studies (e.g., multiliteracies, out-of-school literacies) through the literacy methods courses. I decided to focus my dissertation research on this topic.

**Organization of this Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. This first chapter has presented the purpose for the study and the guiding research questions. Chapter Two provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks put forth by literacy scholars, and the relevant research on literacy teacher education I have drawn upon to ground this dissertation research. Chapter Three outlines the qualitative research design utilized to conduct this
study. The methods of participant selection, data collection, and data analysis are
detailed. Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven report on the research findings. More
specifically, Chapter Four examines the complex literacy histories student teachers bring
with them to teacher education, and the ways in which their literacy histories inform their
initial conceptions of literacy and expectations for literacy teacher teaching and learning.
Chapters Five and Six examine how student teachers’ experiences with the literacy
methods courses informed their conceptions of literacy and understanding of literacy
pedagogy. Chapter Seven analyzes student teachers’ experiences with literacy teaching
during their practice teaching placements. This chapter highlights both the opportunities
and the challenges student teachers’ negotiated as they constructed and enacted an
approach to literacy teaching during practice teaching. In Chapter Eight, I draw
conclusions based on the findings, discuss the implications of this research for literacy
teacher education, and offer suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is organized into two main sections. Section One will outline the theoretical frameworks that have informed how literacy has been taken up in this research study. This section will discuss key tenets of New Literacy Studies, the literacy theorizing and pedagogical framework of the New London Group, and the work of literacy scholars who call upon literacy educators to recognize students’ out-of-school literacy practices as valuable resources. Section Two will highlight some key findings from research focused on student teachers’ experiences with literacy during their teacher education studies; with a particular focus on research examining the influence of student teachers’ literacy histories, as well as student teachers’ experiences with a multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) approach to literacy teacher education.

Theoretical Frameworks: The Social Turn in Literacy Studies

This qualitative research study examined how eight junior-intermediate (grades 4-10) student teachers constructed conceptions of literacy and enacted literacy pedagogy over the course of a two-year teacher education program. The theoretical foundation of this research is informed by the work of literacy scholars who frame literacy as a social practice (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanić, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2012; Kress, 2010; Street, 1984). Street (1984) theorizes literacy as “a social process, in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes” (p. 97). Literacy, in this sense, is intricately
embedded within ideological structures and relations of power which function to set the parameters for what counts as literacy.

An influential body of research produced over the last few decades contributed to a “social turn” in literacy studies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton et al., 2007; Cazden, 1988; Gee, 2000; Heath, 1983; Scriber & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 1993). This research focused attention on the ways in which people use reading and writing in their everyday lives and how literacy use functions to both reflect and reinforce social structures. An emphasis was placed on understanding how “people engage differently with a given text depending on the context in which they encounter or produce it, their motivations and the cultural resources they bring to it” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012, p. 247). Accordingly, language use is positioned as a situated social practice inextricably embedded within time, place, and culture.

**New Literacy Studies**

New Literacy Studies (NLS) has played a central role in theorizing the repertoire of literacies people routinely use to participate and communicate in different social and cultural contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Gee, 1996/2012; Pahl, & Rowsell, 2006; Street, 1984, 1993). The framing of literacies as multiple and situated has facilitated a rethinking of how literacy comes to be defined and legitimized within particular social domains (e.g., schools). According to Street (2005), New Literacy Studies “represents a shift in perspective on the study of and acquisition of literacy, from the dominant cognitive model, with an emphasis on reading, to a broader understanding of literacy practices in their social and cultural contexts” (p. 417). In particular, New
Literacy Studies considers how people use reading and writing in different domains of life to achieve particular purposes. Literacy is positioned as a dynamic process of interaction that is continuously shaped by the specific demands of context, use, and function (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2012).

To more deeply understand what people do with literacy, some of the early research that informed New Literacy Studies directed attention toward the concepts of “literacy events” and “literacy practices” (Heath, 1982, 1983; Scriber & Cole; Street, 1984). Literacy events and literacy practices emphasize the connection between language use and the social structures in which reading/writing are embedded. Heath (1982) characterized a literacy event as an observable “occasion in which written language is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretative processes” (p. 74). The concept of literacy events accentuates the situated nature of language use; namely, that interactions around reading and writing occur within and are informed by social context. The broader notion of literacy practices refers to the “socially regulated, recurrent, and patterned things people do with literacy as well as the cultural significance they ascribe to those doings” (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 342). Literacy in this sense is framed as a dynamic social practice whereby people utilize reading and writing to communicate with and make sense of the world around them. In so doing, they are socialized into the norms, values, and language practices of the communities they participate in (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 2012; Heath, 1983).

This socially situated approach to literacy marks a shift away from an “autonomous model” of literacy, which advanced a decontextualized notion of literacy as a neutral set of skills that one acquires incrementally (Street, 1984). The “autonomous
model” of literacy can be somewhat problematic, as it neglects to consider how literacy practices are embedded within culturally constructed systems of knowledge and structures of power, which often set the parameters for what counts as legitimate and influential literacies (Gee, 2012; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Street, 1984). In contrast, New Literacy Studies put forth an “ideological model” of literacy (Street 1984), which recognizes that “literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships,” and as a consequence “some literacies become more dominate, visible, and influential than others” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012, p. 11). This approach to literacy recognizes that access to a variety of representational resources facilitates the active construction of knowledge and identities. Street suggests that, literacy “is always about knowledge, the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being” (2003, p. 78). In other words, reading/writing practices are intricately embedded within ideological structures and relations of power, which function to set the parameters for what counts as literacy.

Accordingly, New Literacy Studies acknowledges a plurality of literacies and recognizes diverse ways of being literate. These scholars actively consider how people engage with culturally recognized literacies practices to communicate, negotiate, and construct meaning in different domains of life (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Barton et al., 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Street, 1993). Gee (2000) notes that, “it is one of the tenets of the NLS that any piece of language, any tool, technology, or social practice can take on quite different meanings (and values) in different contexts” (p. 188). Literacy is not theorized as a neutral set of technical skills; rather, the plurality of the literacy experience is recognized and attention is focused on the ways in which literacy use varies
in accordance with changing contextual demands, individual needs, and access to available resources (Street, 1997). Indeed, an integral part of literacy learning is the capacity to effectively apply and adapt language to a particular communicative circumstance.

In the social world of the classroom, both teacher and students are active learners and communicators engaged in a reciprocal process of meaning-making. Street gestures to the relational nature of this process in suggesting that “the ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact is already a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by participants” (Street, 2005, p. 418). Until recently, however, New Literacy Studies scholars (Larson & Marsh, 2005; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; 2006) had not explicitly addressed the complexity of literacy pedagogy within classroom contexts (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Mills, 2010). Conversely, the New London Group (1996) have explicitly taken up the intricacies of literacy teaching and learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Mills (2010) suggests “an explicit aim of the New London Group was to develop theory that is of direct use in educational practice” (p. 258). The next section of this chapter will discuss the framework for multiliteracies theory and pedagogy put forth by the New London Group.

**New London Group: Multiliteracies theory and pedagogy**

The New London Group’s (NLG) multiliteracies framework was developed when a group of literacy scholars met in New London, New Hampshire, to discuss how literacy pedagogy might respond to changing social conditions and emerging communication technologies in contemporary society. The position paper developed by the New London
Group (NLG, 1996) puts forth a rich and complex view of literacy, and pedagogical framework for literacy education. They argue that, “new communication media are reshaping the ways we use language” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 6). In response to the changing landscape of literacy the NLG (1996) advanced the concept of multiliteracies to address two related trends: namely, the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of learners and the multiplicity of new communication technologies utilized within contemporary culture. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) capture the substance of multiliteracies when they describe it as a different kind of learning, “one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes” (p. 5).

The New London Group called upon educators to “rethink what we are teaching, and in particular, what new learning needs literacy pedagogy might now address,” to facilitate students’ access to resources and participation in contemporary social worlds (1996, p. 61). Literacy education has traditionally privileged textual modes taught through a singular standard grammar and literary canon, while largely neglecting how the inherently different logics of various representational modes operate to convey meaning (e.g., the grammar of the visual) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). However, “when technologies of meaning are changing so rapidly, there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute the ends of literacy learning” (New London Group, 1996, p. 64). The NLG suggest the navigation of contemporary communication channels is increasingly mediated by the integration of mixed modes of representation wherein the textual is related to visual, audio, spatial, and gestural modes (Cope, & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 1996). Kress argues that, when “meaning is no longer
confined or confinable to ‘texts’ in the traditional sense, nor is communication,” a literacy pedagogy that is to adequately meet “the needs of the young cannot afford to remain with older notions of text as valued literacy object” (Kress, 2000, p. 145). Contemporary literacy teaching should assist students to strategically navigate the diverse text structures, terminologies, and modes of representation they encounter as they participate in different domains of knowledge.

The multiliteracies framework positions literacy pedagogy as a space of possibility, with the potential to facilitate “access to symbolic capital,” without requiring participants to erase or abandon “differences of culture, language and gender” (p. 72). The NLG actively consider how cultural and linguistic repertoires are fundamentally informed by encounters of difference. Difference within this framework is recognized as a productive space of negotiation and learning. The NLG (1996) suggest that, “to be relevant, learning processes need to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different subjectivities – interests, intentions, comments, and purposes – students bring to learning” (p. 72, italics in original). The multiliteracies framework recognizes students and teachers as dynamic participants in learning, who bring diverse cultural experiences and linguistic repertoires into the classroom. Literacy pedagogy should encourage learners to draw meaningful connections between the rich literacy practices in which they engage both within and outside of school contexts.

In contrast to conventional competence-based models of literacy instruction, the NLG conceptualize literacy as an active process of design whereby learners continuously construct and transform representational resources to achieve a variety of meaning-making purposes (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010; NLG, 1996). The ‘Design’ process is central
to the multiliteracies paradigm. The process of shaping emergent meaning making involves three aspects: harnessing *Available Designs*, the resources for meaning making; engaging in the process of *Designing*, whereby resources/available designs are utilized; and creating the *Redesigned*, the newly produced or transformed meaning (New London Group, 1996, p. 77). Kress (2000) suggests this approach puts forward a different theory of meaning making “in which the individual is always shaping and never simply using” resources to construct knowledge and communicate with an intended audience (p. 142).

The NLG also emphasize the importance of developing an approach to literacy pedagogy that attends to the “increasing complexity and interrelationship of different modes of meaning” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 25). Accordingly, they outline six design elements or “metalanguages” to help teachers and students describe and analyze how meaning is conveyed through various realms, namely, the linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal. The intention behind outlining these six elements is not to “impose rules” or “to set standards of correctness;” rather, it is to provide teachers and students with a flexible “tool kit” that could be utilized to “identify and explain differences between texts, and relate these to contexts of culture and situations in which they seem to work” (NLG, 1996, p. 77).

This “tool kit” includes the following design elements. *Linguistic Designs* consider how various linguistic structures, such as the use of select vocabulary, nominalizations, and delivery features (e.g., intonation, stress) can operate to convey an intended message and position the reader (NLG, 1996, p. 79). *Visual Designs* deal with how elements of meaning, such as the use of colour, perspective, and foregrounding, are utilized to create images and page formats (p. 80). *Audio designs* attend to elements
employed in the production of music and sound effects (p. 80). *Gestural designs* explore elements such as behavior, body language, the communication of feeling and affect (p. 80). *Spatial designs* probe the “meanings of environmental [and] architectural spaces” (p. 80). Lastly, *multimodal designs* direct attention to the patterns of interaction and interconnection among the various modes (p. 78). The New London Group acknowledge that “in a profound sense all meaning-making is multimodal;” however, they direct attention to ways in which the “physical, material, and social affordances affiliated with each mode generate a specific logic, and provide different communicational and representational potentials” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 247). In other words, consideration should be given to how the affordances of different modes (e.g., linguistic, textual, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural) contribute to the construction of meaning in different ways (Kress, 2000, 2010).

The multiliteracies framework also takes up the question of how literacy pedagogy might be utilized to enrich and extend the connections between meaning-making practices and the social-cultural contexts in which they are embedded. The pedagogical framework proposed by the New London Group (NLG, 1996) is not meant to serve as a regimented sequence that teachers must follow; rather, it offers a supplement that might prompt teachers to extend their pedagogical repertoire (Cope, & Kalantzis, 2000). The “pedagogy of multiliteracies” framework includes four integrated components: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice (NLG, 1996).

*Situated practice* focuses on providing students with meaningful learning opportunities that take into account the needs and subjectivities of each learner. The NLG
suggest that, “people do not learn anything well unless they are both motivated to learn and believe that they will be able to use and function with what they are learning in some way that is in their interest” (p. 85). An emphasis is placed on creating learning opportunities that encourage “a community of learners” to draw on and share their areas of expertise as an integral part of the learning experience. The *overt instruction* component is not meant to imply a direct transmission approach to literacy pedagogy. Rather, through *overt instruction* teachers scaffold learning activities. This involves discussing and modeling how the various design elements (e.g., text features) can be utilized to convey meaning (p. 86). The aim of *critical framing* is to encourage students to consciously connect their learning to broader social, historical, cultural, and political contexts and to analyze systems of knowledge (p. 86). Lastly, *transformed practice* relates to the ways in which students can apply, revise, and connect their learning to different social contexts and sites of learning (p. 87).

Recently, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) revisited the multiliteracies framework initially put forth by the NLG (1996). They suggested that “the centrality of diversity, the notion of design as active meaning making, the significance of multimodality and need for a more holistic approach to pedagogy” remain relevant (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 167). However, in accordance with their evolving understanding of literacy, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) reframe the four dimensions of the pedagogy of multiliteracies framework as the knowledge processes of *experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying*. My research draws on the multiliteracies framework initially developed by the New London Group (1996, 2000), as it is more closely aligned with the approach to
literacy presented to participating student teachers in the literacy methods courses they completed as part of their teacher education studies.

The work of the New London group also points to the tensions that exist when literacy pedagogy is positioned as a static set of skills and rigid conventions that are meant to be transmitted to students. This framing of literacy restricts the role of both teacher and student. In contrast, Kress (1997) argues that, when literacy is viewed “as a dynamic, organic, fluid phenomenon, constantly shaped and re-shaped by those who speak and write it every day in accordance with their needs and wishes, then the educational task becomes different” (p. 151). When literacy pedagogy is viewed as a dynamic and collaborative space that values the expertise both teachers and students bring to the classroom, the process of learning becomes a more inclusive and multifaceted endeavor. The teacher is not positioned as the sole purveyor of knowledge, but rather as a facilitator who is instrumental in preparing students to actively participate in different domains of knowledge and take part in their communities as critically engaged citizens.

**Connecting out-of-school literacies to school based literacies**

Both the New Literacy Studies and the New London Group frameworks call attention to the importance of connecting students’ out of school literacy lives to the learning opportunities offered in classroom contexts. The literacy practices students participate in outside of school have instructional relevance as they are intimately connected to issues of belonging, cultural participation, and knowledge production. Hull and Schultz (2002) emphasize the importance of attending to the diverse literacy practices children/youth
engage with outside of school. They point out that the rich literacy engagements and accomplishments students engage with outside of school “often contrast with their poor school-based performance and suggest a different view of their potential as capable learners and doers in the world” (Hull & Schultz, 2002, p. 1).

Indeed, the extent to which literacy pedagogy incorporates students’ out-of school literacies “is a “matter of power” that speaks to “what comes to count as literacy, for whom, and to what ends” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 253). When the dominant conception of literacy is constructed around school-based literacy practices, students’ out-of-school literacy achievements are often marginalized and, in some cases, entirely excluded from the classroom (Cummins, 2009; Moje, 2002; Simon, 2012). Cummins (2006) suggests that, when students’ home language practices are excluded from the classroom and school literacies become the dominant “language of belonging and acceptance” students “frequently internalize a sense of shame in relation to their home language and culture” (p. 6). Literacy pedagogy that values and connects with the cultural and linguistic resources students bring to the classroom can help work against deficit perspectives that position students’ out-of-school literacy engagements as inconsequential or in need of remediation (Hull & Schultz, 2002).

A literacy pedagogy that endeavors to create opportunities for meaningful learning should acknowledge and build on students’ diverse interests, lived realities, and linguistic resources (Campano, 2007; Cummins, 2009; Delpit, 1995/2006; Ghiso et al., 2013; Janks & Comber, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1992; McGinnis, 2007; Moje, 2002; Moll et al., 1992; Nieto, 2004; Rogers, 2013; Vasquez, 2004; Vasquez, Tate & Harste, 2013). Street (2005) suggests that, in order to “build upon the richness and complexity of
learners’ prior knowledge, we need to treat ‘home background’ not as a deficit but as affecting deep levels of identity and epistemology,” and thereby help to support “the stance that learners take with respect to the ‘new’ literacy practices of the educational setting” (p. 420). An inclusive approach to literacy recognizes that students draw upon historically amassed and culturally informed bodies of knowledge, their *funds of knowledge*, to construct an understanding of their social worlds (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Literacy teaching that engages with the rich funds of knowledge students bring to classroom learning interactions can foster meaningful connections between students’ lives inside and outside of school.

When students are invited to share aspects of themselves as valued resources within the classroom space, it has implications for their learning and identity construction. Cummins’ (2004, 2006) school-based research with teachers and English language learners aimed at creating dual language identity texts, provides an example of an affirming learning encounter that is centred on students’ lived realities. Students drew on their linguistic resources and cultural knowledge to create dual language texts that were published as books for the classroom and uploaded to the Internet to be shared with a broader audience. Through this learning activity students’ home languages and cultural experiences were treated as an asset, rather than excluded from the classroom. Accordingly, the message conveyed is that a student’s prior experience and language facility can serve as a valuable resource for learning (Cummins 2004, 2006). An inclusive approach to literacy pedagogy recognizes the value in bringing a variety of texts and accessible formats into the classroom, as it can provide students with multiple entry points into literacy learning and knowledge construction (Compton-Lily, 2004; Delpit, L,
In recent years, literacy scholars have argued that literacy pedagogy should also consider how children/youth use digital technologies and collaborative networks to engage in social relationships, produce and disseminate knowledge, and enact identities (Alvermann, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Davies, 2012; Jacobs, 2008; Kress, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, 2011; Vasudevan et al., 2010). Luke (2003) suggests that, “the complex blend of ‘new’ and ‘old’ media are central to the experience of the everyday cultures of childhood and adolescence and are fundamental to the formation of young peoples’ cultural identities” (p. 398). The abundance of technological tools and shifts in contemporary communication practices provoke questions around how the concept of literacy comes to be defined and how literacy pedagogy is to be engaged to meet students’ literacy needs. Lankshear & Knobel (2011) argue that, often “schools demonstrably do not teach effectively, or even seriously promote, many of the literacy skills and understandings students need in their lives now and in the future” (p. 73).

A literacy pedagogy that strives to be accessible and meaningful to all students must not restrict the definition of literacy to conventional notions of text (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, 2007; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Sweeny, 2010; Vasudevan et al., 2010). Luke (2003) points out that, “digital technologies have remediated traditional text genres and forms and generated new modes of textual practice and immediacy” (p. 398). Indeed, the digitally mediated reading and writing practices youth routinely engage in (e.g., Facebook, texting, Twitter) often demonstrate a sophisticated use of distinct text features and an adeptness to effectively communicate
with diverse audiences (boyd, 2007; Jacobs, 2008; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Sweeny, 2010). Alvermann (2008) calls upon “teachers and teacher educators to tap into young people’s interests in producing online content” as a means to connect with a “wide range of competencies that might otherwise go unmarked” in the classroom (p. 17). Literacy teaching that provides students with ample opportunity to exercise choice in their selection of genres and to engage with reading and writing for a variety of purposes can facilitate meaningful connections between students’ lives within and beyond the classroom.

The process of teaching literacy in the contemporary classroom has become increasingly complex, as teachers must remain attuned and responsive to the plurality of literacies and cultural competencies relevant to students’ lives. Literacy teacher education must help prepare beginning teachers to face both the opportunities and challenges presented within their current and future classrooms. The knowledge, dispositions, and skills beginning teachers develop during their teacher preparation form a vital part of the foundation upon which they can build a comprehensive and inclusive approach to literacy teaching and learning. The next section of this chapter considers the role of literacy teacher education in preparing beginning teachers to construct a multifaceted approach to literacy teaching and learning.

**Literacy Teacher Education**

Literacy education is a central component of teacher preparation for as student teachers assume teaching positions at either the elementary, middle, or secondary grade level they
will be responsible for some aspect of literacy instruction (Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Kosnik, Rowsell, Williamson, Simon, & Beck, 2013; Maloch et al., 2003; Milton et al., 2007; O’Neil & Geoghegan, 2011; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). For some this might include the teaching of language arts/English as a core subject area, while for others, literacy instruction will be an integral part of content area teaching. It has been suggested literacy teacher education could better “equip student teachers for the difficult early years of teaching,” however it has also been acknowledged that “finding that balance is not simple” (Kosnik & Beck, 2008, p. 124). The need to prepare beginning teachers for the complexities of the “new” literacy classrooms has become an increasingly pressing concern.

Amidst a rapidly changing landscape of communication, in which youth routinely use diverse technological tools and vast social networks, beginning teachers will be expected to embrace a broad definition of literacy that recognizes a plurality of literacies and multiple sites of engagement (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996). Student teachers will likely be expected to conceptualize literacy and enact literacy pedagogy in ways they did not experience in their prior schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010). As discussed in Chapter One, the student teachers’ previous school literacy experiences often advanced a decontextualized notion of literacy that placed emphasis on the structural mechanisms of language acquisition, rather, than engage with literacy as a socially situated practice (Street 2005, 2003, 1984). In the case of literacy pedagogy, a dissonance is likely to exist between student teachers’ prior schooling experiences, their on-going literacy practices, and what they recognize as relevant literacies. This is not meant to discount the complex literacy lives student teachers lead, whereby they utilize a
range of linguistic resources and a variety of communication technologies on a daily basis. Yet, while they may proficiently mobilize a variety of technologies and digitally mediated networks in their personal lives, they likely have not fully considered the pedagogical affordances of such technologies and the potential implications for the classroom. How might literacy teacher education help student teachers bridge this dissonance?

Williamson (2013) argues, “visionary teacher education necessarily embraces the paradox that we must prepare teachers for the schools we have while simultaneously preparing them for the schools we want” (p. 136). This necessitates an approach to literacy teacher education that works with student teachers to recognize and build upon the linguistics resources and competencies pupils’ bring to the classroom; to scaffold pupils’ adept navigation of diverse text formats and disciplinary domains of knowledge; and to create learning environments that motivate pupils’ to critically engage with diverse resources and varied audiences (Williamson, 2013, p. 136). This is meaningful and important work, yet at times, it can be quite daunting.

Perhaps, the place to begin is to invite student teachers to inquire into how literacy comes to be defined within different contexts and what these definitions mean for literacy teaching and learning. Kinloch (2013) argues student teachers “should learn to read their own lived conditions, privileges, and identities as texts if they seek to build educational communities with students and if they want to strengthen their teaching practice” (p. 118). Student teachers’ initial assumptions about literacy learning, and what it means to be ‘literate’ have been substantially informed by their literacy histories, and multifaceted identities (Brown, 1999; Edwards, 2009; Ghiso et al., 2013; Kinloch, 2013;
Mathers, Benson, & Newton, 2007; Norman & Spencer, 2005; Roe & Vukelich, 1998; Rogers, 2013). Student teachers’ sense of themselves as readers and writers (e.g., “successful” reader; “struggling” reader) can also influence their confidence and sense of preparedness to teach literacy (McGlynn-Stewart, 2012, 2014). Literacy teacher education should invite student teachers to critically reflect upon the connections that exist between their literacy histories, their current literacy practices, and their conceptions of what counts literacy learning.

This chapter will next consider research literature focused on student teachers’ experiences with literacy and literacy pedagogy during their teacher education studies. The first section will discuss research that utilized student teachers’ literacy autobiographies as a means to consider how their prior experiences inform their understanding of literacy. The second section will outline what the relevant research literature has identified as key components of effective literacy teacher education. Lastly, research focused on student teachers’ experiences with a multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) approach to literacy education will be discussed.

**Literacy Autobiography and Literacy Teacher Education**

Student teachers’ initial conceptions of what it means to teach have been substantially informed by their prior school experiences. This is not meant to discount student teachers’ diverse experiences with learning gained beyond the walls of formal schooling. However, it is important to acknowledge that student teacher’s bring “their educational biography” to teacher education, which in part, “accounts for the persistency of particular
worldviews, orientations, dispositions and cultural myths that dominate [their] thinking and, in unintended ways, select the practices that are available in educational life” (Britzman, 2003, p. 27). The extensive amount of time individuals have spent in school as students (e.g., elementary, middle, secondary grades) has been identified as having a profound influence on the process of learning to teach (Britzman, 2003; Bullock, 2011; Darling Hammond, 2006; Kennedy, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Loughran, 2006; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

Lortie (1975) used the term apprenticeship of observation to refer to the process by which beginning teachers have developed their initial conceptions of what it means to teach, based on their own observations and experiences as students. This results in a partial understanding of a teacher’s work, for as students, they are not fully aware of the range of responsibilities teachers enact on a daily basis. As Lortie (1975) notes students,

are not privy to the teacher’s private intentions and personal reflections on classroom event. Students rarely participate in selecting goals, making preparations or postmortem analysis. Thus, they are not pressed to place the teacher’s actions in a pedagogically oriented framework (p. 62).

The preconceptions of teaching student teachers have gained from years of observing their own teachers has provided a limited view of a teacher’s practice. What is often not visible is the professional knowledge and skill that guide program planning, instructional design, daily decision-making, assessment strategies, and the proper allocation of time to different pedagogical tasks. In teacher education, it is important to work with student teachers to critically reflect upon their prior school experiences and to consider how these experiences connect with their understanding of and expectations for teaching and
learning (Britzman, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Hammerness et al., 2005). If students teachers are not provided with ample opportunity to unpack their preconceptions about what it means to teach, they may revert back to the models of teaching they observed; that is, they may teach how they were taught (Lortie, 1975; Britzman, 2003). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) argue, an approach to teacher education that “explicitly seeks to elicit and work with novice teachers’ initial beliefs and concerns” about teaching can help them to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of teaching and learning (p. 369). It is not difficult to see how these insights are applicable to literacy teacher education.

Literacy teacher educators have used literacy autobiography as a means to learn from and with student teachers. Student teachers bring a wide range of experiences with and perspectives on literacy to their teacher education studies, which inform how they approach literacy teaching and learning. The opportunity to critically engage with their literacy autobiographies can help student teachers uncover deep connections between their diverse literacy histories, their assumptions about literacy, and expectations for literacy teaching and learning (Ghiso et al., 2013; Williamson, 2013; Yandell, 2012). Le Fevre (2011) suggests the use of autobiography in a literacy methods course provides student teachers with “opportunities to create understandings out of their experiences that could affect their future actions as teachers” (p. 786). A body of research has focused on the use of literacy autobiography, in literacy methods courses, as a tool to examine the ways in which student teachers’ literacy histories inform their understanding of literacy learning (Brown, 1999; Edwards, 2009; Mathers, Benson, & Newton, 2007; Norman &
Spencer, 2005; Roe & Vukelich, 1998). The literacy autobiographies were often completed by student teachers as an assignment for a literacy methods course.

These researchers suggest the use of literacy autobiography can provide literacy teacher educators with valuable insight into student teachers’ perceptions of literacy and their attitude toward literacy teaching (Brown, 1999; Edwards, 2009; Le Fevre, 2011; Mathers, Benson, & Newton, 2007). These insights can productively inform course design and instructional decisions. Several of these studies reported that participating student teachers initially held restricted perceptions of literacy learning, due in large part to their prior schooled literacy histories (Edwards, 2009; Mathers, Benson, & Newton, 2007; Norman & Spencer, 2005). Edwards (2009) calls upon literacy teacher educators to utilize literacy autobiography as a tool to encourage student teachers “to reflect on their own language and literacy journey in order to broaden their conceptualizations of language and literacy” (p. 58).

Similarly, research conducted by Norman and Spencer (2005) analyzed the autobiographies of 59 student teachers, completed as a literacy methods course assignment, to examine their prior experiences with writing instruction and their perceptions of writing. They found that 91% of the student teachers’ “views about writing ability were fixed,” more specifically, they viewed writing ability “as a gift or talent one either has or doesn’t have” (p. 34). These same student teachers also felt that writing instruction did not have a positive influence on writing development (p. 36). This research points to the importance of providing student teachers with multiple opportunities to consider how their literacy histories might inform their expectations for literacy teaching and learning. For, if student teachers were to translate “fixed”
perceptions of literacy into the classroom unchallenged, they may unwittingly enact a literacy pedagogy that perpetuates systems of marginalization and exclusion.

In a longitudinal study conducted with twenty-eight literacy teacher educators (LTEs) in four countries (Canada, United States, England, Australia), Kosnik et al., (2016) reported that participating LTEs consciously encouraged the student teachers in their literacy courses to rethink literacy in broader terms. For instance, one of the LTEs in the study noted, he explicitly encouraged student teachers to “problematize” their initial assumptions about literacy. He challenged them to “think about literacy as being broader than traditional views about reading, writing, and speaking” (Kosnik et al., 2015, p. 144). Several of the LTEs in the study had student teachers complete literacy autobiographies as a vehicle to explore their relationship to literacy, schooling, teaching and learning.

One of the LTEs suggested having student teachers write literacy autobiographies provides an opportunity to “create and try on new discourses” (Kosnik et al., 2015, p. 144). He recounted the response from one of the student teachers in his literacy course, to illustrate how actively engaging with their literacy autobiographies could prompt student teachers to question the dominant language practices operating in a classroom context. He noted, “it was the first time in her educational career that she had been encouraged to take a positive view of her bilingualism or of her culture to be able to create a new discourse around language in the classroom” (Kosnik et al., 2015, p. 144). Critically engaging with their literacy autobiographies can provide student teachers with the opportunity to disrupt the notions of literacy they encountered throughout much of schooling, and acknowledge the broader literacy practices they participated in beyond the walls of the classroom (Ghiso et al., 2013; Kosnik et al., 2013; Rogers, 2013).
Research focused on the use of literacy autobiography in literacy teacher education calls upon teacher educators to take an active role in assisting student teachers to consciously engage with the complexities of literacy pedagogy (Brown, 1999; Le Fevre, 2011; Mathers, Benson, & Newton, 2007; Norman & Spencer, 2005). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) note that, an “important preconception that many [teacher] candidates hold about learning is that it is the simple and rather mechanistic ‘transfer of information’ from texts and teachers to students who acquire it through listening, reading and memorization” (p. 369, quotations used in original). Literacy teacher education should invite student teachers to engage with literacy pedagogy as an active process and consider the multiple literacies that can inform learning. For many student teachers this might entail embracing pedagogical practices they did not encounter in their own schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Williamson, 2014; Yandell, 2012). Student teachers’ literacy autobiographies can function as valuable “curriculum texts” to encourage professional reflection and facilitate productive dialogue in literacy methods courses (Le Fevre, 2011).

Relevant research consistently reported student teachers’ engagement with their literacy autobiographies, as part of a literacy methods course, motivated them to take a reflective stance and to actively consider how their literacy histories have shaped their perceptions of and attitudes toward literacy teaching (Brown, 1999; Edwards, 2009; Le Fevre, 2011; Mathers, Benson, & Newton, 2007). Edwards (2009) also suggests, the positioning of student teachers’ literacy autobiographies as a part of the literacy methods course “signals” to them that their lived experiences and knowledge “are legitimate and valued along with academic research and texts” (p. 54). These studies also suggest
providing student teachers with the opportunity to share their literacy autobiographies with their classmates exposes them to a diverse range of experiences; notably, experiences with literacy teaching and learning that may be quite different than their own. This can help facilitate the understanding that literacy teaching is enacted in relation to diverse groups of learners (Brown, 1999; Edwards, 2009; Le Fevre, 2011; Norman & Spencer, 2005).

**Important Components of Literacy Teacher Education**

Research on literacy teacher education has also endeavored to identify some of the key components of effective literacy teacher preparation (Beck & Kosnik, 2014; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Kosnik et al., 2013; Lacina & Collins Block, 2011; Lenski et al., 2013; Wolsey et al., 2013). Interestingly, much like the research on literacy autobiography discussed in the previous section, several studies have also emphasized the importance of literacy teacher educators being attuned to the connection between student teachers’ prior experiences with literacy and their initial understanding of literacy teaching and learning (Leland, 2013; Linek et al., 1999; O’Neil & Geoghegan, 2011; Penn-Edwards, 2011; Williamson, 2013).

A study by Leland (2013) utilized survey data from 106 student teachers, to examine the impact of a literacy methods course on elementary student teachers’ perceptions of emergent reading. Finding from the study revealed that participating student teachers “compared the information learned in the [literacy methods] course to their literacy histories,” (p. 69). However, student teachers’ schooled literacy histories may not correspond with the approach to literacy pedagogy encountered in their literacy
methods courses. Leland (2013) concluded that “teacher education programs must take the time to help student teachers analyze and evaluate their personal histories of teaching and learning,” in order to prepare them to meet “the demands of a twenty-first century classroom” (p. 69). While the study focused on student teachers’ experiences with reading specifically, rather than literacy overall, it suggests literacy teacher preparation should actively encourage student teachers to examine the influences that have shaped their understanding of literacy and expectations for literacy teaching.

Research focused on literacy teacher preparation has also suggested that literacy methods courses need to model literacy teaching strategies and provide explicit instruction on literacy program planning (Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Kosnik et al., 2013; Linek et al., 1999; Louden & Rohl, 2006; O’Neill & Geoghegan, 2011; White & Cranitch, 2010). A study by O’Neill & Geoghegan (2011) utilized survey data from 67 student teachers to examine their level of confidence to teach literacy. The findings indicated participating student teachers felt confident that they possessed the “necessary English language knowledge to be effective literacy teachers” however; they reportedly felt “least confident about how to actually teach literacy and the pedagogical skills involved” (p. 201). These studies suggests an important part of literacy teacher preparation is the explicit scaffolding of the pedagogical knowledge needed to facilitate literacy instruction and to develop a comprehensive literacy program.

Based on research examining how new teachers learn and enact disciplinary literacy practices, Williamson (2013) emphasizes the importance of providing student teachers with “explicit and participatory modeling in teaching methods” (p. 137). Williamson (2013) clarifies,
by explicit, I mean that it is not enough for teacher educators to model instructional practices without being transparent about their pedagogical thinking. Much about teaching is invisible to the novice eye, and explicit modeling allows educators to unpack the pedagogical decisions that they make in their planning and in the fleeting moments that characterize classroom interactions (p. 137).

While student teachers are often provided with an abundance of valuable theories, instructional practices, and literacy resources throughout their teacher education studies, it often remains unclear to them how these various components can fit together to develop a comprehensive literacy program, which meets the needs of their students (Beck & Kosnik, 2014).

In longitudinal research with twenty-two beginning literacy teachers, Kosnik & Beck (2008) reported, the development of long-range program plans proved to be a challenge even though “all of the [participants] had classes and assignments on lesson and unit planning, the approach used in their pre-service program did not help them fit the pieces together” (p. 125). The teachers participating in the study noted, during their first three years of teaching they found literacy program planning to be a daunting task. Kosnik & Beck (2009) reported “the new teachers did not feel well prepared to develop a working plan for the year: feasible, balanced, integrated, somewhat sequenced, and complete with structures and routines” (p. 22).

While teacher education programs often require student teachers to develop lesson plans and unit plans, Kosnik & Beck (2009) caution it is important for teacher educators to “recognize the limitations of lesson and unit planning assignments as a way of teaching program planning” (p. 36). Literacy teacher education should also explicitly address and
model the professional decision-making that goes into a teacher’s comprehensive literacy program planning (Kosnik & Beck, 2009). More specifically, the role of teachers in identifying their main teaching goals; deciding when to address particular topics throughout the year and how much time to devote to each topic; selecting corresponding resources, texts, and strategies; and forging links between subjects (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Kosnik et al., 2013; Louden & Rohl, 2006; White & Cranitch, 2010; Williamson, 2013).

Relevant research has also suggested an important component of literacy teacher preparation involves providing student teachers with opportunities to enact literacy teaching within actual classroom settings (Hammerness et al., 2005; Leland, 2013; Linek et al., 1999; Louden & Rohl, 2006). O’Neill & Geoghegan (2011) argue, “only when preservice teachers have the opportunity to see how children learn and progress in their literacy learning through authentic classroom practices will they fully appreciate” the complexity of literacy pedagogy (p. 202). Assuming the role of a teacher and understanding the complexities of this role is a challenging process. Practice teaching can offer student teachers the opportunity to actualize many components of a teacher’s work. For instance, they begin to develop a classroom presence, design learning tasks, facilitate group work, manage classroom dynamics, exercise skills for posing questions, and provide constructive feedback on students’ work (Hammerness et al., 2005). However, student teachers need ample opportunity, during practice teaching, to experience and to reflect upon the complexities of classroom teaching and learning.

Accordingly, Darling-Hammond (2006) emphasizes the importance of enactment to the process of learning to teach, as she astutely notes, “learning how to think and act in
ways that achieve one’s intentions is difficult, particularly if knowledge is embedded in the practice itself” (p. 37). The opportunity to enact literacy pedagogy with students in an actual classroom setting can help student teachers forge meaningful connections between theory and practice. Practice teaching experiences can provide student teachers with the opportunity to implement several of the literacy strategies modeled in their literacy courses and to modify instructional practices in accordance with the literacy needs of their students. The opportunity to apply what they have learned in their literacy courses, while negotiating the practical realities of the classroom, can deepen student teachers’ pedagogical understanding and evolving practice. Hammerness et al (2005) argue, “teacher educators need to make sure that [teacher] candidates have opportunities to practice and reflect on teaching” for “new teachers need support in interpreting their experiences and expanding their repertoires so they can continue to learn how to become effective” teachers (p. 375).

It is important to recognize, however, that the quality and nature of a student teacher’s practice teaching experience matters (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; O’Neill & Geoghegan, 2011). According to Darling-Hammond (2006), exemplary practice teaching experiences offer student teachers ample opportunity to observe and enact teaching, under the supervision of a skilled and supportive mentor teacher. The mentor/associate teacher should provide student teachers with frequent and constructive feedback to help improve their planning, instruction, and assessment of students. In literacy teacher education, supportive practice teaching experiences should offer student teachers opportunities to observe the literacy instruction of experienced mentor teachers, to work directly with children/youth on literacy instruction, and to
receive meaningful feedback about their literacy planning and teaching from knowledgeable mentor teachers. Placements in supportive practice teaching classrooms can help student teachers develop the knowledge and skills needed to effectively engage in literacy teaching and foster a sense of preparedness to teach literacy. Relevant literature on literacy teacher preparation suggests further longitudinal research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of student teachers’ experiences with literacy and literacy pedagogy, over the course of their teacher education studies (Lacina & Collins Block, 2011; Leland, 2013; Lenski et al., 2013; Louden & Rohl, 2006; O’Neill & Geoghegan, 2011; Wolsey et al., 2013).

**Multiliteracies and Literacy Teacher Education**

Increasingly, there have been persistent calls to integrate a multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) approach in literacy teacher education (Ajayi, 2011; Cervetti, Damico & Pearson, 2006; Luke, 2000; Luke & Carrington, 2002; Rowsell, Kosnik & Beck, 2008). This section of the chapter will highlight findings from research literature that has examined student teachers’ experiences with various dimensions of the New London Group’s (1996) multiliteracies theory and pedagogical framework during their literacy methods courses. The literacy methods courses examined in these studies emphasize particular dimensions of the multiliteracies framework put forth by the New London Group (1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) including: the design process and multimodality (McLean & Rowsell, 2013; Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012; Walsh & Durrant, 2013); the integration of technological tools into literacy education (Boche, 2014; Corkett &
Benevides, 2015; Hutchinson & Wang, 2012; Kist & Pytash, 2015; McVee et al., 2008; Smith & Dobson, 2011); and the four integrated components of the multiliteracies pedagogy framework (i.e., situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice) (Robertson & Hughes, 2010; Saudelli & Rowsell, 2013; Skerrett, 2011).

A number of studies reported that student teachers engagement with a multiliteracies approach to literacy education, in their literacy methods courses, extended their understanding of literacy (Ajayi, 2011; Boche, 2014; McVee et al., 2008; Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012; Sheridan-Thomas, 2007; Skerrett, 2011). For instance, Rosaen & Terpstra (2012) conducted a self-study over two semesters, to examine how student teachers’ understanding of literacy and knowledge of how to incorporate “new literacies pedagogies into K-6 teaching and learning,” evolved as they engaged with multiliteracies concepts through the use of a literacy methods course wiki. They noted that their literacy methods course positioned literacy as “multiple, social and situated” (Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012, p. 36). The authors also stated the use of the course wiki was meant to “have [students teachers] teach through technology, not just with it, [and] to emphasize the notion of design” (Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012, p. 38).

Data sources included the analysis of the written assignments student teachers (n=51) posted to the course wiki (e.g., lesson plans, written reflections). The findings indicated the student teachers’ engagement with a range of literacies (e.g., digital, visual) through the course content and the wiki platform helped to “expand their conceptions of literacy” (Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012, p. 46). The study suggested the student teachers use of the wiki platform, to access course resources and to complete assignments, allowed
them to “gain knowledge, skills, and understanding” of a particular technological tool and to consider the “affordances of that technology as a medium of communication” (p. 46). However, the study also reported “many teacher candidates were not able to fully integrate technology and new literacies into their [lesson] planning” (p. 46). They suggest that further research is needed to fully understand how student teachers connect “new insights about new literacies” to their teaching practice (Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012, p. 47).

In a similar vein, a study by Kist & Pytash (2015) utilized multiple data sources to examine student teachers’ perceptions of integrating the “new literacies” explored in their literacy methods courses into literacy teaching in high school English classrooms. The data sources included focus group interviews, survey responses, student teachers’ blog posts, and in-class reflections completed as part of their literacy methods courses. The findings from the study indicated the student teachers “struggled with the concept of using new literacies in the English classroom” (p. 154). The authors suggest, the student teachers “seemed to construct new literacies as add-ons for the classroom not something to be integrated into reading and writing” in meaningful ways (Kist & Pytash, 2015, p. 154).

Correspondingly, several studies reported that student teachers expressed concern about how to translate the multiliteracies approach presented in their literacy methods courses to their literacy instruction within a classroom context (Ajayi, 2011; Boche, 2014; McVee, Bailey & Shanahan, 2008; Sheridan-Thomas, 2007; Skerrett, 2011). A study by Sheridan-Thomas (2007) analyzed 64 student teachers’ written assignments (e.g., blackboard discussion forums, formal paper, reflective learning log entry) from a
content area literacy course, to determine what the student teachers learned about multiliteracies and how they applied the concepts to their content area lesson planning. The study reported the student teachers came to see literacy as “encompassing more than the ways reading and writing have traditionally been used in schools” (p. 131). In some cases, the student teachers’ “definition” of literacy continued to broaden throughout their time in the literacy course “to include not only a range of out-of-school literacies and digital literacies but also varied learning styles and diverse cultural backgrounds” (p. 132). However, the findings also indicated the student teachers “had difficulty writing explicitly about how to use multiliteracies” concepts in their lesson planning. Sheridan-Thomas (2007) reported that, the analysis of the “mini-unit lesson plans” the student teachers developed suggested they “did not necessarily know when they were using [the] multiliteracies” framework (p. 138).

A potential limitation of this study and several of the studies reported in the research literature, is that the data analysis focused solely on student teachers’ written assignments for a particular literacy methods course, seemingly excluding student teachers’ direct experiences with literacy teaching in classroom contexts (e.g., practice teaching). The use of multiple data sources and a longitudinal research approach to examine student teachers’ experiences with literacy teaching and learning over the course of their teacher education studies could strengthen such research endeavors. For instance, the use of qualitative interviews, conducted with student teachers throughout their teacher education studies, can facilitate the deep examination of student teachers’ perspectives on how their literacy learning, practice teaching experiences, and personal literacy practices have informed their evolving understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy.
Research focused on examining student teachers’ experiences with multiliteracies concepts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996) in their literacy methods courses does point to a question worthy of further consideration; namely, in what ways can teacher educators work with student teachers to explore how their past and current experiences with literacy might inform their construction of an approach to literacy teaching and learning. Ajayi (2011) encourages literacy teacher educators to consider the skills and perspectives that student teachers bring to their teacher education studies and how these experiences inform their understanding of literacy pedagogy.

The study (Ajayi, 2011) utilized a survey tool, containing both quantitative and qualitative questions, to examine how student teachers’ (n=48) literacy course experiences informed their knowledge of multiliteracies and their sense of preparedness to teach from a multiliteracies perspective. The findings indicated the literacy courses heightened students teachers’ awareness of the “the impact of new communication technologies on literacy forms, practices, knowledge and literacy instruction” (p. 18). The study noted that the student teachers drew on their life experience to inform their understanding of how communication technologies could be used to facilitate literacy learning. However, the student teachers also expressed concern regarding the “adequacy” of their literacy courses to prepare them “to teach new literacies” (Ajayi, 2011, p. 20). Ajayi (2011) argues that literacy teacher educators must explicitly prepare student teachers to negotiate a “shifting literacies landscape” that is increasingly shaped by “the new blends of knowledge, skills and identities associated with multimodality [and] multiliteracies” (p. 24).
In addition, relevant research literature also suggests literacy teacher education must explicitly model multiliteracies instruction in an effort to help student teachers make deliberate connections between theoretical concepts and practical classroom applications (Boche, 2014; Hutchinson & Wang, 2012; McLean & Rowsell, 2013; Robertson & Hughes, 2010; Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012; Skerrett, 2011; Smith & Dobson, 2011). Boche (2014) argues, while “teacher education programs continue to expand the notion of text in multiple ways” what student teachers “desire are practical applications of multiliteracies they can put to use immediately in the classroom” (p. 129). Constructing a pedagogy of literacy teacher education that achieves that balance is not a simple task. Further research is needed to more fully understand how student teachers “make sense of [their] shifting views of literacy” and put their expanding understanding of literacy pedagogy into practice within the classroom (Boche, 2014, p. 130).

The qualitative research study I have undertaken seeks to contribute to the understanding of how student teachers construct conceptions of literacy and enact literacy pedagogy throughout their teacher education studies. This longitudinal research utilized three data sources (i.e., questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, document analysis) to capture both the breath and depth of student teachers’ perspectives on and experiences with literacy teaching and learning over the course of a two-year teacher education program. The knowledge gained through this study seeks to contribute to our theoretical and practical understanding of literacy teacher education in several important ways.

First, the research invites us to consider what notions of literacy and literacy teaching are presented to student teachers throughout their teacher education studies. The research offers a view into the complex process of learning to teach literacy. The
examination of this process can assist our understanding of how student teachers construct a knowledge of literacy and enact literacy pedagogy. Furthermore, the study deepens our understanding of the role teacher education plays in the lives of beginning teachers; in particular, the ways in which teacher education intersects with student teachers’ literacy histories (e.g., school, home) and their personal literacy practices. When student teachers have the opportunity to become aware of what is influencing their professional practice they can be more intentional when making teaching decisions. Lastly, the study helps us identify the challenges student teachers face in literacy teaching amidst a shifting landscape of communication, as well as the supports they need to facilitate their development as teachers. Teacher education programs that offer student teachers ways to rethink literacy may facilitate the implementation of a multifaceted approach to literacy pedagogy, which would in turn assist the children and youth they teach to navigate and critically engage with contemporary culture.

This chapter outlined the literacy theory and relevant research on literacy teacher education that informs my dissertation research. The next chapter will outline the qualitative research design utilized to conduct my research study. Details will be provided on the research methodology, the context of the study, the recruitment of participants, the methods of data collection and data analysis.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This qualitative study examined how eight junior-intermediate student teachers constructed conceptions of literacy and enacted literacy pedagogy as they entered into conversation with the broader field of literacy, over the course of a two-year teacher education program. Learning to teach is a complex process of negotiation, for “teaching concerns coming to terms with one’s intentions and values, as well as one’s views of knowing, being, and acting in a setting characterized by contradictory realities, dependency and struggle” (Britzman, 1995, p. 74). This study endeavors to contribute to the understanding of the role literacy teacher education plays in the lives of beginning teachers; in particular, the points of intersection between student teachers’ literacy histories, their experiences with a literacy teacher education program, and their evolving conceptions of literacy.

This longitudinal study utilized a qualitative research design; more specifically, a sample of student teachers (n=8) was studied in depth, using different phases of data collection, and the themes that emerged as the study progressed were grounded in the data (Creswell, 2003; Maxwell, 2005). A qualitative design was employed as this research approach places emphasis on understanding the intricacies of participants’ experiences, the social contexts in which these experiences are embedded, and the meaning participants’ assign to their lived experience (Merriam, 2002; Punch 2009). As Miles and Huberman (1994) point out,
qualitative data with their emphasis on people’s lived experiences are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on events, processes, and structures of their lives: their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions and connecting these meanings to the social world around them (p. 10, italics in original).

Qualitative inquiry yields a “richly descriptive” interpretative analysis, which typically includes the “voices of participants,” to convey the underlying mechanisms and complexities of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2003). Accordingly, a qualitative research approach was an appropriate choice for this study for it facilitated an intensive examination of the multifaceted process of learning to teach literacy, in relation to particular points in time and specific contexts (Maxwell 2005; Punch 2009).

More specifically, this study employed a grounded theory approach to examine how a group of J/I student teachers negotiated the complex process of learning to teach literacy, over the course of their teacher education studies. Strauss & Corbin (1994) describe grounded theory as “a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (p. 273 italics in original). In a grounded theory approach conceptual patterns in the data are progressively identified and systematically compared to inductively generate a theory or elaborate upon existing theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). The fluid, yet systematic, nature of this approach is particularly useful for addressing “at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or interaction about a substantive topic” because the generation of theory grounded in the data is “sensitive to individuals in a setting and may represent the complexities actually found in the process” (Creswell, 2005, p. 396). A
grounded theory approach can assist a researcher to uncover the intricacies of a process, specify the central conditions and interactions influencing the process, and discover associated relationships and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

While grounded theory offers a fluid and evolving research approach there are certain principles that are necessarily present. First, data collection is guided by the principle of theoretical sampling a process whereby the researcher simultaneously and sequentially collects and analyzes data in order to decide what data to collect next, with the aim to generate theory as it emerges (Glazer & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Second, the constant comparison method of analysis is used to identify relationships and patterns in the data. Constant comparison is an inductive method of data analysis which involves “generating and connecting categories by comparing incidents in the data, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories” to gain new insights (Creswell, 2005, p. 406). The researcher continues this cyclical process of concurrent data collection and analysis until categories are fully developed or saturated. Saturation in grounded theory research is achieved when the researcher determines that new data are not providing any substantial insights to category development but are confirming what has been found and the relationships between categories are well established (Creswell, 2005; Glazer & Strauss, 1967; Punch, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Study Context

The student teachers who participated in this study were enrolled in a two-year post baccalaureate teacher education program, at a research-focused university, located in an
urban centre in Ontario, Canada. More specifically, the student teachers were enrolled in the Junior-Intermediate (J/I) division/cohort of the program, where the focus is on learning to become teachers of students in grades four through ten. The structure of the teacher education program requires student teachers to complete courses in each of the content areas outlined in the provincial curriculum (i.e., literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, arts). Student teachers also complete a general teaching methods course and several foundations courses focused on the history of education, special education, educational psychology, anti-oppression education, and legal issues in education. In addition, the student teachers in the J/I cohort also complete a course in their area of subject specialization/teachable area (e.g., mathematics, English, history, science, health and physical education).

As part of the program requirements, student teachers also complete four practice teaching placements in an elementary, middle, or secondary partner school. Each of the four practice teaching placements is four to five weeks in length. The student teachers complete two practice teaching placements in the first year of the program and two practice teaching placements in the second year of the program. For each of the placements student teachers are assigned a mentor/supervising teacher (i.e. associate teacher) who is to provide regular support and feedback. The practice teaching placements are meant to provide student teachers with a range of practical classroom experiences including: observing the teaching of mentor/associate teachers, preparing lessons, instructing the whole class, working with pupils one-on-one and in small groups, developing classroom management skills, assessing the progress of pupils, and providing constructive feedback. The practice teaching placements are also meant to provide
student teachers with the opportunity to develop a range of skills (e.g., attending to classroom management, facilitating classroom routines), and an understanding of how schools “work” from the perspective of a teacher. In each practice teaching placement the supervising/mentor teacher completes a formative and summative assessment of the student teacher’s performance.

Since this study examined J/I student teachers’ experiences with literacy teaching and learning during their teacher education studies information pertaining to the literacy methods courses they completed as part of their program is described herein. In their first year of the teacher education program the student teachers completed a full-year 36-hour literacy methods course (12 classes of three hours each). In the second year of their studies, they completed a half-year 18-hour literacy methods course (6 courses of three hours each). The first year literacy course and the second year literacy course were taught by two different teacher educators; that is, the first year literacy course was taught by Abby\(^1\) and the second year literacy course was taught by Debra. Both Abby and Debra are experienced educators having worked for many years as classroom teachers, administrators, and teacher educators. The two literacy courses were quite distinct, yet complimentary. During the time of this study, I worked as a Teaching Assistant for the first year literacy course, but did not have any direct involvement with the second year literacy course.

The literacy methods courses focused on the following key concepts and topics: definitions of literacy, multiliteracies, critical literacy, the cueing systems, reading and writing in the junior grades, comprehension, poetry instruction, children’s/adolescent

\(^1\) Pseudonyms used for the teacher educators.
literature, non-fiction, media literacy, and issues in literacy pedagogy (e.g., reluctant readers, English language learners (ELL), home-school connection). A variety of pedagogical strategies and resources were utilized in the literacy courses to explore these topics including: formal instruction; class discussions on relevant topics (e.g., critical literacy, out-of-school literacies); related course readings (e.g., adolescent literacies, content area literacies); collaborative learning activities (e.g., student teachers shared how they used digital technologies as pedagogical tools during practice teaching); examining videos of middle school classrooms to identify the various spaces of literacy; and reading a variety of children’s/adolescent literature.

Student teachers also completed several core assignments as part of the literacy courses. In the first year literacy course they completed four main assignments: designing and sharing a multimodal All About Me text, writing a literacy autobiography, responding to a professional text on reading, and responding to a professional text on writing. In the second year literacy course the student teachers completed two main assignments: a book talk presented to a small group in the class, and a written review and analysis of literature related to a current issue in literacy pedagogy (e.g., the use of graphic novels to teach reading/writing).

Participants

As noted, the participants in this study were student teachers enrolled in the junior-intermediate (J/I) cohort of a two-year post baccalaureate teacher education program in a faculty of education, located in a large urban centre in Ontario, Canada. The term junior-
intermediate student teacher refers to individuals who are learning to become teachers of students in grades four through ten. The following steps were taken to invite the J/I student teachers to participate in this study. First, Abby the teacher educator instructing the J/I student teachers in the first year literacy course, granted me permission to make a brief presentation about the study to the class and to invite the student teachers to participate in study. An open invitation was given to the entire J/I student teacher cohort (n=22). The student teachers were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. It was also communicated to the student teachers that participation or non-participation in the research would not affect their grades or status in the teacher education program.

All the student teachers in the J/I literacy course (n=22) agreed to participate in the first phase of the study, which involved the completion of two questionnaires. The questionnaires were used to gain initial insight into the J/I student teachers’ conceptions of literacy, their literacy practices, and their experiences with literacy pedagogy. From the initial questionnaire data a purposive sample of J/I student teachers was identified to participate in the interview phase of the research. Further information regarding the design and administration of the questionnaires and the interviews is provided in the section below entitled Data Collection.

A purposive sample of eight J/I student teachers was recruited to participate in four stages of semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of their conceptions of literacy and experiences with literacy teaching, over the course of their teacher education studies. A concerted effort was made to select a purposive sample that was representative of the J/I student teacher cohort (e.g., gender, age, teachable subject
qualification distribution). As most of the student teachers in the J/I cohort were female, this skewed the sample of student teachers in terms of gender (n=8; 6-females, 2-males).

Table 3 provides an overview of the purposive sample.

Table 3: Participant information for the purposive sample (n=8) of J/I student teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Teachable Subject</th>
<th>Highest Degree Completed</th>
<th>Degree Major(s)</th>
<th>No. of years since degree completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>Visual Art</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Fine Arts &amp; Hebrew</td>
<td>6-10 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Sociology &amp; Economics</td>
<td>1-5 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Art History &amp; English</td>
<td>1-5 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lukas</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>B.Sc</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>less than 1 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynne</td>
<td>Physical Ed</td>
<td>B.Com</td>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>1-5 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>B.Sc</td>
<td>Zoology &amp; English</td>
<td>less than 1 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>BPHE</td>
<td>Physical Ed &amp; Health</td>
<td>1-5 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Second Language Ed &amp; Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>1-5 yrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Pseudonyms used for all participants

This research was subjected to ethical review, which was approved by the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board (Ref: 26867). Participants were asked to sign and submit a letter of informed consent, in which issues of confidentiality and anonymity were outlined (Appendix A). To protect participants’ identities pseudonyms were used when referring to individuals, groups or institutions in the study. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and without consequence.
Data Collection

This longitudinal study involved three phases of data collection with the J/I student teachers to capture both the breath and depth of their experiences with literacy teaching and learning. Qualitative data collection methods included: questionnaires administered to the entire J/I student teacher cohort (n=22); semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of J/I student teachers (n=8; 6-females, 2-males), and a document analysis of relevant materials (e.g., syllabi, literacy autobiography assignment). This qualitative approach to data collection produced a comprehensive picture of the opportunities, challenges, and supports that informed participating student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and their construction of a literacy teaching practice.

Questionnaires

All the J/I student teachers in the literacy methods course (n=22) voluntarily completed two questionnaires during the first year of the program (See Appendix B and C). The questionnaires were used to gain an initial understanding of the range of literacy practices J/I student teachers routinely engaged with, their prior school literacy experiences, their conceptions of literacy, and their experiences with literacy teaching and learning. From the initial questionnaire data a purposive sample of eight J/I student teachers was identified to participate in four-stages of semi-structured interviews.

The teacher educator instructing the J/I cohort in the first year literacy methods course provided time at the end of class for the student teachers to complete each of the questionnaires. The first questionnaire was administered twelve weeks into the fall term,
after the first practice teaching placement. The second questionnaire was administered at
the end of the winter term, after the second practice teaching placement and at the
completion of the course. The questionnaires contained both Likert scale measures and
open-ended questions. The five-point Likert scale questions ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5
(a great deal). Close attention was given to the wording of the questions in an effort to
achieve clarity and to minimize researcher bias.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Qualitative interviewing offers a point of entry to explore how participants’
experience dimensions of their social worlds and the meaning they assign to these
experiences. Charmaz (2001) notes, “qualitative interviewing provides an open-ended, in-
depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial
experience, often combined with considerable insight” (p. 676). In this study, semi-
structured interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the student
teachers’ evolving conceptions of literacy, their personal literacy practices, their
experiences in the literacy courses and in the practice teaching placements, and their
understanding of their role as teachers of literacy. A semi-structured interview format
was used to develop broad categories for investigation and to generate questions to
explore each category in-depth (Merriam, 2008; Punch, 2009). Probe questions were used
during the interviews to extend issues and ideas raised by the participants.

The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews is particularly useful when
seeking to gain insight into the complexity of a participant’s lived experience; for, as
interviewees weave their narratives they mobilize individual and collective experiences,
contextual elements, relational processes, and influential socio-cultural mechanisms to construct and communicate meaning (Merriam, 2008; Mishler, 1986). In addition, the flexible and emergent nature of the semi-structured interview format compliments a grounded theory approach, for the themes that emerge during an interview can be used to direct the focus of subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In this study, four semi-structured interviews were conducted with the purposive sample (n=8) of student teachers (32 interviews) over their two-years of teacher education studies. The interviews were conducted after the student teachers had completed each of the four practice teaching placements. In year one of the study, the first interview was conducted in the fall term (December) and the second interview was conducted at the end of the winter term (April). In year two of the study, the student teachers were enrolled in the half-year literacy methods course (18-hour literacy course) in the winter term. Accordingly, the third interview was conducted early in the winter term (January) so they could share their initial thoughts on the course. The fourth interview was conducted at the end of the academic year (April).

The interview questions were open-ended with probe questions added when needed. The design of the initial interview protocol was guided by the overall research questions and the data derived from the first questionnaire. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest initial research questions serve as “a directive” that “gets the researcher started and helps him or her stay focused throughout the research project” (p. 90). The first interview protocol (Appendix D) contained questions organized into six broad categories: 1) literacy history 2) literacy course experience 3) first practice teaching placement
experience 4) literacy teacher identity 5) expectations of pupils’ literacy needs and 6) conceptions of literacy.

In subsequent interview protocols additional questions and categories were included to clarify and expand upon relevant themes that emerged from the data analysis process. For example, additional categories were developed (e.g., *personal literacy practices*) (Appendix E) and interview questions were added to the category *practice teaching experience* (e.g., a question regarding the use of technology during practice teaching) (Appendix F). This inductive process provided the opportunity to deeply explore student teachers’ evolving conceptions of literacy and their enactment of literacy pedagogy over the course of their teacher education studies. Although the interview data included only those student teachers who comprised the purposeful sample (n=8) their experiences offer productive insights into the complex process of constructing an approach to literacy teaching.

Each interview was conducted face-to-face at a time convenient for the student teachers. All of the interviews (32 interviews) were conducted by the researcher and audio-recorded using a digital recorder for future transcription. The length of each interview was approximately 60-90 minutes. After each interview, participants were provided with the opportunity to ask questions about the research. Throughout the interview process I wrote analytic memos to record impressions, analyze emerging ideas, and define issues to be explored in the subsequent interviews. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. In an effort to accurately represent participants’ responses a conscious effort was made to transcribe long pauses, filler words (uhs, ums), repetitions, laughter,
emphasis markers, and changes in the pitch of a participant’s speech (de Fina et al., 2006; Gee, 1991).

**Documents**

In conjunctions with the questionnaires and interviews, relevant documents were also collected, such as the syllabi from the literacy methods courses and specific assignments (e.g., literacy autobiography). The syllabi provided insight into the structure and content of each literacy course. More specifically, the syllabi provided information regarding the topics prioritized in each course, course readings, assignments, grading schemes, instructional strategies, and projected learning outcomes. In addition, the purposeful sample of student teachers granted the researcher access to relevant course assignments. For example, all eight of the student teachers shared copies of their written literacy autobiographies, an assignment they had completed for the first-year literacy course. Access to the student teachers’ literacy autobiographies provided rich insight into their literacy histories (e.g., school, home, community), their attitudes toward literacy teaching and learning, and their thoughts on how these experiences influenced their conceptions of literacy.
Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistical Data Editors 22 was used for statistical analysis. Means, standard deviations and t-tests were conducted on the questionnaire data. The questionnaire data were used to gain an initial and broad understanding of the J/I student teacher cohorts’ (n=22) prior school literacy experiences, their conceptions of literacy, their experiences with literacy teaching and learning, and the range of literacy practices they routinely engaged with. From the initial questionnaire data a purposive sample of eight J/I student teachers was identified to participate in four-stages of semi-structured interviews.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach whereby analytic coding strategies and the principle of constant comparison analysis were applied to identify categories and themes until theoretical saturation occurred (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Identified commonalities and marked differences were used to generate, modify, and establish themes that emerged as the study progressed. The analysis proceeded in several stages. The qualitative data analyzed included open-ended questionnaire responses, semi-structured interview responses, and relevant documents (e.g., student teacher literacy autobiography assignments).
**Coding Process**

Throughout the coding process analytic memos were written to record impressions, pose questions to the data, elaborate on ideas about data, note emerging themes, and direct further areas of inquiry (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the open coding stage of analysis the data was “fractured” or broken apart into analytic segments to identify conceptual codes and categories (Strauss, 1987, p. 29). This stage of analysis involved a close and detailed reading of the data (e.g., transcripts), segmenting the data into conceptually related pieces, and applying labels/codes to represent the concepts identified. Both descriptive codes (e.g., negative image of self as reader/writer) and in vivo codes, that is, codes that captured participants’ words (e.g., teaching literacy officially) were applied to the segmented pieces of data. The opening coding process was guided by two main procedures: the posing of questions to the data (e.g., What is happening in the data? What is this piece of data an example of?), and the constant comparison of coded data to note marked similarities and differences in order to generate conceptually meaningful categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

During the axial coding stage of analysis “data are put back together in a new way after open coding, by making connection between categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). At this stage of analysis the codes and categories generated through open coding were examined to identify interrelationships between and within the data. The properties and dimensions of codes and categories were examined to identify patterns and connections (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As connections were identified the codes were grouped to form the main conceptual categories that cut across the data. As with open coding, the procedures of posing questions to the data, and the constant comparison
methods of analysis were used. However, during the axial stage of analysis these procedures were increasingly focused on relating substantive categories to make conceptual connections (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For example, a connection was identified between the codes student teachers’ *school literacy history, out-of-school literacy history* (e.g., *home, peer*), and *expectations for the literacy course*. These codes, along with other relevant codes, were grouped under the conceptual category *Influence of Literacy History*. The process of axial coding continued until theoretical saturation was reached, that is, no new codes were identified, and the categories were fully developed and integrated (Creswell, 2005; Punch 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

During the *selective coding* stage of analysis the main categories were integrated around a core category, and the categories were further refined to advance the conceptual understanding of the process under study. The selection of the core category was “based on several factors, such as its relationship to other categories, its frequency of occurrence, its saturation, and its clear implications for the development of theory” (Creswell, 2005, p. 407). During the axial and selective coding stages of analysis tables and diagrams were created to develop, advance, and depict relationships between and within categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This inductive process of analysis advanced my understanding of the student teachers’ shifting conceptions of literacy; in particular the relationship between student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy, their literacy histories, their experiences in teacher education, and their evolving construction of a multifaceted approach to literacy teaching. See Table 3.1 for an example of some of the grounded codes generated, and the grouping of codes into one of the identified categories.
Table 3.1: An example of grounded codes and the grouping of codes to develop a conceptual category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Stages</th>
<th>Example of grounded codes &amp; a category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Coding</td>
<td>• schooled literacy history – positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• schooled literacy history – negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• home literacy practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• peer literacy practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• positive image of self as reader/writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• negative image of self as reader/writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• turning point literacy learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expectations for the literacy course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• initial conception of literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axial Coding</td>
<td>Influence of Literacy History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• schooled literacy history – positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• schooled literacy history – negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• home literacy practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• peer literacy practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• image of self as reader/writer – positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• image of self as reader/writer – negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• applying literacy history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• turning point literacy learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expectations for the literacy course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expectations for the literacy teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• initial conception of literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective Coding</td>
<td>Main Category: student teachers’ shifting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conceptions of literacy &amp; literacy pedagogy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations of the Study

There are certain limitations to this study. For instance, the size of purposeful sample of eight student teachers is rather small, which limits the ability to generalize the findings to a wider a population of student teachers. A further potential limitation of this research is the participating student teachers were drawn from one teacher education program. In addition, this research does not include observational data from the student teachers’ practice teaching placement experiences. While, the student teachers did provide rich
descriptions and insightful perspectives on their practice teaching experiences in each of
the four interviews, the opportunity to observe their practice teaching placements may
have added an additional dimension to the data analysis. It would have been ideal to
observe the student teachers in their practice teaching classrooms but this was not
feasible.

**Trustworthiness of the Data**

In qualitative research the concept of validity is often used to refer to the trustworthiness
or “credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation or interpretation” (Maxwell,
2005, p. 106). Several of the “validation strategies” outlined in the qualitative research
literature were employed in an effort to enhance the trustworthiness of my research
(Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2005). These strategies included triangulating different data
sources, collecting rich data through intensive interviewing, and acknowledging
researcher bias.

The triangulation of data sources refers to the use of different data collection
sources to examine the process under study. Triangulating the data helps the researcher
gain “a broader and more secure understanding of the issues” under investigation
(Maxwell, 2005, p. 95). In this study, the triangulation of data sources involved
administrating questionnaires, conducting four phases of interviews, and gathering
relevant documents (e.g., syllabi, assignments). The analysis of these different data
sources provided the opportunity to both capture a breath and depth of participants’
perspectives and to corroborate findings (Creswell, 2013, Maxwell, 2005).
The longitudinal design of the study, the conducting of intensive interviews, and the verbatim transcription of the interviews facilitated the collection of “rich data.” Rich data refers to data that are detailed enough to provide a revealing and comprehensive picture of the phenomena under study (Maxwell, 2005, p. 110). Creswell (2013) also suggests, “rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding the transferability” of the research (p. 252). In this study, the collection of rich data and the inclusion of participants’ voices in the presentation of the findings helped the conclusions formulated to remain grounded in the data.

Lastly, Michelle Fine (1994) highlights the complexity of navigating the research process as she calls upon researchers to consider “how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations” (p. 72). It is important to acknowledge that my own conceptions of literacy and experiences with literacy teaching informed my approach to the study and my interpretations of the data. I was working as a teaching assistant in the first year literacy methods course during the time this study was being conducted. My position afforded me several benefits. For instance, I had an intimate understanding of the structure of the teacher education program, and a deep knowledge of the content and the pedagogical strategies emphasized in the literacy courses. My position also allowed me to develop a rapport with the student teachers. In one sense, my position as a teaching assistant and a doctoral candidate served to legitimize my research interest, while my position as a fellow student helped establish the awareness of a common experience between the student teachers and myself. The occupying of these multiple positions
helped facilitate the navigation of the invisible, yet always present, and often restrictive boundaries of the participant-researcher dynamic (Mishler, 1986; Peshkin, 2001).

However, I also recognize that my multiple positions also posed challenges for the research. For example, my position as a teaching assistant in the program may have influenced the student teachers’ willingness to participate in the research, and the participants’ thoughts about the responses I desired. Peshkin (2001) astutely notes, “one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed,” and as such researchers must be mindful of their subjectivity throughout the research process (p. 455). Several steps were taken to try to address these potential challenges. The student teachers were made aware that participation in the study was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. It was also communicated to the student teachers that participation or non-participation in the research would not affect their grades or status in the teacher education program. The student teachers were informed that I would not be grading their assignments in the literacy course. Abby, the teacher educator I was working with in the first year literacy methods course, had agreed to take on all of the grading responsibilities during the time the study was conducted. I had no input into the student teachers’ final grades.

In addition, interviews were conducted in a “neutral” location such as a seminar room rather than my office. At the beginning of each interview the purpose of the research was explained to participants, with particular attention paid to reiterating the goal of understanding student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and their experiences with literacy pedagogy. Participants were also reminded that their responses were confidential and would not be revealed to their instructors in the program. Throughout the study ample opportunity was provided for participants to ask question about the research and
receive any clarification. Lastly, the writing of analytic memos throughout the research process allowed me to continuously reflect on how my positionality influenced my interpretation of the data.

**Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the qualitative research methodology utilized in the design of this study. The chapter provided information regarding the study context and the selection of participants. Details were provided on the three phases of data collection and the data analysis process, specifically the use a grounded theory approach. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the limitations of the study and the “validation strategies” employed in an effort to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

The data chapters that follow will present key findings from the study. Chapter Four will discuss the ways in which student teachers’ literacy histories informed their initial conceptions of literacy and their expectations for literacy teaching as they began their teacher education studies. Chapter Five will examine student teachers’ shifting conceptions of literacy and evolving understanding literacy pedagogy at the junior-intermediate grade level. Chapter Six will discuss the ways in which student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy became more nuanced as they entered into conversation with a broader field of literacy (e.g. multiliteracies). The final data chapter, Chapter Seven will explore student teachers’ experiences with literacy teaching during their practice teaching placements. The chapter will highlight both the opportunities and challenges student teachers negotiated as they constructed and enacted an approach to literacy teaching during practice teaching.
CHAPTER 4: STUDENT TEACHERS’ LITERACY HISTORIES & INITIAL CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY

“My past has shaped the way I view literacy, however I can confidently say that my view of literacy is constantly evolving.”

Sue (literacy autobiography)

“I initially thought that my past experiences would not influence the way I would teach literacy. It definitely will.”

John (survey data T1)

This research examined how a group of student teachers constructed conceptions of literacy and how they began to develop an approach to a literacy teaching, over their two-years of teacher education studies. The process of learning to teach entails a complex negotiation of the “tensions between being and becoming a teacher as student teachers drawn from their past and present in a process of coming to know” (Britzman, 2003, p. 36). This dissertation research is guided by a central premise: student teachers come to teacher education with a rich array of literacy experiences gained both inside and outside of school contexts (Edwards, 2009; Gee, 2012; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Le Fvre, 2011; Leland, 2013; Norman & Spencer, 2005; O’Neil & Geoghegan, 2011; Penn-Edwards, 2011; Street, 1984).

Student teachers enter teacher education with their own literacy autobiographies, however, as reflected in the statements from Sue and John that opened this chapter, they often were not fully aware of how their literacy histories informed their conceptions of literacy and “legitimate” literacy practices. Indeed, in the case of literacy pedagogy a
dissonance seemed to arise between the prior schooling experiences of student teachers, their on-going literacy practices, and what they recognized as relevant literacies. The findings presented in this chapter suggest participating student teachers’ previous schooled literacy experiences were often delivered through an “autonomous model of literacy,” which advanced a decontextualized notion of literacy that placed emphasis on the structural mechanisms of language acquisition, and largely neglected the array of literacies they used in daily lives (Street, 2005, 2003, 1984). While the student teachers often engaged with a wide range of resources and networks of communication in their out-of-school interactions (e.g., home, community, peer) their initial conceptions of literacy were largely grounded in the approach to literacy they encountered in their prior schooling.

This chapter will delve into the complex literacy histories student teachers bring with them to their teacher education studies. The analysis is guided by my first research question: What are student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy and relevant literacy practices? In an attempt to address this research question the chapter examines the range of literacy practices student teachers engaged with during their childhood and adolescence, the types of literacies they used in various social contexts (e.g., school, home, community, peer networks), and the meanings they assigned to these practices.

The chapter is organized into five main sections. Section One focuses on student teachers’ schooled literacy histories, including both the experiences they identified as positive and as negative. In Section Two the focus is on their out-of-school literacy experiences (e.g., home, community, peer). The Third Section examines how student teachers’ literacy histories are implicated in the process of constructing identities as
readers and writers. Section Four will consider student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy. Lastly, Section Five will explore their expectations for literacy component of their teacher education program.

It should also be noted that the chapter divisions outlined above are not meant to imply static or isolated categories. On the contrary, within the context of this research student teachers’ literacy biographies are conceptualized as a active space of engagement wherein the past, present, and imagined futures are often placed in dynamic tension as the student teachers strive to constitute their meaning.

**Schooled Literacy Histories**

The survey data allowed aspects of student teachers’ schooled literacy experiences to be explored from a broad perspective. The survey sample (n=22) comprised of the entire junior-intermediate (J/I) student teacher cohort was asked to provide information regarding their previous school literacy experiences. Table 4 reports the mean scores and standard deviations for participants’ self-reported level of enjoyment of school literacy at various grade levels/divisions. The items were scored on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal). On average, the J/I student teachers seemed to indicate they most enjoyed their primary school (grades K-3) literacy experience \( (M = 3.85, SD = 1.09) \) and least enjoyed their high school (grades 9-12) literacy experience \( (M =3.05, SD =1.28) \).
Table 4: Mean enjoyment ratings of school literacy experience at specified grade divisions/levels Fall term year-one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Grade/Division</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min. Scale</th>
<th>Max. Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student teachers’ prior school literacy experiences were explored in greater depth through the analysis of the interview data, and the literacy autobiographies they completed as part of the literacy methods course in the first year of their teacher education studies. Although the interview data included only those student teachers who comprised the purposive sample (N=8) their responses offer valuable insight into how students teachers’ schooled literacy histories inform their initial conceptions of literacy in complex and varied ways.

It is important to consider how the authoritative structures entrenched within school spaces often function to delineate the material and symbolic resources that students are expected to masterfully negotiate in order to be deemed proficient readers and writers. Indeed, within a school context the value assigned to certain material and symbolic resources, points to how culturally negotiated meanings of literacy enable sites of inclusion and exclusion, thereby demarcating the boundaries through which students come to be recognized as “literate”. In other words, students who mobilize and embody the literacy practices privileged within the domain of the classroom often become recognized as “successful” readers and writers. It is within such relational encounters of recognition and of exclusion that students come to distinguish what counts as relevant literacy practices and legitimate knowledge.
In an effort to understand student teachers’ schooled literacy histories, the first research interview asked the student teachers in the purposive sample (n=8) to reflect upon and discuss both negative and positive schooled literacy experiences. The grade level and the type of literacy experience selected for discussion was left to the discretion of each student teacher. Each of the sections that follow will present a select number of student teacher interview responses (i.e., direct quotes from the interview phase); however, it is important to note these findings are representative of key themes and recurrent patterns identified in the data as a whole.

**Past Negative School Literacy Experiences**

**Framing Literacy As An Isolated Skill**

“She [the teacher] was very much obsessed with conventions.” Zoe

All the student teachers in the purposive sample (n=8) recounted negative school literacy experiences, which seemed to be connected to literacy instruction that was delivered through an autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984). This approach to literacy teaching emphasized the mastery of a narrow set of linguistic conventions, isolated skills, and prescriptive rules for reading and writing. This restricted approach often focused on form rather than meaning, and in so doing presented language and literacy as detached from context, use, and social purpose (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012).

Student teacher Robert’s early home literacy experiences and relationship with reading were very positive. He noted “that having always had books read to me by my
parents, I learned to read and love books early on.” However, once he entered school his relationship to reading shifted quite drastically. Robert provided a succinct recollection of a negative literacy experience during the early years of school:

Grade one and two, maybe even three, we had to do a lot of work out of readers, and we’d all sit in a circle, and we’d get assigned a story to read. I was a fast reader, so I’d read through the story, and it’d be done, and for the next twenty minutes to half an hour I’d have nothing to do. So I starting reading through the rest of the reader, and I was told you’re not supposed to do that, you’re reading ahead, then you’re going to have nothing to do for the rest of the year. So that was boring. We didn’t discuss anything in the readers we just read aloud, and I had to wait there for people that were reading one word at a time. So that, I didn’t enjoy it at all… the teachers weren’t willing to allow us to work at our own pace, and read what we wanted.

He also went on to recall having negative experiences with writing in elementary school:

I also remember having great ideas for stories in Grade 2, but getting frustrated by my slow handwriting and difficulty with spelling. Instead of writing the stories that I envisioned in my head I was forced to greatly shorten and simplify them.

Robert’s negative schooled literacy experiences highlight the potential consequences students encounter when language and literacy are taught through a restricted approach. Robert was a proficient reader, who as he put it “learned to read and love books early on,” through the reading interactions he shared with his parents at home. Within the school context, however, Robert came to perceive reading as a boring and an
unpleasant activity. In the classroom space the restrictions placed on his fluency, selection of reading materials, and ability to engage with texts on his own terms functioned to penalize Robert, rather, than foster his interest in engaging with reading as an active process of meaning making. His frustration is palpable as he went on to explain how the emphasis placed on accurate spelling and precise letter formation stifled his engagement with creative writing and self-expression.

A literacy pedagogy that positions language as an isolated entity or neutral set of conventions is often enacted through activities that focus on the acquisition of technical skills which a student must master in order to move forward (Street, 1984). This decontextualized approach seemingly privileges form, rather than meaning, whereby correctness becomes the marker of literacy achievement, frequently to the neglect of other proficiencies such as creativity, expression, communication, fluency, and meaning-making (Barton et al, 2007). In Robert’s case, his ability to express himself through creative storytelling was hampered by the value placed on accurate spelling and meticulous handwriting within the pedagogical space of the classroom. Robert’s negative school literacy experiences shed light on the ways in which culturally available forms of communication and representation are at times restricted by classroom encounters over reading and writing (Gee, 1996/2012).

Similarly, the negative schooled literacy experiences shared by student teacher Zoe, also provide a point of entry to consider the dynamics at play when students, as active learners, construct conceptions of literacy through classroom interactions:

I remember that I liked most of my teachers that were teaching literacy, except for one of them, which was in grade 10. I can recall exactly what
that experience was about, the reason was she [the teacher] was not really paying attention to the meaning of the literature. She was, now I can tell you but at that time I had no idea about what she was doing, but now I can tell you, that she was too obsessed with the form rather than the meaning. She was very much obsessed with conventions. For me at that time, I was very good at spelling and things like that, but I wanted the freedom to write as it came to me. She was very much obsessed, she would ask us to do certain things like, why don’t you have a certain number of paragraphs here? Why don’t you have a comma here? Why don’t you use some kind of convention of writing here? Why didn’t you just obey what I told you, and what is written in that course book?

The tone of Zoe’s voice peaked perhaps to signal the perceived consequence of her teacher’s approach to literacy teaching:

She was not really looking at my work as something individual, novel, and unique. I had a message for my audience, for my reader. So she didn’t pay any sort of attention to what I was trying to say in that essay or say in my composition, and she really didn’t care about the feelings of the students I think.

At the end of the narrative a tension seemed to surface as Zoe attempted to negotiate and reconcile the merits of her tenth grade literacy teacher’s restrictive approach with the more “flexible” approach of her teacher from the previous year (the ninth grade).

Well to some extent now I believe she was not that bad, because maybe many of us needed a little bit, a more strict person who could have control, control over the conventions especially. But all the time, in that year we
were comparing her to our previous teacher who was very flexible, and gave us a lot of room to write, to find out about and read different genres, and bring them to the class to discuss them.

When Zoe discussed her tenth grade English class, she repeated the evaluative statement that the teacher was “too obsessed” with the conventions of the English language. In this instance, literacy seemed to be defined as a student’s ability to correctly apply a rigid set of language rules and procedures. When the pedagogical emphasis is placed on “correctness” literacy learning becomes “linked with the view of literacy as competence,” rather than understanding literacy “as a social practice which is concerned with meanings and use” (Barton et al., 2007, p. 105). In Zoe’s case, the teacher neglected to consider the ways in which language could be used as a tool to communicate meaning and engage with one’s audience. This restrictive approach to literacy teaching did not provide Zoe with the space to write freely and express her intended message to an audience. A literacy pedagogy that frames literacy as a competence that students’ demonstrate through the correct application of a rigid set of linguistic conventions and skills, can function to restrict the potential for students to engage with literacy as a multifaceted social practice, wherein knowledge is reciprocally constructed (Barton et al., 2007).

In addition, Zoe’s recollection of the teacher’s commands to “just obey what I told you and what is written in that course book,” highlights some of the dynamics at play when a transmission model of literacy pedagogy is enacted. Within this transmission paradigm the teacher and the course textbook are positioned as the authority in the classroom with the power to define what counts as literacy and how literacy is to be used.
The student’s role is essentially relegated to mastering the “conventions of writing.” In other words, students’ interests and lived experiences are largely discounted as legitimate sources of knowledge, and as a consequence students are positioned as passive recipients, rather than active agents in the construction of knowledge.

Indeed, the authoritative structures Zoe encountered in her prior schooling still seem to exert some influence as she wrestles with what it means to teach literacy. A tension is evident as she contrasts the strict approach of her tenth grade teacher against the “flexible” approach of her ninth grade teacher. Overall, Zoe seemed to voice a disapproval of the tenth grade teacher’s regimented approach to literacy teaching, for she felt it largely neglected students’ needs and feelings. At the end of the narrative, however, Zoe enacts a reversal of sorts, with the suggestion that she may now see some merit in the tenth grade literacy teacher’s approach. She noted that perhaps some of “us [the students] needed a little bit [of] a more strict person who could have control over the conventions.” Zoe seemed to wrestle with the merits of each approach to literacy teaching. Ultimately, she seemed to prefer the “flexible” approach to literacy teaching, for it provided students with the freedom to write creatively, engage with a variety of genres, and collaboratively construct meaning through classroom discussions. The tension Zoe articulated offers a glimpse into the complex process student teachers negotiate as they construct a literacy teaching practice.
Feeling Disconnected From School Texts

“I hated Shakespeare.” Lynne

A number of the student teachers noted their dissatisfaction with the types of texts they were assigned to read in high school and with the restricted approach applied to the analysis of these texts. For instance, Lynne provided a succinct recollection of a negative school literacy experience. With an assertive tone she noted, “I hated Shakespeare. It was so boring we never did anything fun. I, I can remember just dreading it because it was never fun.” Lynne playfully distorted the tenor of her voice to mimic a robotic tone, and then proceeded to explain her displeasure with reading Shakespeare in high school English classes:

It was just like read book, regurgitate information, memorize passage, snooze. So it just, it, it, and it’s horrible because I don’t ever want to feel like that about having to, about reading a book, especially something so important as Shakespeare. There were some really good books that we got to read, and I really did like them, but at the same time it was just like, oh that’s it? We’re just going to read them and write an essay, boring.

Like Lynne, several of the student teachers in both the surveys and the interviews, specifically made reference to their dislike of reading Shakespeare in high school English classes. The reoccurrence of this Shakespeare reference gestures to the institutional value placed on certain genres and authors who fit into a Western canon of literature. The privileging of such texts within the authoritative context of a school serves to reproduce a particular Western aesthetic of literature, and in so doing, delineates the boundaries
within which students come to negotiate their understanding of relevant cultural knowledge and legitimate literacy practices.

Lynne’s evaluative statement, “I hated Shakespeare,” signals the sense of disconnect she felt to the text. However, at a later point in her narrative the reverence she bestows to the work is evident as she explained “it’s horrible because I don’t ever want to feel like that about having to, about reading a book, especially something so important as Shakespeare.” These statement points to how the symbolic value assigned to the work of Shakespeare, throughout her years of schooling, has had a enduring influence on how she comes to define important literary works and genres.

In an attempt to further understand the specifics of Lynne’s high school experience I asked her, “So how would you have liked the class to have been? She responded quickly as though the answer was at the forefront of her thoughts. Lynne elevated the pitch of her voice to express excitement and replied, “interactive, and thinking, and what does it mean to the world. Like, in literacy class [in the teacher education program] we talk about text to text, text to self, text to world, and all of those connections.” Lynne took issue with the detached and repetitive manner in which the texts were approached in her high school English classes. The pedagogical focus seemed to be placed on memorizing passages from Shakespeare and writing formulaic essays, rather than exploring the thematic complexities of the text and the potential connections to students’ lives. She drew a distinct contrast between a school literacy history that left her feeling detached from the text, and her current experience in literacy teacher education that emphasized the importance of connecting texts to students’ lives.
Student teacher Beth echoed many of Lynne’s concerns regarding the importance of providing opportunities for students to connect to the texts they read in the classroom. Beth explained that she enjoyed reading several of the texts assigned in high school. However, she also felt that the pedagogical approach used often neglected to consider the meaning students construct from the text. Beth noted,

I really enjoyed reading, so I would find the books we had to read interesting, but I hated the conversations. I just felt like we were listening to you know to write down what the teacher thought were important ideas.

LM: So do you remember what it was about the conversations that you didn’t enjoy?

Beth: Um, I just remember very clearly sitting with the book in rows with the teacher in front, and writing down in the margins things that the teacher said. That’s like, that’s the picture I have in my mind of English class. So it wasn’t that I hated it, because I really did enjoy literature. So, I didn’t hate it, but I didn’t enjoy it. It was just okay this is something we have to do. Let’s find out what’s important. I enjoyed writing book reports because I enjoyed that self-reflection time to, like, try and creatively make connections. I didn’t like writing, I still don’t like writing, but I enjoyed thinking about making those connections. Um, but I don’t remember enjoying the actual class part.

While Beth was an avid reader, she noted that within the classroom reading became a prescriptive task. In her words reading became relegated to “something we have to do.” She described pedagogical interactions with texts that appear to be rather one-sided; whereby, the teacher was positioned as the authority who defined what was
important in the text, and the students were passive recipients who were expected to simply copy down the teacher’s interpretations and directives in their notebooks. Consequently, Beth felt detached from the texts, for in the classroom she was not positioned as an active participant in the reading process and in the construction of meaning. Within the space of the classroom students’ interests, opinions, and insights were largely excluded from reading process and the construction of knowledge.

Beth noted that she did not enjoy and still does not enjoy writing, however, she did appreciate activities that afforded her “self-reflection time” and the opportunity to “creatively make connections.” She ends the narrative with the evaluative statement, “I don’t remember enjoying the actual class part,” reiterating the sense of disconnect she experienced with literacy learning throughout much of her prior schooling.

Similarly, student teacher Lukas recounted negative school literacy experiences, in which he felt detached from the texts he read in school. When asked to reflect upon his experience with literacy education, during his time as a school student he confided, “I feel like I’ve had a horrible experience with literacy.” Lukas provided further detail about his experience,

Um, pretty much everything I remember revolves around Shakespeare, and it’s kind of like remembering lines, and then rehearsing lines, and who said what. It’s all essays, and remembering quotes. So I don’t really have any positive memories. Uh, that was high school, so like probably starting at grade ten to grade twelve were bad experiences. I don’t really have any positive experiences with literacy.
Like Lynne, Lukas did not enjoy the restricted approach applied to the study of Shakespeare during high school, where an emphasis was placed on memorizing site passages, rather than facilitating students’ active engagement with the text. The negative association Lukas ascribed to these schooled literacy experiences is strikingly evident as he repeated the claim, “I don’t really have any positive experiences with literacy.”

In an effort to further understand his school literacy history Lukas was asked to elaborate on why he felt these experiences were not positive. He reported having difficulty relating to the genres of text selected and assigned by his teachers, which consequently left him feeling disconnected from the material read in school. Lukas explained,

Um, I just feel like I wasn’t really understanding a lot of the stuff that I was learning, and I had trouble relating to a lot of the stories that we read. Like even the Outsiders, I couldn’t really relate much to that, and I think that was in grade eight. So, I’ve always felt like I’m reading something but it’s just so distant, that it’s just, I’m reading it because I need to read it, and I need to memorize these lines, and I need to write this essay. So that’s kind of how I felt.

Lukas’ narrative highlights how within institutional systems, such as schools, the cultural resources used to delineate legitimate reading and writing practices can become implicated in how students’ develop a sense of themselves as readers and writers. The select genres and skills-based literacy activities prized in Lukas’ former classrooms, such as the ability to memorize lines and adhere to rigid essay guidelines, became the gauge by which he measured his ability as a reader and writer. He seems to fault himself for not
“really understanding a lot of the stuff that I was learning” and for having “trouble relating to a lot of the stories.”

The sense of disconnect he felt toward assigned classroom texts became framed as a failing on his part, for not “really relating” to the reading/writing practices and cultural knowledge designated as valuable within the classroom context. A deficit discourse is evident as Lukas assigned blame to himself for not understanding the material taught and for having trouble relating to the assigned texts. He becomes positioned as an outsider in the classroom space. Lukas’ recurrent admission, “I don’t really have any positive experiences with literacy” points to the sense of exclusion he experienced within his former classrooms, spaces wherein his interests as a reader and writer did not fit within the parameters used to define prized texts and literacy practices.

A lot is at stake when doing literacy

“You write how you talk.” Laura

Social interaction plays a vital role in the construction and enactment of contextually meaningful literacy practices. Bartlett (2007) suggests, “such interactions matter, in part, because doing literacy is not merely about mastering a code, but largely about developing command of literacy practices that are recognized as ‘legitimate’ ” (p. 54). Student teacher Laura’s schooled literacy history animates the ways in which ideological structures often set the parameters for what counts as literacy, to thereby reproduce systems of marginalization.

Laura immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong at the age of six. Cantonese was Laura’s first language. Upon arriving in Canada she was enrolled in an elementary school
the last week of grade one, and was placed in an English as a second language (ESL) classroom. In her literacy autobiography she recalled that “daily ESL summer school, watching a lot of TV, and playing with other children in the neighborhood allowed [her] to pick up oral English skills extremely fast,” during her first summer in Canada. By grade two, she “was speaking with and almost at par with the rest of the class.” In high school Laura “detested English” classes. She completed English in summer school from grades nine to eleven. She noted that completing English courses in “summer school was a saving grace because what could be better than completing a detested subject within one and a half months.”

During our first interview Laura was asked to share any negative experiences with literacy from her previous years of schooling. She hesitated to even label the experiences as negative, but rather placed the onus on herself for the difficulties with literacy that she encountered in school. Laura explained,

I always thought that in general, I just wasn’t very good at it [literacy]. Like, I don’t think that there was anything that was outstandingly negative. But uh, I think, that my marks were just mediocre, and I always felt that I was mediocre at it. I just got by at writing, and that was it.

As a follow up question Laura was asked why she felt she “wasn’t very good at it”? Was it because of the grades she referred to as “mediocre”? Laura elaborated upon her response:

I think so, and I think that one teacher probably said, “You just need to write a bit better, you write how you talk.” So I think that was like, oh okay, so I need to improve. But, it’s not like that was such a horrible thing
that the teacher did. I just had that feeling, for all those years before grade 12.

Laura’s response illuminates the complex ways in which interactions with others around oral and written language practices function to delineate social positions (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Gee, 2012). Social positions are often constituted as contextually meaningful labels (e.g., struggling writer) and categories of identification (e.g., mediocre student) become associated with the enactment of literacy activities. Barton et al., (2007) suggests, “when literacy is talked about in terms of skills, the ‘problem’ or ‘difficulty’ is located in the individual people, who are described as having some kind of deficit” (p. 15). A sense of anxiety and urgency is palpable as Laura recounted her various efforts to “pick up English skills” so she could be “on par” with her classmates.

The structure of Laura’s narrative reveals how the deficit discourse that operated in her classroom encounters became internalized. The prevalence of “I” statements in Laura’s narrative, such as “I just wasn’t very good at it,” and “I always felt that I was mediocre at it,” highlight the tension induced as her conception of herself as a writer is negotiated within the binary of individual and collective moments of interaction (de Fina et al., 2006). In other words, Laura’s identification as “a mediocre” writer was constructed within the external realm of institutional influence and the private realm of individually embodied experience.

Laura’s response calls attention to the ways in which the institutional mechanisms used to judge a student’s literacy ability functioned to inform her conception of herself as a writer. For instance, she referenced her “mediocre” grades and the teacher’s perception
of her literacy abilities as inadequate, communicated to her through the teacher’s
evaluative statement “you just need to write a bit better, you write how you talk.” Within
the school context, the continuous application of such evaluative mechanisms positioned
Laura as someone who struggled with literacy. The deficit discourse used to position
Laura seemed to, in part, obstruct the teacher’s ability to acknowledge the rich cultural
and linguistic knowledge she brought to the classroom.

Laura however, actively draws upon available resources to contest imposed labels
(e.g., struggling writer) and to reposition herself. An integral part of “becoming a member
of a community is the development of the knowledge and behavior expected of one who
occupies particular social positions in that community” (Schiffrin, 2006, p. 106). Laura
astutely mobilized available resources such as peer interactions, television programs, and
summer school courses to further develop her command of the language, and the cultural
practices deemed legitimate within the school context. She strove to perform the literacy
practices ostensibly required to be recognized as a reader and a writer in the classroom.
At the end of the narrative Laura alluded to a turning point that took place in grade 12,
which shifted her conception of writing and herself as a writer. This experience will be
examined in the next section.

**Past Positive School Literacy Experiences**

When asked to discuss their schooled literacy history, specifically positive experience
with literacy teaching and learning, a number of the student teachers interviewed noted
that positive experiences were either limited or completely lacking. For instance, Lukas,
Sue, and Beth each had difficulty identifying a single positive school literacy experience.
As reported earlier in this chapter, Lukas recalled not having any positive experience with literacy during his previous schooling. Indeed, he confided “I feel like I’ve had a horrible experience with literacy.” Sue identified one positive aspect of her elementary literacy education; however, this appeared to be the exception rather than the norm. Sue recalled in elementary school “I enjoyed some of the poetry units we did, though I wouldn’t say I overly enjoyed poetry in general, but that would probably be about where I stop at of what I enjoyed about my school literacy.” Beth noted that while she was an avid reader and a “good student” she did not enjoy literacy activities in school. Beth explained,

Um, well I always loved reading. One of my favorite activities was just curling up with a book. But um, I did not like English classes for sure in high school. So, I’m trying to think of a positive experience, but I don’t have clear memories of it. Um, probably in younger grades sitting on the carpet with read alouds and picture books, but I don’t have any real strong positive memories about literacy. Even though I was a good student.

In contrast, the student teachers who did identify positive school literacy encounters, recalled literacy activities that provided them with the opportunity to share their lived experiences, exercise choice, express themselves creatively, and engage in interactive communication with others. For instance, Lynne and Zoe recalled participating in creative writing activities, which provided them with the opportunity to “write freely” and “use [their] imagination.” Student teacher Lee also recalled a positive, yet seemingly, rare experience with literacy from her prior schooling. Lee noted,
I don’t remember a lot of interesting things being done in class. Actually one, I guess in grade five we did something called Story Painter, which was where we’d take turns having to illustrate chapters of a book and then present it to the class. I remember doing that but otherwise it was mainly like reading chapter by chapter.

The school literacy experiences Laura and Robert identified as positive will be discussed to examine this finding in further detail.

Creating A Space In The Classroom For Students’ Lived Experiences

“It was the first time my teacher, any English or Language Arts teacher, had ever really recognized what I wrote.” Laura

Laura vividly recounted a turning point in her schooled literacy history that seemed to shift her view of writing and conception of herself as a writer. Laura recalled,

It was grade twelve, and it was the first time my teacher, any English or Language Arts teacher, had ever really recognized what I wrote. She read it to the whole class. And I just wrote it as something that was in my mind. I just wrote it, and I just didn’t think twice about it. I just put it on paper and then handed it in, and I had no idea it was as good as she thought it was. So that really opened up my eyes to know that, oh okay, writing isn’t so bad, because I always had an issue with writing, and I never enjoyed it. I always took English in summer school because I hated it in high school. I thought this is too much work. I’m not getting it. I’m not good at it... It was just a shock that she chose to read mine. And then I had a few responses, I remember one guy in class turned around and was like “you wrote that, it’s so vivid, it’s like a picture, it’s so descriptive,” and I thought, oh okay, I just wrote it, and I didn’t think twice.
I asked Laura if she could remember the topic of the written piece to which she was referring as she recounted her positive school literacy experience. Not only did she immediately recall the topic, but the sense of excitement communicated through the elevated pitch in her voice revealed the experience was still very meaningful to Laura. She recalled,

It was about a subway ride specifically. So, she [the English teacher] just wanted us to describe an experience that we had. I had several subway rides in London on the tube and then in Hong Kong on the MTR. So just, a lot of my experience went into that. It was just being on a subway, jammed packed with lots of people, the smells that you get, the things that you see, how you feel because you’re so squished, and all the noises around you. So, even now I can remember really well what I wrote, which is surprising, but I guess that’s because of an experience I had.

Once again, Laura’s schooled literacy experience provides insight into how the literacy practices performed within the relational space of the classroom function to delineate social positions, and in turn, influence how students’ see themselves as readers and writers. McCarthey (2001) reported a correspondence between students’ perceptions of their own literacy abilities and the perceptions held by teachers and peers of those same literacy abilities. Accordingly, such internal and external realms of interaction influence how students construct broader conceptions of themselves as readers and writers.

I was taken aback when Laura noted that grade twelve was the “first time any” English or Language Arts teacher “had ever really recognized” her writing. On this
occasion the teacher’s pedagogical focus was on the descriptive communication of content, rather than the mastery of a set of composition skills, which created a space in the classroom for Laura to be recognized as a writer. The recognition she received from her teacher, and peers, functioned to demystify the writing process and render the practice of writing more accessible.

Laura explained that the interaction, “really opened up my eyes to know that oh okay, writing isn’t so bad, because I always had an issue with writing.” She registered surprise at the recognition and affirmative response she received from her teacher and classmates because in composing the piece she “just wrote it as something that was in [her] mind.” In this instance, the classroom became as space that welcomed and acknowledged her diverse lived experiences and rich funds of knowledge. Unlike her previous school literacy interactions, in this instance, she was provided with the opportunity to represent her experience through writing and witness the value placed on this rich knowledge base. Within this dynamic moment of pedagogical interaction and recognition Laura began to see potential for herself as a writer.

Providing A Space In The Classroom For Students To Engage

“I really got to know the books, and I really got to know the other students.”

Robert

Student teacher Robert recalled a positive high school literacy experience that invited him to express himself through creative channels, engage in meaningful discussion with classmates, and receive encouraging feedback. He recounted that in grades 10 and 11 he had a “fantastic teacher” for the teacher’s collaborative and
multifaceted pedagogical approach made “English class a highlight.” Robert provided examples of pedagogical activities that made English class a dynamic and engaging space. He recalled, “we had classes outside, flew kites to re-awaken the adolescent innocence lost in A Separate Peace, had meaningful discussions and debates in groups, and multimedia presentations on authors from Shakespeare to John Wyndham.”

In recounting this positive high school literacy experience, Robert suggested that while they did read texts mandated by the official curriculum, this particular English teacher made the texts more meaningful by providing students with a variety of communications tools and the space to collaboratively explore the texts. He noted,

She had us read books that were required for the curriculum, but we all got in groups and discussed them, we did group presentations, at one point we made a video, and we all shared our videos at the end. So it was a lot of fun. I felt like I really got to know the books, and I really got to know the other students.

Robert also greatly appreciated and benefited from the encouraging feedback his English teacher provided on his writing assignments. He noted this encouragement represented a stark contrast from previous experiences with writing in school, whereby the imposition of rigid restrictions limited opportunities for self-expression and creative experimentation. Comparatively, his tenth and eleventh grade literacy experiences seemed to be an outlier, for his English teacher facilitated the development of a fulfilling writing space. Robert commented,

My teacher loved my writing, giving me feedback after every assignment, and encouraging creativity. This was so different from the stifling literacy
essays I’d done throughout high school, where thoughts had to be packed within strict categories, one must refer to the topic sentence at every point, and never use personal pronouns.

Unlike past schooled literacy experiences, this approach to literacy teaching provided Robert with the opportunity to forge meaningful connections with texts through the use of multimedia communication tools, collaborative investigations with classmates, and dynamic class discussions. Within this classroom context he was also eager to engage in writing activities because he was given the space to exercise his creativity, draw on his interests, and share his voice with an attentive audience. His creative writing was finally acknowledged as a legitimate practice within the school context.

**Past Literacy Experiences in Out-of-School Contexts**

An attempt to understand the complex ways in which student teachers’ literacy histories inform their conceptions of literacy and their development as teachers of literacy should consider the influence of multiple sites of literacy learning. Up to this point, the chapter has examined student teachers’ schooled literacy histories, however, this site of learning represents but one dimension of a multifaceted literacy journey. They also engaged with complex and meaningful literacy practices in their homes, communities, and peer networks.

As previously discussed the student teachers often associated school contexts with restricted notions of reading and writing that often privileged the acquisition of a rigid set of skills, and in turn, limited opportunities for dynamic communication and creative self-
expression. When literacy is framed as a skill independent of the broader social context, issues of culture and power can become obscured; accordingly, school-based literacy practices grounded in this framing of literacy can function as a mechanism for social conformity, and thereby reproduce systems of marginalization.

A number of the student teachers associated classroom literacy practices with feelings of anxiety and exclusion. Participants suggested the skills-based exercises and literary genres privileged within the classroom context were often quite disparate from the literacies they used in their daily lives. In contrast, out-of-school literacy practices often provided a space for them to pursue their interests, exercise choices, connect with others, and express their creativity. Out-of-school reading and writing activities were frequently associated with opportunities to cultivate one’s imagination and experience a sense of comfort and joy. Thus, attention now shifts beyond the school walls, to consider how student teachers’ experiences at home, within their community, and peer networks influenced their relationship to literacy.

**Home Literacy Practices A Site of Companionship, Security, and Familial Connection**

“It all began with my Grandmother’s bedtime stories.” Zoe

Five of the eight student teachers interviewed recounted fond memories of their parent(s) spending time reading to them. Words they often used to describe these home reading practices included companionship, comfort, wonder, and joy. Participants also noted that they developed a love of books and learned to read at a young age because of
daily home literacy practices. For instance, Lee connected her love of reading and books to her home environment.

My love of reading began from a very early age. I was always read to as a young child and observed my parents reading. I reflect on my early literacy history with much joy and humor. As an only child, books provided me with a great deal of entertainment in the years before I started school and formed friendships. Reading taught me the power and wonder of imagination, and enabled me to create magical play worlds for myself. I literally lived in some of my favorite stories...Books became even more significant to me when I started school. As a young child, I had a severe speech impediment and could not communicate effectively. Consequently, I was socially isolated. During this difficult phase of my childhood, books provided an escape and were a safe place where I found comfort. (literacy autobiography)

Lee considers herself to be an avid reader. Her positive relationship to reading and deep engagement with books was deeply influenced by the reading practices her parents modeled. From an early age, Lee’s parents routinely read to her and provided opportunities for her to actively observe their engagement with reading. For Lee, reading at home became associated with a sense of wonder, joy, and security. As an only child books became her companions. The companionship and security she found in books became even more important when she began school. Her out-of-school reading practices provided a reprieve from the social isolation she experienced in the classroom, where her severe speech impediment made it difficult to communicate and connect with others.

Much like Lee, Zoe also found reading books to be a wonderful source of companionship that helped her to combat the loneliness she sometime felt as an only
child. She confided, “I was an only child, and I could fill a lot of my time reading storybooks...Reading all those books could fill my lonely childhood and nurtured my rebellious adolescence.” Zoe suggested the literacy activities she shared with her family were central to her development as a reader and writer. She recalled a pivotal childhood experience in which her grandmother carried on a tradition of oral storytelling and shared cultural traditions. She explained,

> It all began with my Grandmother’s bedtime stories, she was not able to read or write, but she could tell the most colorful and lively stories I have ever heard. Every night she would tell me a different story though the themes were the same the endless battle between good and evil.

The literacy practices Zoe learned from her parents also functioned to shape her experiential knowledge and cultural identity. Her parents exposed her to a variety of literary genres, such as picture books, fairytales, Persian mythology, novels, non-fiction, and also provided access to texts written in both Persian and English. She fondly recalled her mother’s intentional use of picture books to teach her the English language, and in turn, Zoe masterfully applied this linguistic knowledge to her daily life. Zoe recalled,

> My mom was keen on teaching me English so she bought me a few English storybooks and started reading them to me. I insisted on listening to the same story over and over again so I could look at the colorful pictures in those books. Soon, I started looking at those pictures during the day and copying the letters written under them into my notepad. I also started to notice some of the items in the living room and kitchen had the same alphabet [letters] on them, such as the TV, radio, fridge, and cooker. (literacy autobiography)
At home, Zoe also enjoyed independently selecting and reading texts from the family’s large collection of books. The lively stories told to her by family members and the stories she enjoyed reading independently inspired Zoe to initiate her own writing project. Zoe recalled that she “loved writing at home” because within this space she felt comfortable to pursue her own interests and desires. These rich and diverse out-of-school literacy practices provided Zoe with opportunities to engage with her cultural heritage, construct knowledge, and exercise her creative impulses.

Writing at school was a very different experience however, Zoe identified a disparity between the literacy practices she engaged with at home, and the reading and writing practices she was required to perform in the classroom context. In her experience “school writing was not enjoyable.” Zoe wanted to bring the creative writing she enjoyed doing at home into the classroom and continue writing “about [her] wildest dreams and imaginations.” However, in classroom context, she felt “all the teachers were concerned about was spelling, punctuation, and handwriting.” Zoe noted that at school the teachers “wanted to see perfection” and “no one wanted to read my stories or listen to my version of Jack and the Beanstalk.”

Within the classroom, writing activities were focused on rehearsing a rigid set of language structures and skills. This restricted focus minimized the opportunity for Zoe to incorporate her interests, rich literacy practices, and life experience into her school-based learning. School literacy practices effectively excluded, and by implication, devalued the diverse cultural resources and multifaceted literate identity Zoe brought with her into the classroom.
Beth also recalled being an avid reader since early childhood. At times she would even opt to read independently rather than socialize with friends. With a chuckle she recalled, “on weekends I would sit and read, like on Saturday afternoons, and sometimes friends would come over and I’d be kind of bummed, I just really enjoyed reading.” Much like Lee and Zoe, Beth also associated the reading she did at home with feelings of comfort and joy. In stark contrast, in the school context her relationship to reading was quite different, for in this space reading was associated with anxiety and insecurity. Beth explained,

I love the peaceful experience of reading, which is why I did not enjoy in-class readings. I am a very slow reader. When I was in school I would often feel pressure to read quickly when given items to read to ourselves during class. I never wanted to be the last one to finish and have everyone wait for me. If I tired to read quickly, I would not fully comprehend what I was reading. I similarly disliked when everyone in the class took turns reading out loud. I could not focus on comprehension because instead I would concentrate on my imminent turn and on the pronunciation of the words.

As has been observed with other participants, Beth also connected her “love of reading” to her text-rich home environment. Beth confidently remarked “I trace my love of reading directly to my parents and the home environment that they created.” Indeed, her reading preferences and habits have been strongly influenced by her parents. Throughout her childhood, her parents provided access to a range of texts, modeled reading activities, and encouraged her to develop a personal reading practice. She described her father as a “voracious reader” who “likes to own his books and keep them
organized in his home library,” which she confessed “has pretty much taken over at least a corner in every room in the house.” While Beth does not share her father’s particular reading preferences, she clearly admires his inquisitiveness and the pleasure he finds in reading. She noted,

My dad reads everything and anything, like he’s a real facts kind of person. He reads tons of non-fiction and crime novels. Um so, I don’t really feel so connected to him in his choice of reading. But, he reads everything, and remembers everything, and he gets ever news magazine under the sun delivered to the house, it is covered in books.

Beth emphasized that her mother is also an avid reader who modeled reading practices and preferences for her children. She fondly recalled, “I remember it clearly that my mom continued reading to us at night, even after we were in school, and we could read on our own, so that, I remember being very positive.” Over the years, Beth connected with her mother through a shared interest in works of fiction. She noted, “I always felt very connected to my mom, we have very similar tastes in novels.” Beth’s literacy relationship with her mother has informed her conception of reading and the ways she thinks about different genres of texts. Often, her mother would share her thoughts about the type of texts that qualified as worthwhile reading, judgments which she imparted to Beth. Beth explained,

My mother, we have a very good literacy relationship, but growing up she, and it was okay for me because I liked to read, but I think it could be problematic for others, but growing up if I would want to read the *Babysitter’s Club*, and I could, I was allowed to read that, as long as I read
a quote unquote good book as well. So, like I could read one *Babysitter’s* book if I read one *Little Women*.

Her mother’s judgments functioned to elevate the status of certain texts and simultaneously diminish the status of others; consequently, these literacy interactions influenced the value Beth assigned to particular genres of text. The examination of such formative literacy relationships highlights the ways in which sociocultural dynamics influence one’s conception of legitimate literacy practices and relevant cultural resources. The construction of knowledge is situated in social realms “with culturally available resources imbued with the meaning of those who have shaped and reshaped them in their social environment; responding to the needs of their time” (Kress, 2010, p. 14). How one comes to understand what counts as literacy is an ongoing process, which is negotiated within influential realms of social interaction and epistemic principles.

**Connecting To Texts In Out-Of-School Spaces**

“I started to enjoy reading.” Lukas

Interestingly, when the topic of out-of-school literacy experiences was discussed during the research interviews, the student teachers that had been positioned as reluctant or struggling readers in school, noted that their literacy engagements outside of school offered them opportunities to connect with texts and cultivate identifications as readers. Out-of-school literacy experiences introduced them to genres that complemented their interests and attended to dimensions of their literate identities that had been largely excluded from the classroom context.
Sue for example noted, “in elementary school I always struggled with all the basics usually associated with literacy, such as phonics, grammar, spelling, oral and written communication.” In high school her relationship to reading was still conflicted for “as an adolescent [she] dreaded reading in front of the class, [she] was shy and was always a slower paced reader.” Overall, she did not really enjoying school-based reading practices because she “had a hard time connecting with the characters, especially within books that were assigned as Literature.”

However, Sue’s conception of reading broadened once the confines delineated by school reading practices were extended as she was introduced to books with which she could forge a connection. A “bright spot” in her literacy journey appeared in grade 5 when a “cousin gave [her] the Anne of Green Gables series, [and she] instantly connected with Anne’s rebellious tomboy character.” This experience motivated Sue to seek out additional books that appealed to her interests. She “began to read [her] mom’s Hardy Boys books” and joyfully “lost [her]self in the mysteries of the brother detectives.” Her engagement with these books ostensibly extended the practice of reading beyond the texts mandated by the official English curriculum, and provided her with the opportunity to see texts as resources that she could connect with and feel intrigued by. In contrast to the classroom, reading experiences within the home helped to position reading as a practice that was accessible to Sue.

Similarly, Lukas noted that “as a child he wasn’t a great reader and reading was not something he enjoyed.” As reported earlier in this chapter, Lukas felt disconnected from the books mandated by the language arts curriculum because often the texts seemed unrelated to his interests and life experience. Within the school context he often had
difficulty locating genres of texts that appealed to him; unfortunately, he interpreted this as a failing on his part for “not knowing what is a good book.” Lukas explained,

A lot of it was kind of relevance, being able to relate to the books that I was reading because it was kind of me not knowing what is a good book. So, I’d randomly pull it, and look at the picture and the title, and I’d be like I don’t like it, and I would try another book, and it would become discouraging if I found out two chapters in that I didn’t like it.

His relationship to reading changed however, when he sought out and participated in, a summer community-reading program at a neighborhood library. Through his participation in the community-reading program he discovered meaningful ways to connect with texts and reading, which consequently strengthened his identification as a reader. The program provided him with the opportunity to identify genres that interested him, namely, horror, vampire, and fantasy books. By finding the genres of text that interested him, Lukas began to establish a sense of connection to these texts, which facilitated a positive shift in his relationship with reading. He started to enjoy reading and see himself as a reader. Lukas reflected,

When I was smaller I had, I wasn’t a great reader. So, my parents would try to give me rewards to read. Eventually I moved on from that, but it was more me going to the summer reading program. So there’s a little reading program, I lived downtown, so it’s like a ten-minute walk away, so I used to do that in the summer, and I started to enjoy reading a lot compared to before.
Through his participation in the community-reading program he began to identify his genres of choice as he was introduced to books that engaged him, such as Harry Potter, and as a result he started to enjoy reading. Lukas noted, “Harry Potter got me back into reading, because in a way I could relate to the characters, like they’re going to school, but also there’s kind of this fantasy feel to it, so it’s kind of nice to have that.”

His involvement with the community-reading program was a meaningful experience, so much so, that he began to volunteer as a reading-buddy with the program in order to work with children, who like him felt disconnected from books, and therefore did not enjoy reading. He described,

As I slowly began to appreciate reading, I decided to promote literacy by volunteering as a summer reading-buddy at the local library. I did this for three summers, and began to see that some children were like me when I was younger, in disliking books and finding reading boring. While the reading buddies program had prizes and incentives, it was vital for the child to read something that they had a passion for or could connect to. It was easily noticeable when a child lost interest in a book. These children needed alternatives such as non-fiction books, magazines, comics, and manga books. While these are not traditional texts, they helped to promote literacy by alternative means through visuals and important facts that the reader can relate to and connect to.

His involvement with the community-reading program was a formative literacy experience, and in many ways represented a stark contrast from his schooled literacy experience. Lukas, throughout much of his schooling had a rather apprehensive relationship to reading, largely due to the sense of disconnect he felt to the texts that were
privileged within the classroom. Within the school space the absence of genres that he 
connected with, such as fantasy novels, non-fiction books, magazines, comics, and 
manga, functioned to position reading as a practice that was inaccessible to Lukas. The 
classroom space did not provide the adequate structures of support to facilitate his 
discover of reading material that appealed to his interests, acknowledged his reading 
preferences, and nurtured his identification as a reader. Moreover, he was perceived to be 
a reluctant reader, and as a consequence Lukas seem to internalize this deficit positioning. 

However, Lukas proceeded to shift this conception through his participation in the 
community-reading program. Within this space he discovered genres of texts he related 
to and connected with. The program attended to reading practices and dimensions of his 
literate identity that had been excluded from the classroom. This experience also 
motivated him to give back to the community, by volunteering as a reading-buddy in the 
program, working with children who had experienced similar difficulties with reading. 

Lukas’ narrative points to the tensions that arise when literacy is defined by 
restrictive skills and rigid categories of canonical genres. Lukas troubles the traditional 
standard used to define a “good book.” He signals an attempt to reconfigure this standard 
with the suggestion that while “not traditional texts” children often need “alternatives, 
such as non-fiction books, magazines, comics, and manga,” as a means to construct and 
assert their identifications as readers. The community-reading program functioned to 
extend the boundaries of literacy engagement; for, in this site of knowledge construction 
Lukas was introduced to resources and practices that validated his interests, and in turn, 
facilitated a positive relationship to reading. As a consequence his identification as a 
reader began to blossom.
Using Social Media and Cultural Tools As A Means To Connect

“It was a way to keep connected.” Lynne

The student teachers also suggested that social media tools and popular culture resources represented valuable sites of literacy engagement beyond the school realm, which facilitated learning and communication with a broader audience. These social realms of interaction enabled the expression of hidden literacies, activities that were largely unaccounted for in the classroom, such as personal writing practices and communication technologies. Student teacher Lynne recounted with delight how the “invention of the Internet” offered an alternate space of communication that provided her with the opportunity to write freely, creatively express ideas, and connect with a network of peers. She reflected,

Well it was at a time when we, we didn’t have Facebook, but we had blogs and live journal and stuff like that, and so it was a way to keep connected, but at the same time I could express myself, and I found it easier to do that, and I guess stay interested in writing, being able to express myself.

This virtual space allowed her to “write freely” for the purposes of expression and communication, largely unencumbered by the anxieties sometimes provoked in the classroom, where writing is often used as a mechanism to formally rehearse proper grammar usage and finely hone composition skills. The writing practices Lynne engaged with in this virtual space functioned as a pivotal social network through which peers constructed relationships and enacted identifications during adolescence. These
technological tools served a social function; namely, providing a means to connect with others, cultivate affinity groupings, and secure one’s social standing among peers. Lynne commented,

Well the blogging, and the live journal, and all of the stuff definitely that was the thing to do, and MSN and ICQ back in the day, those were the kinda [sic] things that we all stayed connected with and had access to, there was no text messaging there was nothing like that, you connected on your blog and on your instant messenger, and that was it…It, it was really fun. I mean just like now kids have ipads and iphones and ithis and ithat, we had that, it was like ICQ oh my God, it was the best [changes tone to express excitement], the be-all-end-all of everything, but we didn’t have Facebook. So, it was either live journal, blogging, stuff like that or nothing…Um, obviously we didn’t realize at the time that once it’s on the Internet it’s out there but, you know, it was the way we, I guess keep our social status in high school, and we communicated, and we knew what was going on, and things like that.

Lynne and her friends used these technological tools for personal writings, which were used to communicate with and connect to a social world of others. Her repeated use of the words “connect/connected” throughout her narrative signals how this virtual space functioned as dynamic site of relational interaction, wherein social positions were reciprocally constructed, negotiated, and enacted. The writing practices that occurred within this social hub of information exchange allowed Lynne to skillfully navigate the currency of adolescence, namely, freedom, autonomy, social standing, and peers relations.
When asked about the out-of-school literacy practices with which she engaged, student teacher Laura noted that watching television proved to be a valuable tool to enhance her linguistic repertoires and cultural knowledge. Laura initially responded to my question with a pause, proceeded by a rather self-conscious laugh, and then confided,

Um, well as a kid I watched a lot of TV, and that made a huge difference to me [laughs]. I learned a lot of slang from it, and I, I learned, I guess how people talk, because my parents speak English, but my Dad has an accent and his grammar is not always the best, and I think TV was definitely the biggest part, that helped me. Um, reading I didn’t always find the books I liked to read, so I didn’t read very often. Um, so I’d have to say TV.

Upon her arrival in Canada television offered Laura a glimpse into dimensions of learning often unaccounted for, and at times, rendered invisible within the hegemonic structures of schooling. Laura astutely recognized that television was a valuable resource, through which she could learn about popular culture references and patterns of speech relevant to her new surroundings (e.g., slang), capital she could then mobilize to navigate social realms (e.g., peer interactions). Laura, much like Lukas, noted that she had difficulty finding texts that appealed to her interests, and as a result, she did not read very often. Television functioned as a resource that provided access to a more nuanced understanding of cultural knowledge and relevant practices, information that was not readily accessible in other spaces of learning such as school and home.
**Constructing Identifications as Readers and Writers**

The data discussed to this point has highlighted some of the multifaceted sites of learning, social interactions, and cultural resources that have informed student teachers’ rich literacy histories. This research attempts to engage with literacy as an embedded social practice situated in time, place and culture. Accordingly, the data analysis is informed by the belief that the “ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being” (Street, 2008, p. 4). The next section of this chapter will examine more closely the ways in which student teachers’ past literacy experiences have informed their identifications as readers and writers. Within this research the concept of identification is framed as a dynamic process, constituted in moments of social interaction and situated within specific contexts and temporal sequences (Gee, 2000; Jenkins, 2006). The practice of identification, either individual or collective, is an active, ongoing process that is never complete, but rather a perpetual path of becoming simultaneously negotiated within the internal and external realms of self and other (Hall 1996; Jenkins, 2006).

**The Risk of Judgment Complicates Identifications as Readers and Writers**

“I continue to connect writing with marks, judgment, and pressure.” Lee

A number of the student teachers self-identified as “successful” readers and writers, mainly because learning to read came easily to them, they achieved good grades in language arts/English classes, and they derived enjoyment from reading and/or writing. Notwithstanding these achievements (e.g., good grades, praise) their relationship to
reading and/or writing became more complicated, and at times contentious, as they became increasingly aware of the judgments that might accompany the enactment of literacy practices. Indeed, the “successful” reader/writer label bestowed upon them within the classroom seemed to at times incite feelings of anxiety and undue pressure.

As Beth reflected back on her literacy experiences she identified as “a good student” who “always loved reading” both in and out of school. Her relationship to reading was complicated however, by her concern for the potential judgments that might accompany her selection of texts, texts that might not meet the “good book” standard. As reported earlier in the chapter, Beth’s home life provided a literacy rich environment. Her parents were avid readers who played a vital role in scaffolding reading preferences and encouraging Beth to read regularly. Her mother often voiced quite definitive judgments on the type of texts she considered worthwhile reading. For instance, Beth explained that growing up if she wanted to read a novel from the popular teen “Babysitter’s Club” series her mother would allow this, “as long as [she] read a quote unquote good book as well” such as the novel “Little Women.”

These influential literacy interactions seem to have influenced Beth relationship with reading. While Beth is an avid reader, the act of selecting texts to read invokes feelings of doubt and insecurity, as she anticipates the potential judgments that might accompany her enactment of this practice. Beth explained,

Even though I love reading I always feel so, I always feel really insecure about, like, I remember clearly, it was probably in high school, I had a friend who was an English kind of person. She enjoyed English class and I remember so clearly feeling like she could walk into a bookstore and be confident and feel in place. I loved reading and I felt insecure walking into
a bookstore, well you know, what kind of book should I be reading? And well, are people going to judge me going over to that side of the store versus that side of the store? And how do I know which book to choose and what’s going be a good book, and is that like something I should be reading? I don’t know, I just remember feeling insecure about the whole thing. And so now, as an adult I realize well yeah, you can, there’s no right or wrong, but I guess that still lingers.

Beth’s narrative provides insight into her conception of what it means to be a reader and her relationship to reading. In the narrative she positioned her friend as an “English kind of person,” who felt comfortable and confident in a bookstore because within this space she could successful enact a literate identification through the appropriate selection of “good books.” On the contrary, Beth’s identification as a reader is more conflicted. While she admittedly “loves reading,” her preoccupation with the disapproval that might accompany her selection of reading materials makes her feel anxious and insecure; a dynamic she acknowledged “still lingers” in adulthood. Beth’s identification as a reader is reciprocally constructed through relational encounters, as she simultaneously negotiates the responses of others with individually embodied experiences.

Student teacher Lee’s strong identification as a reader was also apparent as she described herself as an “avid reader” whose “love of reading began at an early age.” Reading has always been a “source of enjoyment” in her life. Her intimate connection to reading was evident as she explained the role books have played in her life. Lee stated, “I love books as physical and tactile objects…books are not only a lovely escape, but also a source of constant learning, which challenge my ideas and reality.” As reported earlier in
the chapter, from a young age Lee associated reading with a sense of companionship and comfort. Reading helped her to combat the loneliness of being an only child, and the social isolation she experienced due to a severe speech impediment that limited her ability to communicate with others.

During adolescence her reading practice continued to be associated with a sense of companionship. For example, in high school she and some friends formed a book club that continued to meet for many years. Lee noted that, “the book club provided a great opportunity to remain in contact with friends. It was fun to share ideas and reactions to some wonderful books that I may not have chosen to read otherwise.” Over the years she developed into a confident and enthusiastic reader. Her reading practice facilitated a sense of companionship, comfort, and social connection.

In stark contrast to her positive relationship with reading, Lee’s relationship to writing was more conflicted, her conception of writing narrowed as school writing objectives necessitated the production of a restricted range of prose (e.g., essays). Lee characterized her “experience with writing as more formal” than reading. She explained,

Writing is not an activity from which I generally derive enjoyment. When I reflect on my early school years, I associate writing with creativity and fun. I remember concocting long, rambling stories that were a source of humor for my family, and probably for my teachers as well. In high school, I continued to develop and refine my writing skills. I discovered that I excelled at writing essays and earned high marks. One of my high school English teachers frequently used my essays as exemplars for the class, which made me proud in one respect, but also created anxiety. I put enormous pressure on myself and felt I always had extremely high expectations to meet. Everyone in my class knew that the teacher was
using my papers and I felt embarrassed because I did not want to be seen as “the favorite.” At university I elected to study English literature and art history, which led to essay after essay. Consequently, I continue to connect writing with marks, judgment, and pressure.

Lee was considered to be a “successful” writer in school, consistently achieving good grades and producing written work her English teacher often hailed as an exemplar of “good writing” for her classmates to follow. While one might expect the success Lee achieved in school to foster a positive relationship with writing and to bolster her identification as a writer, in actuality, the opposite occurred. More specifically, the markers of school success she achieved did not lead to a positive relationship with writing, but rather functioned to provoke feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, and insecurity.

As Lee progressed through school her engagement with writing was more regimented and limited consisting mainly of essays. Consequently, her conception of writing as a practice became much more limited, as the act of writing came to signify formal academic prose. The sense of “creativity,” “fun,” and “humor” she derived from writing in her early years of schooling diminished, and eventually was replaced with a sense of anxiety. Lee associated the act writing with feelings of anxiety and tension, as she became increasingly conscious of the judgments that might accompany the enactment of classroom writing practices. While she “excelled at writing essays and earned high marks,” the success she had attained in school complicated her relationship with writing. Lee simultaneously felt pressure to satisfy expectations (e.g., maintain high grades), and yet feared her success with writing might provoke a social rebuking from her peers,
particularly if her achievements caused her to incur the label of “teacher’s favorite.”

Ultimately, for Lee writing became an exercise in discomfort, for her the act of writing within the classroom context rendered her vulnerable to the judgment of others.

Similarly, Zoe also noted her identification with writing shifted as she became more aware of the judgments that could accompany her writing practices. Zoe recalled that while writing “came easily” to her, writing was often “difficult for [her] friends and classmates.” Comparatively she “could easily manage to write something overnight that people usually found interesting and different.” As time went on however, the process of writing became more frustrating as the “risks [she] used to take” with her writing diminished. Zoe was asked to elaborate on why she felt her willingness to “take risks” in her writing had changed. She explained,

I think one, maybe one reason I am not as brave as I used to be to take risks is that I’m aware of the sort of mistakes that people might make, the sort of judgment that people might have over your piece of writing, that made me a little or maybe lot more conservative about it.

Zoe’s relationship to writing became more self-conscious, the freedom she previously found through writing was stifled by a concern for making “mistakes,” mistakes that might cause others to judge her as inadequate. Throughout her childhood she had enjoyed “taking risks” with writing, but during adolescence this drive was diminished as she realized that writing had the potential to expose her to the judgments from others. As a result, her once confident engagement with writing and identification as a writer became more reticent and self-conscious.
One might expect that the literacy success Zoe and Lee achieved in school would function to strengthen their identification as writers and foster their writing practice. On the contrary, their conception of writing became more restricted and the practice of writing became a site of tension. In each case, the literacy success they achieved in school provoked a conflicted relationship to writing and seemingly narrowed their conception of writing. While the acknowledgment they received within school helped them recognize their talent for writing, the very mechanisms used to commend their talent as writers also revealed that judgment is intricately connected to the public enactment of reading and writing practices. They came to understand that the performance of writing practices within the social world of the classroom had very real consequences for how students occupied this space and were positioned within it. The mechanisms used to judge student performance effectively functioned to delineate categories of identification. The judgments rendered within the classroom were varying reinforced by external recognition and individually embodied attributions.

**Writing as a form of self-exploration and expression**

“I dealt with much of my angst through my independent journal.” Lynne

Some of the student teachers noted that they engaged with reading and writing practices as a means of self-exploration and creative expression. For example, Lynne’s identification as a writer seemed to flourish during her teen years as she used personal writing practices to sort through some of the complexities of adolescence. As a teenager she “dealt with much of [her] angst through independent journal” writing and the writing
of “song lyrics.” These practices provided her with the opportunity to “freely express” herself and write about topics that she “could relate to.” Lynne confessed that several of these personal writing artifacts are still stored in her parents’ house next to her old “writing hideouts.”

Student teacher Robert also connected with writing as a form of self-exploration and expression. He voiced a strong relationship to reading and writing but clarified he is “definitely a writer first and a reader second.” Robert credits his parents with inspiring him to engage with writing as a means of expression. He explained that his “first few years of school weren’t great experiences with literacy, so [his] parents encouraged [him] to write stories.” Engaging with writing as a creative outlet proved to be an enjoyable process. As an adolescent he continued to write short stories and also began to write poetry. The act of writing helped him to “clarify thoughts, to create, to express [himself], to record experiences and plan new ones.”

In his adulthood Robert continued to write poetry and short stories. His identification as a writer helped him cope with his shyness because he could share aspects of himself through his poetry writing (e.g., his connection to nature). For Robert writing poetry seem to represent a space of reciprocal exchange between author and reader. He explained,

I enjoy writing poetry. The omission of all the grammar and syntax that poetry allows seems to bring it closer to human thought. I always use conventions like metaphor, symbolism, and pathetic fallacy, which seem to crystallize thought, emotions, and experiences in ways that are meaningful to all readers. I believe poetry is the closest we can get to deep, real communication…This is a type of writing that fosters creativity,
both in writing and interpretation, and its essence is meaningful communication. (literacy autobiography)

His connection to poetry was further developed in university through the study of English literature. Robert explained, “in university, [his] favorite literary periods were Romanticism and Modernism…[he] loved the connectedness to nature, emotion, spirituality and individualism of the Romantic poets, and the experimental, creative desperation of the Modernist writers.” These experiences influenced how he thought about reading and writing. He noted, “I think of the reading and writing of literature as the struggle to create and communicate. It is through literature that we try to understand the world we find ourselves in, create the world we live in, and communicate with ourselves and others.” Through personal writing practices (e.g., journaling, poetry, short stories) Lynne and Robert connected with writing as a form of expression, which helped them construct identities as writers.

**Negotiating School Language Practices and Home Language Practices**

“At the back of your mind you know okay this is not my first language.” Laura

The examination of student teachers’ literacy histories highlights the complex ways in which reading and writing practices are intimately related to the process of identity construction. As noted previously, student teachers Laura and Lukas were both identified as English language learners (ELL) in elementary school. Throughout much of their schooling they were perceived to be “reluctant” or “struggling” writers/readers. Within the school space their linguistic resources and cultural experiences were often not
recognized as a legitimate source of knowledge. When the rich funds of knowledge, lived experiences, and cultural resources that students bring to their learning interactions are not recognized, the classroom can operate as a site of exclusion, rather than an invitation to learning (Campano, 2007; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

This section of the chapter will consider more closely how Laura and Lukas’ formal school literacy experiences influenced how they constructed identifications as readers/writers. Laura’s experience as an English language learner (ELL) within the school context seemed to fundamentally shape her conception of herself as a “weak” writer. The complex social dynamics associated with the positioning of Laura as an ELL student are evident as she recounts her previous school experience:

Um [pause], like there was always, you knew that your first language wasn’t English, but it was never an outright issue. Like, it was never a huge barrier because in class you’d talk to your friends in English, you’d pick it up really quickly because it’s all around you, but at the back of your mind you know okay this is not my first language, so I should work harder on it. I should read more books, I should do something to kind of compensate or like meet up, and be at par with everyone else.

Laura’s experience illustrates how ideological structures can implicitly operate within school contexts to define what counts as literacy, and to reproduce systems of marginalization. When literacy is conceptualized as the mastery of dominant language standards and a requisite skill set, the task of acquiring these skills becomes situated in the individual (Barton et al., 2007). Accordingly, those individuals who do not display what is perceived to be the adequate skill set are perceived as deficient (Barton et al., 2007).
Laura’s identification as a writer was in part, negotiated within classroom contexts that seemingly positioned her linguistic and cultural experiences as a deficit, rather than a resource. Her narrative suggests she internalized aspects of this deficit positioning. A sense of anxiety and self-consciousness about her ELL status seemed to surface as Laura described the persistent awareness that English wasn’t her “first language.” While Laura suggested the home-school language disparity “was never an outright issue,” the consequence of deficit-based instruction seems apparent as Laura noted the implicit pressure to “work harder” so she could “compensate or be at par with everyone else.” As noted earlier in this chapter, throughout much of her school literacy experience Laura manifested an insecure identification as a writer, so she worked hard to measure up to the classroom standards used to define a “successful” writer.

One of the many implicit inequities of language instruction that is focused on a narrow set of skills is that students are not provided with the opportunity to integrate their rich linguistic resources and cultural identities into their formal school experiences, and as a consequences these resources are not recognized as valuable sites of knowledge (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Campano, 2007). In Laura’s case she placed the onus on herself to “read more books” and “work harder” so that she could “compensate” and be “at par with everyone else” in the classroom. The restrictive literacy instruction Laura encountered throughout much of her schooling profoundly shaped her identification as a writer. As Laura recounted her school literacy history she confided, “I always thought that in general I just wasn’t very good at writing.” Even though Laura went on to achieve success in post-secondary studies, attaining a degree in sociology, upon entering her teacher education studies she maintained the conception of herself as a struggling writer.
As Lukas reflected on his school literacy experience he did not identify as a “successful” reader. He recalled that he was placed in an English as a Second Language (ESL) program in grades three and four. Lukas described the city in which he “grew up,”

It was kind of large, slightly low socio-economic, and there were a lot of immigrant families coming in. So throughout elementary, and I guess high school, it was very multicultural. So there was a strong emphasis on having ESL programs, especially in high school.

Lukas noted that he “wasn’t a great reader” and “did not enjoy reading in school.” I asked Lukas to discuss further his comment that he “wasn’t a good reader.” He elaborated,

In terms of reading I guess maybe a road bump would be, me being, like I was the first child who was kind of educated in the Canadian system. So language-wise English was my second language. So at home we spoke Chinese, while I was learning English my parents were also learning English. So it was really hard.

Lukas’ narrative highlights how literacy practices can function to position people and to exert power. As people engage with literacy activities “related to social institutions” such as schools, it often becomes apparent that “literacy is located in formal hierarchies” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012, p. 17). Lukas seemed to internalize the hierarchical structure of a school discourse that privileged dominant language practices. He comes to identify his home language as a perceived obstacle, rather than a resource, hindering his ability to establish himself as a “successful” reader.
Both Lukas and Laura demonstrated complex linguistic abilities as they moved between two languages. They engaged with the Chinese language at home and with the English language at school. However, their sophisticated linguistic capabilities were not acknowledged within the school space. When the school discourse privileges dominant language practices and fails to recognize students’ home languages as a resource, it can function to limit students’ sense of connectedness to the classroom and restrict their ability to construct confident identifications as readers and writers (Cummins, 2004, 2006, 2010; Delpit, 1992, 1995/2006).

As reported earlier in the chapter, Lukas noted that he did not enjoy reading in school because he had difficulty finding texts he related to and connected with. He also explained that his parents and teachers “pushed” him to read in an effort to enhance his proficiency; however, these efforts seemed to have the opposite effect. Rather than motivating him to read the imposed pressure made reading feel like an unpleasant task. He recalled,

I guess it was a lot of my parents pushing me to read. So maybe that was one of the reasons why I didn’t enjoy reading because it was pushed so much on me, it was pushed by my teachers, and it was pushed by my parents, and I kind of didn’t like it so much.

LM: And why do you think they did push it?

Lukas: Um, because well my parents are really, they want me to succeed in I guess the general sense of academics. So out of all the subjects, Math my parents could understand, it was like numbers, and it was fairly universal. English was something that they had, they were powerless to kind of teach me, especially at home. So they kind of wanted to push me to do English,
to understand, to read those books so that “you know your English because we can’t help you in those aspects.”

Barton and Hamilton (1998/2012) suggests that, “literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships,” and consequently, “some literacies become more dominant, visible, and influential than others” (p. 11). School literacy instruction that does not provide students with the opportunity to incorporate their linguistic and cultural resources into their formal learning ostensibly positions students as recipients of knowledge, rather than co-constructors in their learning (Campano, 2007; Compton-Lilly, 2004; Cummings, 2006, 2010; Moll et al., 1992).

Within school contexts the negotiation of home language practices and school sanctioned language practices can become a site of tension for students and their families (Campano, 2007; Compton-Lilly, 2004). For Lukas and his family schooled-literacy practices represented as site of exclusion, rather than an invitation to fully participate in his formal learning. His choice of the word “powerless” to describe his parents is telling, the term is used to represent how his parents were positioned in relation to his learning at school. Lukas draws an interesting contrast between the subjects of Math and English, whereby Math is positioned as accessible, while English is positioned as a practice that his parents cannot fully be a part of because it is not their first language. His parents attempt to disrupt these boundaries of exclusion by encouraging Lukas to master school sanctioned language practices so that he may successfully participate in the school system and adeptly navigate broader society.

As was reported in the out-of-school literacy section of this chapter, Lukas’ conception of himself as a reader began to shift through his participation in a reading
program at a local library. His participation in this community program was a turning point. Unlike his school experience, the library program supported and encouraged his discovery of texts that aligned with his interests. Through the library program Lukas realized a sense of connection to specific genres and texts (e.g., fantasy, horror, comics, manga), as consequence reading became an attainable practice and he began to see himself as a reader.

**Student Teachers’ Initial Conceptions of Literacy**

Both the initial survey that was distributed to the J/I literacy cohort (n = 22) and the initial interviews conducted with the purposive sample of eight student teachers, asked participants to comment on their initial conceptions of literacy upon entering the teacher education program. The data suggests that student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy were rather restricted. This finding was evident across both the open-ended survey data and the interview data. This finding is consistent with relevant research literature that has found student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy to be quite “narrow” (Edwards, 2009; Le Fevre, 2011; Penn-Edwards, 2011; Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012).

The interview phase of this study allowed for a deeper exploration of student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy as the open-ended format of the interview questions provided participants with the opportunity to discuss their experiences in greater detail. The interview data suggests student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy were considerably informed by the restrictive models of literacy they encountered throughout much of their prior schooling. This finding is consistent with related research
that has found student teachers’ conceptions of teaching and learning were substantially influenced by their prior schooling experiences and exposure to competing discourses of teaching (Britzman, 2003; Kosnik & Beck, 2009).

The suggestion that participating student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy were rather restricted upon entering their teacher education studies is in no way meant to present a deficient view of student teachers. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that student teachers bring rich literacy practices, varied cultural resources, and dynamic lived experience to their teacher education studies, which can deepen and enrich their teaching. Accordingly, attention now turns to complicating this finding by considering the following questions: What are the points of intersection between student teachers’ initial experiences in literacy teacher education, their literacy histories, and their conceptions of literacy? What changes when student teachers have the opportunity to place their literacy histories in conversation with their teacher education experience?

In many ways the student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy reflected aspects of the restricted approach to literacy teaching they experienced throughout much of their prior schooling. For example, Lynne’s initial conception of literacy was embedded in a view of reading and writing as a set of isolated abilities largely detached from context, use, and social purpose. She noted, “I thought it [literacy] was just reading and writing, and that was it, your ability to read and write, and your ability to put sentences together, and that’s where it ended.” Beth also seemed to associate literacy with the rigid approach to language instruction she experienced in school, which emphasized the acquisition of a set of language skills and isolated components, while largely neglecting meaning-making processes. Beth explained,
I remember when I saw that we had a literacy class [in teacher education] I didn’t really know what that meant. I thought, I really, I thought, it was like phonics, learning how to decipher words. Um, I definitely did not have the whole big picture of literacy, as cross-curricular and outside of school literacy. Uh [sigh] I, I thought it was really, phonics, maybe grammar. I didn’t really realize [laughs].

Similarly, Lukas drew a direct connection between his prior school experiences and his initial conception of literacy. More specifically, he associated literacy with the negative aspects of his school literacy experience, he referenced the canonical texts and writing assignments that functioned to exacerbate his sense of disconnect from the classroom. He explained,

I guess it kind of relates back to when I was schooled. So it was like reading Shakespeare, reading really old books, I had no idea what was going on, and then writing lots of essays, and that’s what I pictured literacy to be.

Zoe drew a subtle, but noteworthy, connection to her school literacy history, as she recounted how she conceived of literacy upon beginning the teacher education program. Interestingly, she echoed the exact phrase, “obsessed with conventions,” she had repeatedly used to previously describe her former high school teacher’s rigid approach to literacy teaching. Zoe had voiced her opposition to the teacher’s vigilant emphasis on the correct application of language rules because it limited students’ opportunities to exercise creativity and engage with writing as a form of expression. Zoe recalled,
I could just see literacy as the ability to read and write. And especially when it comes to writing, I was very much obsessed with the conventions. And so, when I started the [teacher education] program to me literacy was all about the conventions of the English language.

In addition, the experiences of Laura and Sue provide insight into the ways in which prior school literacy experiences can powerfully inform one’s conception of literacy and one’s identification as a reader/writer. As reported earlier in the chapter, throughout much of their schooling Laura and Sue did not connect with the reading and writing practices emphasized in the classroom. Each of them recounted school literacy practices that focused on texts they did not connect with and instructional strategies that reduced reading/writing to a static formula. Both Laura and Sue seemed to have interpreted the sense of disconnect they felt in relation to schooled literacy practices as a deficiency on their part. The detrimental consequences of this internalized deficiency framing shaped their identifications as readers/writers. They identified as “not a good” or “not a strong” reader and/or writer.

As they entered their teacher education studies the persistent consequences of these negative attributions were still apparent as they each voiced anxiety over their ability to teach literacy because of the difficulties they encountered with literacy in school. Their initial conceptions of literacy also seemed to mirror the restricted approach to literacy they experienced in school. After a pronounced pause Laura explained how she had initially conceived of literacy,

When I first started it [the teacher education program] I thought literacy was like English class. It was very boxed, and it’s one thing English class.
And I thought okay it’s good I’m learning about something that I need to work hard on. Um, because actually even in University my marks, I always thought okay this isn’t good enough, this is not good enough. So, I really, I thought this is good. And then I could teach kids and I could learn how to be better myself. And that’s the initial idea I had when I first started the program.

In her response Laura echoed many of the same sentiments she voiced when she previously described her experiences with literacy as an ELL student, during her elementary years of school. For instance, in describing her relationship to literacy upon entering the teacher education program, she revealed the enduring sense that her capability with literacy is “okay” but “not good enough,” and that literacy is “something that [she] needs to work hard on” so that she can “better herself.” Interestingly, Laura’s many accomplishments in university and within the community (e.g., youth mentor, tutor) did not seem to substantially reinforce her multiple capabilities with literacy, and sense of herself an established reader and writer.

Sue also voiced anxiety about teaching literacy and recounted an initial conception of literacy that was informed by her school literacy history. Sue confided,

Quite honestly I was scared to teach it [literacy]. So I was glad to take a course in it. I’m still nervous to teach it, but it hasn’t, it’s not as bad. But, what were my views on literacy?

LM: Yes, how would you have defined literacy when you first started the teacher education program?

Sue: I thought that it was reading a book in the typical fashion, what I grew up doing, as opposed to what we’ve learned about multiliteracies and things
like that. So you know, I thought it was your run-of-the-mill, dry, here’s your novel, tell me the plot, setting, climax, resolution. Those types of things came to mind when I thought of literacy [laughs].

Sue seemed to situate her initial conception of literacy within the restricted instructional activities she encountered in school. She equated literacy with the mundane approaches to novel study she had previously experienced in the classroom; that is, an instructional approach that did not extend much beyond examining the structural components of the novel. Her sense of disengagement with this approach to novel study is evident in her description of the task as “run-of-the-mill” and “dry.” Sue gestured to a shift in her conception of literacy as she referenced the “multilteracies” approach encountered in her current literacy methods course. The examination of student teachers’ shifting views of literacy will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

Unlike Laura and Sue, student teachers Lee and Robert were labeled as “successful” literacy students throughout much of their prior schooling. Within the classroom space the markers of achievement, namely the attainment of good grades and praise from teachers, often accompanied their literacy achievements and in turn, positioned them as “successful” readers/writers within the school context. Interestingly, Lee and Robert’s initial conceptions of literacy gesture to how their school literacy “success” served as a filter of sorts, effectively narrowing what they thought counted as literacy. For instance, Lee described her initial conception of literacy as follows,

I guess I thought literacy was just what was done in English class. So I hadn’t thought of content area literacies at all. And I guess because I always liked English so much I hadn’t thought about how hard English
might be for students who don’t like it, who have troubling reading, and how uncomfortable that could be.

Lee suggested that she had not initially conceived of literacy in broad terms. She thought of literacy as an isolated set of activities that only occurred in “English class,” rather than literacy as a social and contextually situated practice that was relevant across the curriculum. In addition, the sense of enjoyment and success she experienced in “English class” shaped her conception of literacy teaching and learning. She had never really given much thought to how school literacy practices can create challenges for some students.

In a sense, Lee’s enduring success with school-based literacy, had initially constrained her consideration of how the structuring of reading and writing activities in the classroom can create a site of challenge and discomfort for some students. This was an important realization for Lee. If student teachers uncritically assume that the students they teach will be engaged by a literacy pedagogy modeled on their prior school literacy experiences, they may unwittingly enact a literacy pedagogy that reinforces systems of marginalization and exclusion (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Barton et al., 2000; Gee, 1996/2012; Rogers, 2013). Lee had initially assumed based on her school literacy history, that her current and future students will inherently enjoy and excel at school-based reading and writing activities, just as she had.

Similarly, Robert’s initial conception of literacy appeared to have been fundamentally influenced by his reading preferences and achievements in school. Robert stated,
I was really excited about the literacy aspect of the program [teacher education] because I took an English major at [University name] and I studied a lot of really quality literature, and I like the whole idea of teaching students to look at a book and think for themselves about it. So, coming into it I guess I was really excited to be in some type of literature situation in practicum or teaching it.

Robert’s conception of literacy was greatly informed by his study of English literature at university. In his literacy autobiography he recalled that, “in university his favorite literary periods were Romanticism and Modernism.” During the interview, Robert expressed excitement at the prospect of teaching literature to students. He noted that in university he studied “quality literature.” His conception of literacy points to the framing of literacy as a particular type of text and view of an author (Gee, 1996/2012; Marsh, 2004; Street, 2008). Throughout his narrative he seemed to equate the terms literacy and literature. Robert’s initial conception of literacy appears to be situated in the study of English literature, particularly the study of canonical texts.

Student Teachers’ Expectations for the Literacy Component of the Teacher Education Program

The last section in this chapter will discuss student teachers’ initial expectations of what the literacy component of the teacher education program would involve. The interview data revealed two main findings: first, most of the student teachers reported that they did not have clear expectations for the literacy component of the teacher education program; second, the student teachers who did have definite expectations thought the literacy
course would administer a lockstep approach to literacy teaching, comprised mainly of concrete techniques and the direct implementation of curriculum expectations.

For example, Laura explained that she did not know what to expect from the literacy methods course when she started her teacher education studies. Laura confided,

Actually I had no idea. I, I didn’t have a lot of expectations about the program or didn’t have a picture in my mind of what it would be like at all. I kind of just came in, because I worked really hard to get into the program, so I was like okay this is what I want, I know it’s really good and beneficial, so I’m just going take it as it is, so no expectations.

Lynne also noted that upon entering the teacher education program she did not have well-defined expectations for what the literacy course would involve. Lynne recalled,

I mean, I’m not really sure to be honest with you, I wasn’t sure what to expect out of the program except that I was going to learn a lot on how to teach, and why to teach, and techniques, and how to do things, and the reason behind it, beyond that nothing strikes me.

The data also revealed the student teachers who did have expectations for the literacy course, thought the course would advance a teacher as technician approach to literacy teaching, whereby they would be required to strictly adhere to the curriculum expectations and deliver literacy instruction through a concrete set of strategies. Robert noted that he “was hoping that the [literacy] course would give some techniques” and “concrete strategies to use” in the classroom.
Sue expected literacy teaching to be rigidly directed by the curriculum expectations with little space available for teachers to exercise autonomy through their pedagogical practices. She seemed surprised to encounter a literacy methods course that approached literacy in broader terms. Sue explained,

I had no idea actually [laughs], I had no idea what to expect. Um, having the, having the amount of emphasis that [the government] puts on literacy and mathematics I was expecting them to be pretty core courses. Um, I was expecting to more go into curriculum expectations rather than the kind of the broader sense of how to teach literacy effectively. So, that was, that’s kind of what I expected it would be very curriculum-based, this is how you teach this to this age group, this is how you teach this to this age group, so yeah.

Correspondingly Lukas expected the literacy methods course to transmit a predetermined toolkit of strategies that student teacher would unwaveringly apply in the classroom. Lukas seemed to base his expectations for the literacy methods course on the transmission style of instruction he received during his undergraduate training in science, which emphasized a lecture format of instruction and rote memorization strategies for learning content. The disparity between the two approaches to learning is demonstrated as Lukas contrasts his undergraduate training with his current experience in teacher education. He explained,

I guess coming into the [teacher education] program it’s different because I came from undergrad [sic], well I came from Biology, so it was a lot of rote memorization. Coming here [teacher education], especially in the first week, I was kind of like why are we talking so much and reflecting?
Where are all the lecture notes and what not? So that was a huge change for me coming in.

Lukas, much like Sue and Robert, also expected that the literacy methods course would strictly focus on the implementation of mandated curriculum expectations, and the direct application of step-by-step techniques for effective literacy teaching. He further explained his initial expectations for literacy methods course,

Okay, well I pictured it to be a lot of lecture material, like here’s this, this, and this. That, that we were going to be spoon-fed material, kind of as to what a literacy teacher should be doing, like step-wise. I feel like that is still slightly lacking. Also, I guess initially when I came in I thought the [literacy methods] course content would be going over the curriculum that we would be teaching, it’s not really like that. But [laughs] yeah, I just thought it was going be like, so in grade seven they learn this, we’re just going to review some things and how to teach it. So I thought it was going to work that way.

Lastly, Beth’s expectations for the literacy methods course highlights a common assumption held by many of the student teachers, namely the belief that Junior-Immediate teachers (grades 4-10) do not need to teach literacy because their students would have already mastered the requisite literacy skills, during their primary grades of schooling (e.g. grades K-3). Beth said,

I really, I didn’t have a clue what it meant, I just remember not having a clue what this class [literacy methods] was going to be. I really thought it was like okay teaching kids how to read, and that is some of what we are doing, but it’s obviously so much more. I really thought that meant
teaching kids how to read, how to decipher words, which I thought was a little strange for [grades] 4 through 10, but I thought okay people unfortunately aren’t really learning how to read. I guess also, I thought it was grammar because I definitely grew up learning specific, you know learning grammar separately. But, I think a large part of what I thought it would be [the literacy course] would be grammar, how to teach grammar.

Beth’s initial expectation of the literacy course also corresponds with that of Sue, Robert and Lukas, as her assumptions about the role of a literacy teacher were situated within a teacher as technician paradigm, in which the enactment of literacy pedagogy was driven by the mandated curriculum expectations. Beth’s narrative however, also suggests that her experience in the literacy methods course shifted her conception of the role of a literacy teacher. She became increasingly aware of the autonomy and the informed choices literacy teachers can exercise in an effort to meet the needs of their students. As Beth explained this shift in perspective she gestures to the complexity of navigating these pedagogical responsibilities. She communicates a sense of feeling “overwhelmed” by the prospect of making these pedagogical choices. The pitch of Beth’s voice registered surprise as she described,

In terms of my thinking about the literacy class, what my expectations were, one of the major things that was so shocking to me was that teachers, I thought like in grade seven you’d teach you know Julius Caesar or Shakespeare, that, that every teacher knew these were the things they have to teach. And in some ways I’m amazed that we don’t have to do that. But that’s also the part that is so overwhelming too because you don’t have to teach Shakespeare who knew.
Conclusion

This chapter delved into the complex ways in which student teachers’ literacy histories informed their initial conceptions of literacy, their expectations for literacy teaching and learning, and their understanding of themselves as readers and writers. The findings suggest the student teachers entered teacher education with restricted notions of literacy, due in large part, to their school literacy histories. While the student teachers’ daily literacy practices (e.g., home, community, peer) drew upon a range of resources and multifaceted networks of communication their initial conceptions of literacy were largely grounded in the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984) they encountered in their prior schooling. The student teachers often associated school contexts with restricted notions of reading and writing that often privileged the acquisition of a rigid set of skills, and in turn, limited opportunities for dynamic communication and creative self-expression. Many of the student teachers recalled feeling disconnected from the texts and instructional activities promoted in their prior school-based literacy encounters, which had consequences for how they defined what counts as literacy and how they constructed identities as readers and writers.

The student teachers’ schooled literacy histories served as a filter of sorts, effectively narrowing their initial conceptions of what constitutes relevant and legitimate literacy practices, which informed their expectations for the literacy component of their teacher education studies. The majority of the student teachers initially expected the literacy methods courses to advance a teacher as technician approach to literacy teaching, whereby they would be required to rigidly adhere to curriculum expectations, and
unwaveringly transmit a toolkit of concrete literacy strategies. The student teachers’
school literacy histories also powerfully informed how they constructed identities as
readers and writers, which also shaped their expectations for literacy teaching. Their
conceptions of themselves as readers and writers influenced their sense of preparedness
to teach literacy. For instance, many of the student teachers who identified as
“successful” readers and/or writers had initially expected their transition to literacy
teaching to be quite natural and seamless because learning to read and/or write had come
easily to them, they achieved “good grades” in school, and they derived enjoyment from
these activities. In contrast, the student teachers who self-identified as “struggling”
readers and/or writers, based largely on their negative school literacy experiences, voiced
feelings of anxiety and self-doubt in their ability to teach literacy.

The next two data chapters, chapters Five and Six, will consider student teachers’
experiences in the literacy methods courses. The findings presented in each of these
chapters speak to the ways in which student teachers’ conceptions of literacy shifted as
they entered into conversation with the broader field of literacy (e.g., multiliteracies, out-
of-school literacies) in their literacy courses.
CHAPTER 5: STUDENT TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES CONSTRUCTING AN APPROACH TO LITERACY TEACHING

“Prior to beginning the teacher education program I had a rather traditional view of literacy. My understanding of literacy has been expanded through our discussions of multiliteracies and students’ out-of-school literacies”

Lee (survey data T2)

“I’ve realized the complexity of what defines literacy.”

Marcus (survey data T2)

As demonstrated in the previous chapter student teachers’ school literacy histories have socialized them into literacy practices and discourses that often positioned literacy in restrictive terms; namely, as an isolated skill that must be acquired incrementally (Gee, 1996/2012; Street, 1985). In contrast, student teachers often engaged with a rich array of literacy practices through their out-of-school interactions (e.g., home, community, peer networks). Indeed, the examination of student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy revealed an apparent dissonance between their prior schooled literacy experiences, their out-of-school literacy interactions, and what they recognized as relevant literacies. This chapter will further explore how this dissonance served as a catalyst provoking student teachers to situate their relationships to literacy within autobiographical, historical, cultural, and social domains of experience (Huebner, 1967; Pinar, 2004). The finding discussed in both chapters five and six consider the ways in which student teachers meaningfully connected past and present domains of experience to construct an approach to literacy teaching.
Accordingly, the data examined in the next two chapters (Chapters 5 and 6) considers how the student teachers engaged with the approaches to literacy and literacy pedagogy presented in their teacher education courses. Chapter Five and Six will also examine the ways in which student teachers’ conceptions of literacy shifted as they entered into conversation with a broader field of literacy through their literacy courses. An upcoming chapter (Chapter 7) will examine student teachers’ experiences with literacy during their practice teaching placements. This analysis is guided by my second and third research questions: In what ways do J/I student teachers’ conceptions of literacy shift over the course of a two-year teacher education program? and How do J/I student teachers see their role as teachers of literacy?

Chapter Five is organized into two main sections. In Section One the focus is on student teachers’ shifting conceptions of literacy. Section Two provides a more detailed look at the ways in which the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy broadened and informed their understanding of literacy teaching in the junior-intermediate grades.

**Student Teachers’ Shifting Conceptions Of Literacy**

“The literacy course it was an eye opener to understand literacy in all its meaning.”

Laura

The analysis of survey data collected from the J/I cohort (n=22) provided the opportunity to examine the extent to which student teachers’ felt their conceptions of literacy had changed during their teacher education studies. Table 5 reports the mean scores and standard deviations for the J/I cohorts’ self-reported extent of change in their view of
literacy and their understanding of literacy teaching and learning. Student teachers were asked to score each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal).

Survey data was collected at two points during the J/I cohort’s first year in the teacher education program. The time-one (T1) survey data was collected 12 weeks into the fall term, after the first practice teaching placement. The time-two data (T2) survey data was collected at the end of the winter term. On average, student teachers indicated that their view of literacy had changed a fair amount during their first year in the teacher education program \((T1 \text{ } M = 4.63, \text{ } SD = 0.48; \text{ } T2 \text{ } M = 4.55, \text{ } SD = 0.69)\). The student teachers also reported that their understanding of literacy teaching and learning had changed a fair amount during the first year of teacher education studies \((T1 \text{ } M = 4.58, \text{ } SD = 0.49; \text{ } T2 \text{ } M = 4.85, \text{ } SD = 0.37)\). In this instance there was a statistically significant increase in the mean ratings from T1 to T2 \((t = -2.77, \text{ } p = .012)\).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Mean scores extent of change in student teachers’ view of literacy and understanding of literacy teaching and learning for Time 1 (T1) and Time 2 (T2) survey data.</th>
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<td>T1 View of literacy</td>
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<td>T1 Understanding of literacy teaching</td>
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The qualitative survey data also support and elaborate upon the findings reported in the table above. More specifically, many of the student teachers noted that their initial conceptions of literacy broadened during their teacher education studies. For example,
one of the open-ended survey questions asked student teachers to comment on how their conception of literacy and literacy teaching had changed during their time in the teacher education program. Student teacher Zahra commented, “I used to think of literacy in a very traditional sense, as Shakespeare, novel studies, but now I realize that literacy is so much broader than what I originally thought.”

The qualitative survey data also indicated that many of the student teachers became more attuned to the complexity of literacy teaching. For instance, John noted,

My understanding of literacy teaching has changed a great deal. It’s extremely difficult to teach as I learned during my practicum. Students are at different levels when it comes to literacy, finding ways to accommodate all learners is a challenge. The [teacher education] program helped me tackle that challenge for the first time.

Similarly, in her survey response Jennifer noted, “the program opened my eyes to literacy. I didn’t know how complex literacy was before the program. I also didn’t see it as an important part of education, now I do.” The survey data provided a useful, but preliminary, understanding of how student teachers’ conceptions of literacy shifted during their teacher education studies. These finding were explored in greater depth through the collection and analysis of interview data from the purposive sample of student teachers (n=8).

Attention now turns to the analysis of the interview data as it offers a more comprehensive picture of the range of opportunities, challenges, and supports that informed student teachers understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy. The interview data was collected in four stages over the course of the two-year teacher education program.
education program. Although the interview data included only those student teachers that comprised the purposeful sample (n=8) their experiences offer productive insights into the complex process of constructing an approach to literacy teaching. Each of the sections that follow will present a select number of student teacher interview responses (i.e., direct quotes from the four phases of interviews); however, it is important to note these findings are representative of key themes and recurrent patterns identified in the data as a whole.

The next section of this chapter will highlight the ways in which prior schooling experiences ostensibly functioned as filters to narrow student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy. The examination of these filters provides insight into how institutional discourses and acts of social positioning operated throughout the student teachers’ prior schooling, to effectively set the parameters by which they initially defined what counts as literacy. As the student teachers identified the impact of these filters their conceptions of literacy began to shift.

The Past Informs The Present: Dissonance As A Catalyst For Change

A pedagogy of literacy teacher education that is committed to working with student teachers to deeply consider what it means to teach literacy should endeavor to gain insight into the perspectives and experiences, which inform how student teachers think about the place of literacy in their future classrooms. Barton & Hamilton (1998/2012) note that “people’s understanding of literacy is an important aspect of their learning, and people’s theories guide their action” (p. 13). As reported in the previous chapter, the student teachers brought a wide range of experiences with literacy (e.g., home, peer,
school) to their teacher education studies, which can deepen and enrich their literacy teaching. The data also revealed, however, student teachers’ school literacies histories in many ways served to restrict their initial conceptions of literacy and their expectations for literacy teaching. The next section of this chapter will examine the ways in which student teachers’ school literacy histories informed their initial and evolving conceptions of literacy.

Attending to the influence of student teachers’ school literacy histories is not meant to diminish or discount their diverse linguistic resources and rich life experiences. Rather, the intention is to gain a deeper understanding of how student teachers’ previous years of schooling informed their expectations for literacy teaching and learning; for, as the data suggest their school literacy histories were very influential (Britzman, 2003; Cochrán-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Dewey, 1938/1997; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Lortie, 1975). Teacher education should engage student teachers in the consideration of how their own temporality informs the process of learning to teach (Huebner, 1967). This endeavor necessitates the construction of an “educational environment” in which “the past is in the present as the basis for projection” (Huebner, 1967, p. 177). If as literacy teacher educators, we hope to work with student teachers to develop a multifaceted approach to literacy pedagogy, we must also be committed to working with them to uncover how school structures can, at times, privilege certain literacy practices and simultaneously inhibit others. As educators it is important to become consciously aware of how our autobiographical encounters with schooling have shaped how we come define what counts as literacy.
As noted in the previous chapter the majority of the student teachers entered teacher education with rather restricted conceptions of literacy, due in large part, to the influence of their school literacy histories. This finding was evident across both the survey data (n=22) and the interview data (n=8). The finding is also consistent with related literature in the area of literacy teacher education (Boche, 2014; Moje 2008; O’Brien & Stewart, 1990; Penn-Edwards, 2011; Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012; Sheridan-Thomas, 2007; Skerrett, 2011; White & Cranitch, 2010; Williamson, 2013). Throughout much of the student teachers’ prior schooling literacy was often positioned as an isolated set of skills to be taught within the period allotted for “language arts” or “English” on the classroom timetable. Accordingly, upon entering their teacher education studies many of the student teachers conceived of literacy as an autonomous set of skills incrementally taught and acquired in “English class” (Street, 1984). While they engaged with a diverse range of dynamic literacy practices in their out-of-school lives, student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy largely overlooked these practices, and instead were firmly rooted in their school literacy histories.

In particular, their initial conceptions of literacy were considerably informed by the teacher-directed and skills-based approach to language instruction they encountered throughout much of their schooling; in spite of the fact, that many of them found these experiences to be quite negative. However, as the student teachers actively pieced together their literacy autobiographies as part of their teacher education studies, the juxtaposition of the past with the present provoked them to reexamine their initial assumptions about literacy and literacy pedagogy.
As Maxine Greene (1971) theorized the relationship between curriculum and one’s lived experience, she wisely noted the act of conscious reflection can inspire an individual to “incorporate [the] past into the present, to link the present to the future” (p. 263). As the student teachers mined their rich literacy histories they began to identify points of dissonance between the approach to literacy emphasized throughout much of their prior schooling, and the approach to literacy teaching modeled in their teacher education studies. It is often in such moments of disruption, “moments of strangeness,” that “the individual reaches out to reconstitute meaning, to close the gaps, to make sense once again” (Greene, 1971, p. 261). Indeed, the points of dissonance the student teachers identified between their school literacy histories and their present studies seemed to serve as a catalyst, effectively provoking them to rethink what counts as literacy.

For instance, student teacher Zoe initially associated literacy with the rigid approach to language instruction she experienced in school. This instructional approach emphasized the acquisition of a narrow set of linguistic conventions largely detached from context, use, and social function. As Zoe reflected upon her experience in the literacy course during the first year of her teacher education studies she explained,

I think the literacy course, the most important thing that it brought me is that awareness of how to approach literacy as a teacher, that was a very different sort of awareness I can tell you. I used to think, okay, so I’m supposed to teach these students what setting is, and the conventions, and that’s it. But then I found out that it can be very different, very exciting at the same time, and very, very much related to a wide range of subjects and people’s situations and needs.

Zoe’s experience in the literacy course functioned to extend the frame she had
initially used to define literacy. She began to see reading and writing practices as situated and responsive to the demands of different contexts. The positioning of literacy as a dynamic socio-cultural process provoked the student teachers to consciously consider the ways in which distinct social contexts “pose different demands, offer different opportunities, and require different ways of communicating” (Barton, et al, 2007, p. 14). The dissonance the student teachers identified between the restrictive framing of literacy that characterized much of their prior schooling and the multifaceted approach to literacy modeled in their teacher education studies, signaled a pivotal shift in their evolving understanding of literacy.

Campano (2007) suggests, “new teachers may be constrained by personal history, especially when they are evaluated by social criteria that has little to do with their potential” (p. 91). The conscious awareness of this personal history can, however, “also be an educator’s greatest asset, imbuing teaching with passion and giving it intellectual focus” (Campano, 2007, p. 91). Indeed, for many of the student teachers the identification of points of dissonance, between their prior schooling and current studies, functioned as a catalyst for change igniting a shift in their initial conceptions of literacy. Accordingly, the student teachers began to (re)consider literacy in broader terms and to question how literacy comes to be defined within the social world of the classroom.

Student teacher Lukas identified the dissonance between the way literacy was positioned throughout much of his prior schooling and the approach to literacy he encountered in his teacher education studies. The literacy course invited him to reflect upon his relationship to reading and writing and consider how this might inform his construction of a pedagogical practice. Lukas explained,
I feel like I’m building my foundation because I never really had that much of a strong foundation in literacy, like before for me, it was just reading Shakespeare, and analyzing. So coming into this [teacher education] program, that deconstructed what I thought, and I’m trying to build what it means to be a literacy teacher. So, it’s continuously developing, because I’m trying to absorb new ways of teaching literacy, just because I know the way that I was taught I didn’t enjoy, and I don’t think a lot of people enjoyed it. So I’m trying to absorb as many new things as I can… I guess for me, knowing what I’ve gone through, I want it to be different.

Upon entering the teacher education program, Lukas like many of the student teachers, had initially conceived of literacy as the select texts and a regimented skill set students were required master and successfully demonstrate in “English class.” Interestingly, his initial conception of literacy was deeply tied to the literacy activities he found inaccessible and unenjoyable throughout his schooling. Many of these experiences were discussed in the previous chapter. Here again Lukas makes specific reference to activities he did not connect with in school, such as the “reading of Shakespeare,” and the “analysis” of texts he felt were too far-removed from his life experience. His repetition of the phrase, “I’m trying to absorb new ways of teaching literacy” gestured to the dissonance he identified between the way literacy was framed throughout much of his prior schooling and his current experience in teacher education. Most notable perhaps, is his suggestion that the literacy course provoked him to “deconstruct” his initial conception of literacy and rethink the potential for literacy teaching.
The literacy course invited student teachers to consider the diverse literacy practices people engage with on a daily basis as they negotiate different social domains. Inviting student teachers to think about literacy teaching and learning through the broader frame of social practice seemed to facilitate a fluid process of deconstructing, re-envisioning, and re-constructing what counts as literacy. Student teacher Lynne’s frustration is palpable as she recalled her school literacy history. She repeatedly expressed a sense of having “missed out” as she contrasted her past experience with literacy instruction against her current experience in teacher education. Lynne stressed,

I feel like I’ve missed out on so many great things, like in literacy class we talk about technology and incorporating that as a new type of literacy. That a lot of kids they understand it like it’s second nature to them, no problem, because they’ve grown up with it. I feel like I’ve missed out on so many things. I would have loved English if my teacher had done some of the things that we’re learning now, rather than read *Brave New World* do a book report, snooze fest, or read the book and watch the movie. I feel like I’ve missed out.

Lynne identified disparities between the restrictive framing of literacy she experienced during much of her previous schooling, and the multifaceted approach to literacy modeled in the literacy courses in her teacher education studies. Lynne’s identification of this disconnect motivated her to consider what she might do differently as she constructs an approach to literacy teaching. When asked what she wished would have been included in her previous school literacy experience she promptly listed a series of collaborative, creative, and interactive activities, many of which were modeled in the literacy courses. In an excited tone Lynne emphasized,
We could have done so many other things like debates, discussions, skits, plays, make a movie, talk about a movie, make a documentary, make a case, discuss. I really feel I missed out with my education compared to how we’re learning how to teach literacy.

Lynne’s response signals her attempt to re-envision the teacher-directed model of language instruction that comprised much of her schooled literacy history, whereby students were often positioned as receivers of knowledge, rather than active contributors in the construction of knowledge (Freire, 1970/2007). Lynne by contrast, expressed her interest in constructing a literacy pedagogy that creates space for students to share their thoughts, voice their opinions, and actively participate in the production of knowledge.

Sue, much like Lukas and Lynne, also voiced resistance to the rather rigid approach to literacy teaching she encountered during her “formal schooling.” As indicated in the previous chapter Sue’s school literacy history was not positive. She characterized herself as having “struggled with all the basics usually associated with literacy.” Much like Lukas, Sue did not enjoy reading in school because she felt “forced” to read books that didn’t connect to her interests or lived experience. Her studies in teacher education, however, seemed to provide an opportunity to think about literacy in broader terms and consider how literacy operates both within and beyond the classroom. She explained,

Well, I mean from what I thought school literacy was, was very narrow, like fictional novel study, writing a poem, what I really envisioned English as, writing essays, stuff like that…The literacy course really I feel broadened my view of what literacy is. And not being an English major,
and not really having enjoyed English in all my formal schooling, I, I thought it was interesting the way it kind of ballooned out, rather than taking what I considered typical English lessons previously. I thought that was the most important part about it. So, that there isn’t just one way of doing it. And we need to think more about the student’s life and background, and what they find interesting as opposed to, the fictional novel study that we want to force them into. I think that’s really important.

Sue noted that her experience with the literacy course broadened her conception of literacy beyond the confines of the “typical English lessons;” whereby, students were required to write formulaic essays and perpetually read a narrow range of texts. Literacy activities she felt often failed to connect with her interests and life beyond the classroom. She utilized the vivid image of an expanding balloon to communicate the shift in her conception of literacy. Sue began to envision literacy pedagogy as a space of possibility and meaningful connection. Literacy pedagogy became reframed as a relational space that valued and responded to students’ interests, needs, and lived realities.

As Sue engaged with this broader framing of literacy the prospect of literacy teaching began to seem more accessible to her. It facilitated the realization that “there isn’t just one way” to teach literacy. The foregrounding of children/youths’ interests and lived experience as integral to literacy pedagogy functioned to supplant the hierarchical role of the teacher as the sole purveyor knowledge. Consequently, Sue’s initial insecurities about teaching literacy because she was not “an English major” and “struggled” with schooled literacy began to diminish.

Sue had initially felt insecure about her ability to teach literacy because Science, not English, was her designated area of content specialization (i.e., teachable subject).
Sue, like many of her colleagues in teacher education, had initially assumed those most adept to teach literacy were the student teachers with a designated subject specialization in English. Interestingly however, the student teachers with an English specialization (i.e., English teachable), often reported a sense of surprise that their designated qualification, namely the study of English at the University level, did not directly translate into knowing how to teach literacy at the junior-immediate grade level. The discussion of this finding is in no way meant to diminish or discount the specialized content knowledge student teachers bring with them to their teacher education studies, but rather seeks to contribute to the understanding of the diverse ways in which their educational histories inform their understanding of literacy teaching and learning.

Student teacher Lee’s specialization in English had initially influenced her sense of preparedness to teach literacy and her expectations of pupils’ literacy needs and abilities. Her initial conception of literacy pedagogy began to shift as she identified disconnects between her initial expectations and realities of the classroom. Lee noted,

I’m realizing that you actually have to consciously teach reading still into J/I, and that it’s not just the traditional skills, and that it’s much harder than I thought too. I guess I always assumed because I studied English, and I liked it, that I’d find it easy to teach. But actually, I found it in some ways more, well in some ways more difficult than teaching math in my first practice teaching placement because that was so structured, and you know exactly what you have to cover. But literacy is harder because it’s more abstract. So in that way, I found it more difficult. Maybe too because it came easy to me [sic] that it might be harder to relate to students who don’t get it or don’t like it.
Lee’s experiences as a learner, namely, her study of English at the post-secondary level coupled with her enjoyment and achieved ‘success’ with schooled literacy practices, set the initial parameters by which she defined what it meant to teach literacy. Lee had “always assumed because [she] studied English and [she] liked it, that [she’d]’ find it easy to teach.” Based on her literacy history, she had also assumed that students at the junior-intermediate grade level would readily engage with school based reading and writing practices and be highly proficient. Once she had the opportunity to enact literacy teaching within the classroom context, however, she was surprised to learn that “reading still” had to be “consciously” taught at the J/I level. Moreover, she registered surprised at the realization that literacy pedagogy involved more than teaching “just the traditional” language conventions and skills.

As Lee identified the points of tensions between her initial conception of literacy pedagogy and the challenges she subsequently faced in the classroom, the prospect of literacy teaching became a more complex and elusive endeavor than she had initially expected. She repeatedly noted that literacy teaching was “more difficult” than she had expected it to be. Lee elaborated further on how her educational history informed her initial expectations for literacy teaching and learning. When asked if there was anything that surprised her about her experience in teacher education program she said,

I guess part of it would be learning about literacy, and learning that it is so much more complex than what I thought, because literacy was what I would’ve assumed I already knew about coming in to [teacher education program], but I obviously, I didn’t. I guess, I just thought everyone likes to read and analyze what they read, and talk about the themes and the
literary devices, but than a lot of people don’t at all, so you can’t just do that when you teach.

Lee had always enjoyed and excelled at reading. Her initial conception of literacy was embedded within the academic practices and norms she had been exposed to as a student. As Lee identified points of dissonance between her initial expectations of the role of a J/I literacy teacher and the practical realities of the classroom her conception of literacy pedagogy began to change. During her teacher education studies Lee began to extend the initial parameters she had used to define literacy, and endeavored to construct an approach to literacy teaching that was attentive to students’ diverse interests and needs.

Similarly, Robert also registered a sense of surprise that his study of English at the university level had not fully prepared him to teach literacy to middle school students. He noted that one of the teaching challenges he anticipated was the ability to effectively scaffold the reading process for students who had difficulties with reading. Much like Lee, it was difficult for Robert to relate to “struggling readers” because he had been a proficient reader at an early age and he continued to enjoy reading. He recalled, “the way I learned how to read seemed spontaneous, like at home my mom taught me letters and that kind of thing, and eventually I just picked up a book and started reading. I don’t really know how that happened.”

Robert valued the specialized content knowledge his studies in English literature afforded him; however, as a beginning teacher he recognized the need to develop the pedagogical knowledge required to facilitate the reading process for a diverse range of students. Robert communicated a sense of discomfort at the realization that his academic
training in English had not fully prepared him to teach children how to read. Robert confided he was concerned about,

trying to help students that are struggling with it, especially at the younger grades like [grades], four, five, six there’ll be students that really can’t read, and trying to show them how to read, because all my university literacy is kind of analyzing books and thinking about plot and all that, but not the basic reading itself.

As English specialists both Robert and Lee expected to feel comfortable teaching literacy; however, their experience in the literacy course and their classroom interactions with middle school students unsettled many of their initial assumptions about literacy pedagogy. The knowledge and skills they had successfully applied to the study of English at the post-secondary level did not readily transfer to the teaching of literacy in middle school classrooms. While their identification of this dissonance provoked feelings of insecurity, it also seemed to initiate a deeper understanding of the inherent complexity of literacy pedagogy.

**Disrupting The Junior/Intermediate Fallacy**

“The idea that you’re still teaching people how to read in J/I was also strangely new because I assumed that’s done just in primary.” Lee

Upon entering the teacher education program many of the J/I student teachers seem to hold some fundamental misconceptions about literacy teaching and learning in the middle school division. They had initially assumed that as middle school teachers they would not be responsible for teaching reading and writing. Moreover, the student teachers with a
content specialization in an area other than English (e.g., science, history, art, physical education) seemed to have the impression that literacy would not be an integral part of their pedagogical practice. These findings are consistent with related literature in the area of literacy teacher education (Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Linek et al., 1999; Moje 2008; O’Brien & Stewart, 1990; Penn-Edwards, 2011; White & Cranitch, 2010; Williamson, 2013).

Many of the student teachers mentioned these assumptions so frequently that the code J/I Fallacy was developed and applied during data analysis to examine how these assumptions informed their initial conceptions of literacy. The data analysis suggests the student teachers’ misconceptions about middle school teaching and learning informed their initial conceptions of literacy teaching. However, the data also indicates that as the student teachers identified and dispelled these fallacies their understanding of literacy pedagogy became more nuanced. The dimensions of the J/I fallacy will be explored herein.

Many of the J/I student teachers had initially assumed that the teaching of reading and writing was the exclusive domain of primary school teachers (i.e. grades K-3). They expected that children/youth would have mastered the requisite reading and writing skills before entering the J/I division. Accordingly, they believed that as J/I teachers the teaching of reading and writing would not be part of their pedagogical responsibilities.

Several, J/I student teachers recalled being surprised when they realized they would be completing literacy courses as part of their teacher education studies. Beth for instance, registered a sense of confusion over the prospect of completing literacy courses. She had initially thought of literacy teaching in rather narrow terms; namely, as the
instruction of young children on how to decode and decipher text. Reading skills she believed were acquired in the primary grades. Beth recalled,

Honestly, I didn’t go into this [teacher education] knowing what I needed to learn, what I wanted to learn, what I would be learning. I didn’t know what the courses were going to be. I, with our literacy course, I had no clue what that meant. I just thought, like I’ve said this and written this on the survey, I thought literacy was just learning how to read, like the things you do in kindergarten.

As with many of the J/I student teachers, Beth’s initial conception of literacy was considerably informed by the models of literacy she had experienced in school. This finding was also apparent in the previous data chapter. Filtered through this rather restricted lens literacy came to be defined as the skills, linguistic conventions, and canonical texts taught within the temporal confines of a designated “language arts/English” period. When literacy is positioned within such restrictive boundaries it can make it difficult to think of literacy as dynamic process that is continuously shaped by the specific demands of context, use, and social function (Street, 1984, 1993, 2005).

One might assume that this misconception about the teaching of literacy would not apply to student teachers with a subject specialization in English, that however, was not the case. Student teachers with a designated English teachable also seemed to hold similar misconceptions about the teaching of literacy in the J/I division. For example, Robert, a student teacher with an English specialization, noted “obviously students need to know the basics of reading and writing, and I’ll probably end up having to teach a little bit of that, but I am kind of hoping that primary teachers do a lot of that work.” Robert’s
characterization of the role of a J/I teacher exemplifies the mistaken assumption that primary grade teachers are principally responsible for the teaching of reading and writing. This restricted view of literacy can be somewhat problematic because it neglects to consider literacy learning as a life-long process, in which people continuously learn and apply a range of literacies in different social domains of life (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Gee, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

Lee, a student teacher with a content specialization in English echoed similar expectations. She explained how her initial conception of literacy began to shift as she developed a more nuanced understanding of literacy through her teacher education studies:

I guess I realize literacy is far more complex, and how you really have to teach it as a Junior-Intermediate teacher. Where I kind of assumed you didn’t really teach reading anymore, but I realize now you definitely have to. I guess I assumed that they [students] learned to read in the primary grades and that’s all there is to it. I guess I hadn’t considered enhancing comprehension and reading more difficult texts, and different kinds of texts, that they [students] need instruction. And that some kids maybe won’t even be able to decode properly even in the J/I years.

Lee’s response provides insight into the ways in which the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy teaching and learning began to shift as they engaged with the literacy course. The student teachers began to recognize that reading and writing are not fixed skills that students have wholly mastered by the time they exit the primary grades. On the contrary, as children/youth progress through school they encounter an increasingly sophisticated array of texts (e.g., science textbooks, primary source historical
documents), and modes of representation used to construct knowledge within particular discipline areas. Children/youth must be prepared to continuously negotiate and respond to the interpretive demands imposed by specific disciplinary discourses (Gee, 1996/2012; Moje, 2008). If children/youth do not have the opportunity to gain insight into the text structures and communication strategies used to constitute knowledge within particular disciplines then the likelihood that they will make meaningful inferences and interpretations becomes much more precarious.

Correspondingly, the data also suggests the student teachers’ initial understanding of the complexity of literacy pedagogy was also obscured by the enduring characterization of J/I teachers as the purveyors of content, and primary teachers as responsible for scaffolding a child’s attainment of development milestones (O’Brien & Stewart, 1990). While, this misconception functions to oversimplify the work of both J/I and P/J teachers its influence should not be disregarded. This rather artificial divide considerably informed student teachers’ initial conceptions of their role as J/I teachers.

The student teachers’ initial conceptions of their role as J/I teachers were firmly rooted in their designated content areas of specialization (i.e. teachable subjects). The student teacher’s subject specialization ostensibly established the affinity groupings to which they belonged (Gee, 2000, 2012; Jenkins, 2006). Accordingly, the values and practices of the relevant academic disciplines seem to direct the pedagogical focus of each content area grouping. In other words, a student teacher’s perceived membership in a discipline specific area of the curriculum effectively delineated their initial expectations for their pedagogical responsibilities as a J/I teacher.
For instance, Beth did not initially think literacy teaching applied to her because she identified as an “art teacher” and “always thought that an English teacher teaches English.” Lynne a student teacher with a specialization in Physical Education did not initially see literacy as relevant to her pedagogical practice. When asked if she considered herself to be a teacher of literacy upon beginning her teacher education studies Lynne frankly stated, “No, not at all. I was like, I’m going to learn how to teach phys. ed. [sic] and deliver other curriculum if I get dropped into a Grade 1 class.” Similarly Lukas, a student teacher with a Science teachable, remarked that upon entering the teacher education program he had not considered literacy to be relevant his area of teaching specialization. He believed that J/I teachers were fundamentally responsible for teaching subject-specific curricular content in the designated time slot allotted on the school timetable. Lukas explained,

When I came into the program I didn’t really think of myself as a teacher of literacy. I thought things were like broken up into little bits, like even when you look back if you compare middle school, when I was in middle school there was rotary, and now it’s not really rotary.

Lukas like many of the student teachers, expected that as a J/I teacher he would be exclusively teaching science his subject area of specialization, and as such, he did not see literacy as relevant to his future teaching practice. The rotary timetable Lukas recalled from his educational history, considerably informed his conception of teaching, whereby each subject area was confined to a designated instructional period. The framing of content areas as isolated units can perpetuate a model of knowledge construction that is partial and insular. When interdisciplinary connections are not drawn between the various
content areas it can limit the learning opportunities available for students to think within and across disciplines. Accordingly, students may come to see the specific content areas as isolated entities, rather than multifaceted and intersecting sites of knowledge construction and communication.

Moreover, this paradigm largely overlooks the place of literacy within the content areas; it is therefore, not surprising perhaps that many of the student teachers initially assumed that literacy would not be relevant to their work as J/I teachers. Consequently, the student teachers initially neglected to consider the ways in which different reading and writing practices are used to construct and communicate knowledge within particular disciplines. This is an important realization for student teachers because in order to make disciplinary knowledge accessible to children/youth teachers must prepare students to navigate the diverse text structures, terminologies, and modes of representation they will encounter in the different content areas (Moje, 2008).

As they progressed through their teacher education studies many of the student teachers came to recognize literacy pedagogy as relevant to their work as content areas teachers. This finding will be more fully explored in the following sections of this chapter that examine student teachers’ broadening conceptions of literacy and their recognition of literacy as relevant to content area teaching.

Broadening Conceptions of Literacy

“I would definitely say it’s a 180 degree flip.” Lynne

This section of the chapter examines the ways in which student teachers’ experiences with the literacy courses broadened their initial conceptions of literacy and informed their
construction of a teaching practice. Overall, the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy seemed to steadily broaden as they engaged with the literacy course component of their teacher education studies. The finding is consistent with related literature in the area of literacy teacher education (Boche, 2014; Leland, 2013; O’Neill & Geoghegan, 2011; Rosaen & Terpstra, 2012; Sheridan-Thomas, 2007; Skerrett, 2011; Williamson, 2013).

In each of the four phases of interviews student teachers were asked to discuss their conceptions of literacy, and how, if at all, their conceptions had changed during their teacher education studies. The student teachers reported that their conceptions of literacy had undergone a shift, due in large part, to the concepts and strategies presented in the literacy courses. The literacy courses asked student teachers to consider literacy as a dynamic process, rather than a static entity, that people use throughout their lives as they navigate the daily demands of various socio-cultural contexts. Student teacher Robert seemed to respond to this framing of literacy. He commented,

I’m seeing literacy broader than I used to see it, that is one big change. I guess just all the different aspects of literacy that the program has kind of reinforced. I know, coming into it [teacher education] I knew a lot about novels and poetry, the kind of traditional type of literacy. And although I’d done some of it in school, I hadn’t really thought a lot about teaching media literacy, and reading from newspapers, and digital literacy, but some of those different types of literacies that aren’t what we normally think of as scholarly I think are really important, and the program has kind of reinforced that.

Robert had initially conceived of literacy as the select texts and the reading practices “traditionally” privileged within formal academic contexts. His participation in
the literacy course provoked him to consider how schools are implicated in designating and maintaining the “scholarly” status accorded to certain texts and literacy practices (Gee, 1996/2012). As his conception of literacy broadened he recognized the diverse ways people engage with texts and literacies in different domains of life (e.g., newspapers, digital tools, religious texts). He came to acknowledge these literacy practices as valid and important.

Similarly, Beth suggested her experience in the literacy course during her first year in the teacher education program, had initiated a “big change” in the way she thought about literacy. She recalled a key insight from the literacy course:

I’ve had a few ah ha moments this year in literacy. Oh I mean, I just still so clearly remember the beginning of the year, and I came home and I spoke to my husband about it, when we first talked about out-of-school literacies and bringing those into the classroom, and just, just the very concept that literacy is not just reading novels. At the time that was just mind-blowing, that texting messaging is literacy, and that could have a place in the classroom. And also, I had no clue, I really was clueless at the beginning of this year, but I thought, you know every grade seven teacher had to teach a specific set of novels, and that’s just, you know what you did, and you had to teach certain types of essays. So, the fact that really there’s teacher choice is amazing and scary.

Beth’s understanding of what counts as literacy began to broaden as she recognized the varied formats and multiple tools people use to participate in literacy practices. The literacy course invited her to consider the variety of reading and writing practices children/youth participate in, both within and beyond, the walls of the school. She also developed greater insight into the responsibility of literacy teaching. In
particular, the autonomy a teacher can exercise when selecting reading materials for his/her literacy program. She was pleasantly surprised, but also overwhelmed, by the prospect of selecting the relevant texts and instructional practices to be used in her future literacy program. The realization that a multifaceted literacy program requires knowledge of both conventional texts and emerging digitally mediated resources invoked feelings of excitement and anxiety simultaneously.

As Lynne reflected on her experience in the first year literacy course she also identified a pivotal shift in her conception of literacy. Lynne, in a serious but enthusiastic tone stated,

I would definitely say it’s a 180 degree flip, for sure, that literacy is not just reading and writing, it’s cross-curricular, it’s multi-leveled, and there are so many different types of literacy, and there’s so many ways to be literate, and it’s not just language arts. It’s not just how many books you read.

As Lynne extended her consideration of literacy beyond the language arts classroom she recognized that “literacy is not the same in all contexts; rather, there are different literacies” (Barton & Hamilton, 2012, p. 9). Lynne noted this pivotal turning point had been quite unexpected. I asked her to elaborate on why this shift in her conception of literacy felt so unexpected and profound. Upon entering the teacher education program Lynne had expected the literacy course to deliver a basic toolkit of “strategies on how to teach reading, how to teach spelling, how to teach grammar, how to teach basically everything around an English class.” She was surprised to learn that the
course offered a broader approach to literacy pedagogy. Lynne explained the progression of this turning point:

And then I went, oh literacy, big picture not small picture. It’s just, now it’s the big picture for me. It’s not just this pinhole kind of a thing to look at in the classroom, it’s the whole school, the whole program, the whole curriculum, rather than just English or literature or small subject. And, to know that literacy has different applications in different subjects as well.

The student teachers’ literacy course experiences provide insight into what changes when student teachers view themselves as in conversation with a broader field of literacy. Their experiences point to the ways in which restricted conceptions of literacy, perpetuated by the legacy of prior schooling, can begin to steadily broaden when reading and writing are re-envisioned as multifaceted practices that people engage with to construct knowledge and communicate within different social domains of life. As many of the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy broadened the prospect of literacy teaching seemed more accessible to them. They began to reconceptualize the teaching of reading and writing as a dynamic space where students’ varied interests and needs can be meaningfully engaged.

Student teacher Sue invoked her school literacy history to voice resistance to the teaching of literacy as an isolated set of skills that largely neglects the communicative, expressive, and meaning-making dimensions of language. Interestingly, the aspects of the literacy course that resonated with Sue were the dimensions of literacy pedagogy fundamentally lacking throughout much of her prior schooling. Namely, engaging with literacy pedagogy as space that acknowledges a range of texts and creates opportunities
for all students to exercise choice in the texts read. As Sue began to construct an approach to literacy teaching these dimensions were foregrounded. Sue reflected,

I mean from what I thought school literacy was, was very narrow, as English [class], as writing essays, like again fictional novel study, things like that is what I really envisioned. But it’s more than that, it is about bringing a broad range of different things for the students to read, and you know becoming looser in how we expect students to perform, giving them the tools they need but then letting them go.

Sue further explained how this expanded conception of literacy informed her construction of an approach to literacy teaching:

It’s, it’s interesting to think of literacy as more than just kind of the basics. I like the idea of having it as a form of expression for kids, and not making them always breakdown novels or breakdown their writing into specific steps before they actually start reading or during reading. So, I like the idea of not necessarily, not breaking down as much as I had been taught to break down all the kind of steps, that it’s sometimes more interesting. And to give them choice on how they go about it. I like the idea of incorporating websites, Facebook, graphic novels and ideas like that.

Upon entering teacher education Sue was anxious about her ability to teach literacy because of her perception of herself as someone who “struggled” with literacy in school. However, the prospect of literacy teaching seemed more accessible to Sue as she began to construct an approach to literacy pedagogy that positioned literacy as an expressive and communicative practice, which is attuned and responsive to students’ interests and needs.
The shift student teachers experienced in their initial conceptions of literacy was by no means straightforward. On the contrary, as the literacy courses invited student teachers to consciously reflect upon their initial assumptions about literacy and literacy teaching various tensions inevitably surfaced. In many ways, the student teachers participation in the literacy courses unsettled some deeply entrenched beliefs as they consciously considered what counts as literacy. For instance, Lee highlighted some of the complexities that surfaced as she considered literacy through a broader lens:

Um (pause), I think I keep realizing that it’s more complicated than I initially thought, because initially I just really thought it was reading and writing in English class and that was it. I didn’t think about content area literacies, didn’t think of multiliteracies, and critical literacy. I don't know if I was conscious of it, because it was something that I’m trained to do [with an English specialization], but in terms of teaching it I’m not sure I had really considered it. So, in that way my understanding of literacy is much broader.

Lee suggested that her experience in the literacy courses prompted her to rethink some of her initial assumptions about literacy. She noted that her conception of literacy broadened as she encountered frameworks such as “content areas literacies,” “multiliteracies,” and “critical literacy.” She voiced a sense of uncertainty about how to translate her expertise in English literature and literary theory to the teaching of literacy at the junior-intermediate level. There is not doubt that student teachers bring rich domains of knowledge to their teacher education studies; however, one of the struggles they initially face is how to connect and apply this experience to their evolving pedagogical practice.
Lee confided she struggled at times to reconcile the highly structured reading instruction she experienced in school, with her commitment to constructing a literacy teaching practice that is responsive to students’ diverse reading preferences and needs. Lee explained,

I keep realizing that just because it’s something I would like to read or be interested in probably means half of the class or more won’t be (laughs). So, to really think about that, and that’s been something too, in class we discussed boys and literacy. But, I kind of struggle with this, I think students should be able to read what they want [emphasis in tone] as long as they’re reading that is good, so comics or magazines or hockey cards and that idea. But I still think that kids should still have to read a book in school. So, I’m still negotiating that balance between the more traditional and the broader multiliteracies definition. I think for me, I think it is important to have a balance or ideally. But maybe some kids will never get there, maybe that’s okay. I don’t know.

Points of tension surfaced as Lee negotiated the approach to literacy she excelled at throughout much of her prior schooling with the “broader multiliteracies definition” taken up in the literacy courses. Lee acknowledged the importance of providing children/youth with opportunities to exercise choice in their selection of reading materials. She also recognized the value of bringing a variety of texts and accessible formats into the classroom. Yet, she simultaneously struggled to negotiate this insight with the legacy of her prior schooling; whereby, literacy was defined by a student’s competent mastery of the select texts and the reading/writing skills privileged in school. When the dominant conception of literacy is constructed around school-based literacy practices students’ out-of-school literacy preferences and achievements are often
marginalized (Cummins, 2009; Moje, 2002; Simon, 2012; Street & Street, 1991; Vasudevan et al., 2010). As Lee’s narrative comes to a close remnants of a deficit discourse seem to persist and to position literacy as an autonomous set of skills that some students competently acquire, while others may not (Gee, 2012; Street, 1984, 2003, 2005).

Recognizing Literacy In The Content Areas

“We don’t live in boxes.” Beth

As student teachers’ conceptions of literacy steadily broadened the majority of them came to recognize literacy as relevant to teaching and learning in the content areas. They often cited the literacy courses as instrumental in facilitating this pedagogical insight. The recognition that literacy instruction is a critical dimension of J/I teaching seemed to fundamentally inform their construction of an evolving pedagogical practice.

Sue, a student teacher with a designated science specialization (i.e. teachable), noted her experience in the literacy courses profoundly changed the way she thought about literacy teaching and learning. Sue stated, “the literacy component was one of the strongest things in the [teacher education] program because I realized that literacy is part of every single subject. So, it was fantastic to take those one and a half courses.” This insight prompted Sue to reflect upon her prior schooling experience, and reconsider the relationship between literacy and learning in the content areas. She explained,

I loved science, and I loved math, and I hated languages but I didn’t have the greatest teachers. I remember getting to university, and I had never seen an article, a research-based article before, and how do you navigate
that? And a research-based article in science is very different than in sociology. And the professors would assign three or four articles to read, and I didn’t have the skill set to be able to know okay, well, the majority of the information is in the abstract, and then read the introduction if you really need to know it, and then skip to the discussion and conclusions. And just information like that would have been so helpful to have gained in high school. But that’s a literacy practice, that’s not just acquiring the content of science, that’s knowing best literacy practices for science…So, that’s my personal opinion about literacy in the content areas. You’re not a teacher of science, you’re a teacher of science and literacy they always go hand in hand.

Sue astutely identified that learning in the content areas is about more than students acquiring facts. She recognized the importance of students learning how to navigate reading and writing practices in particular disciplines, in order for them to access and to understand how knowledge is constructed and communicated within these academic domains. Gee (2004) points out the “‘content’ areas of school” are not merely static “bodies of information” rather, “they are the things that people do with those bodies of information and the various sorts of tools and technologies associated with them” (p. 114). Sue acknowledged the need for content area teachers to scaffold students’ understanding of how certain linguistic conventions and structures are utilized to establish the values and norms of practice within particular disciplines (Gillis, 2014; Moje, 2008). She suggested that content areas teachers should make explicit the ways in which particular literacy practices are intentionally mobilized to communicate the norms of investigation, analysis, and interpretation within a specific discipline (e.g., Science).
Guiding students through a situated examination of how reading and writing practices are used in different content areas can help students’ gain insight into how knowledge is constructed, represented, and legitimized within particular disciplinary domains (Gillis, 2014; Lea & Street, 2006; Moje, 2007, 2000; Pytash, 2012; White & Cranitch, 2010). Fang (2014) argues, “being literate in a discipline means not only knowledge of the disciplinary content but also the ability to read, write, think, and reason with texts in discipline specific ways” (p. 446). Sue felt the absence of discipline specific literacy instruction during her middle and secondary schooling, placed her at a disadvantage once she pursued post-secondary studies. She had not been exposed to the text structures commonly used to represent and communicate knowledge in science, which in turn, made it difficult for her to gain access to the relevant disciplinary discourse. The literacy courses helped Sue recognize literacy as a central component in content area learning. Consequently, she began to reframe literacy teaching and learning.

The importance of inviting children/youth to engage with disciplinary literacies as active participants in the production of knowledge became a pivotal part of many of the student teachers’ evolving pedagogical practice (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2014). For instance, Beth’s experience in the literacy course initiated a more nuanced understanding of the place of literacy in the content areas. She became more attuned to the function of reading and writing in content area learning. Beth reported,

Our literacy course for me it was completely eye opening. Just the fact that we really got the message this year that a) literacy is not just traditional literacy and b) that it, literacy is across the curriculum [sic]. That for me, I have really taken that away, that’s really important. And how necessarily to do that? We’ll see in the years to come. But the concept, that’s one of
the things I’ve taken away as so important. And also that once you expand your idea of what literacy is it’s not that challenging to make it happen across the curriculum. You just sort of have to change your mindset a little bit, and well realize the importance of things we’re already doing, and then also push yourself a little bit further to make it more central… Literacy, it’s for me thinking across the curriculum, like we don’t live in boxes, and we don’t read in boxes. I mean, when I was teaching science, if I couldn’t use literacy I wouldn’t have known how to teach it. I was using it, if I wouldn’t have, then the students wouldn’t know how to use it. And when they [students] leave school, even if they become scientists there’s a type of writing that they do science journal writing or lab reports.

Beth suggested the literacy course prompted her to reconsider literacy teaching through a broader lens. She noted this shift required a “change of mindset;” namely, directing conscious attention to the ways in which reading and writing, as situated practices, are used to accomplish specific epistemic goals within a discipline (Gee, 1996/2012). The realization that literacy instruction is an important part of learning in the content areas provoked her to consider how literacy should be addressed across the curriculum. Understandably, at the end of her first-year of teacher education studies Beth registered some trepidation over how to enact literacy instruction in the content areas, however, this broader framing of literacy seemed to inform her understanding of literacy teaching and learning.

Beth’s active consideration of how literacy is used in different disciplines effectively extended the parameters she had previously used to define literacy. She emphasized the importance of scaffolding how reading and writing practices are used within specific disciplines to accomplish particular goals. If students are to be invited to
engage with a subject domain they should be provided with opportunities to learn how
distinct literacy practices are intentionally used to construct disciplinary knowledge
(Gillis, 2014; Hynd-Shanahan, 2013; Moje 2008, Pytash, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan,
2014). Beth displayed both an understanding of this concept and a concern for the future
literacy needs of her students. Beth, like Sue, recognized it is important for J/I teachers to
model the use of diverse texts and disciplinary literacies in order to prepare students to
successfully access and negotiate different disciplinary communities (Gee, 2000;
1996/2012; Moje 2008,).

As many of the student teachers developed a conscious awareness of the
relevance of literacy in the content area teaching they recognized the need to explicitly
teach children/youth about the distinct ways reading and writing are used within
particular subject areas. For instance, Robert emphasized the importance of teaching
students how to recognize the specific text formats and delivery modes mobilized within
a discipline. This pedagogical insight seemed to inform his development as a J/I teacher.
Robert noted,

The content area literacy we talked about in the first-year literacy course I
think that’s important to everything. For example science, knowing where
to look for information and knowing how to read science it’s different
from a novel. So I think that’s important to get the students to realize
where literacy is, and I think it’s different in each content area. What, what
you look for, like in math you’re looking through problems and trying to
think of how the words are related to each other. And, in science you’re
looking for major ideas and trying to find out what areas you are interested
in, in a large block of text. So, I think seeing literacy in a different subject
is really important.
As Robert astutely stated it is “important to get students to realize where literacy is and I think it’s different in each content area,” he is, in effect acknowledging literacy as situated social practice (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Gee, 2012; Street, 1984, 2005). He is actively considering how language functions within specific contexts of use. Insights such as these can have profound implications for middle school teachers. As content specialist teachers they must be prepared to guide students in understanding how literacy practices are used to construct knowledge, convey authority, and legitimize ideas within a discipline (Gee, 2004, 2012).

Similarly, Laura also noted that her experience in the literacy course facilitated the realization that literacy instruction is an essential part of teaching and learning in the content areas. Laura explained,

It’s actually a huge change, because Abby [literacy course instructor] always says literacy is in every part, it, it’s across the curriculum. Literacy is in every subject. And I really see that now because you always have to write in every subject, you always have to read, and it’s how you share ideas. Literacy is a way you communicate and understand things. So, that is obviously a requirement of every class, whether you’re reading a textbook or reading a primary resource in a history class or whatever it may be. And then, to have the kids write even in science class a lab report, that still requires literacy, and to write well, and to communicate well. Um, which means that ever teacher should be a teacher of literacy [voice peaks]. So, it’s very important.

The student teachers’ explicitly acknowledged the need for content areas teachers to scaffold students’ understanding of how distinct linguistic strategies and particular text formats are mobilized to construct and to represent knowledge within particular subject
areas. Laura for instance, specifically referenced the use of primary source documents in History and lab reports in the Sciences to communicate knowledge. These pedagogical insights are critical to the construction of a J/I teaching practice. Students’ should have multiple opportunities to learn about the distinct writing styles and text formats used within specific disciplines, for as they progress in their schooling the demands of each subject area become increasingly sophisticated and embedded within the disciplines themselves (Moje, 2008). If children/youth do not have access to the reading and writing practices used by content specialists (i.e., historians, scientists) it becomes much more difficult for them to access and make sense of each subject area as a whole (Gillis, 2014; Moje, 2008).

Lastly, as the literacy course prompted Lee to consider the function of reading and writing in the content areas dimensions of the J/I fallacy were dispelled. Lee came to understand that literacy instruction did indeed need to continue at the middle and high school levels. Moreover, she also identified that literacy teaching and learning does not occur within a silo, but rather extends beyond the confines of an English classroom. Her conscious consideration of the place of literacy in content area learning prompted her to think about how she might meet the literacy needs of students in an upcoming practice teaching placement. Lee noted,

Now I guess, I see it more, that in other subjects you’re teaching literacy as well, it’s not so specific to English [class]. Well even in, I’ll be teaching history as well, and if we’re looking at some primary sources then kids might need help with understanding that, and even with understanding how to read the text book, you can’t just assume that they get it.
The student teachers’ experiences in the literacy courses informed their understanding of the relationship between literacy and content area teaching. They came to recognize that a fundamental part of learning in the content areas requires children/youth to understand how knowledge is constructed and communicated within particular disciplines. This insight seemed to mark a shift away from seeing literacy as an isolated set of skills that teachers transmit to students, to an understanding of literacy as a complex process. The student teachers came to see literacy an integral part of teaching and learning in the content areas.

Seeing Literacy As Integral To Content Area Teaching

“Ever teacher should be a teacher of literacy.” Laura

The student teachers’ experiences in the literacy courses encouraged them to consciously consider how reading and writing practices function in particular discipline areas. The data suggest the majority of student teachers came to understand that “every teacher is a teacher of literacy.” In other words, they recognized that as content area specialists they will need to teach students discipline specific literacy practices.

Several authors in the disciplinary literacy literature voice opposition to the suggestion that ‘every teacher is a teacher of literacy.’ They view this claim as emblematic of efforts to impose “generic” reading and writing strategies on content specific texts, often to the neglect of subject specific learning objectives (Fisher & Ivey, 2005; Gillis, 2014; Hynd-Shanahan, 2013; Moje 2008; Pytash, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2014). These authors suggest literacy teaching in the content areas must attend
to and advance students’ learning within specific discipline areas. Gillis (2014) argues, teachers should “teach discipline appropriate literacy practices, which vary according to the content area” (italics in original p. 621). In other words, the teaching of “discipline-appropriate literacies practices” will help students understand how ideas, issues, and knowledge are generated and represented in different discourse communities. In this sense, literacy teaching within the content areas endeavors to apprentice students in “disciplinary ways of thinking” (Moje, 2008).

In this research study the data suggests the student teachers use of the phrase, “every teacher is a literacy teacher” did not signal the intention to apply generic reading/writing strategies to content area teaching and learning. Rather, their use of the phrase seemed to signal the recognition that literacy instruction is an integral part of scaffolding students’ understanding of how to effectively read, write, analyze, and communicate within specific discipline areas. For instance, Robert noted that prior to the literacy course he had not fully recognized how integral literacy instruction was to content area teaching and learning. He acknowledged,

I’ve been kind of discovering right now how literacy is incorporated into everything. So you’re always teaching literacy, no matter what subject you’re assigned to teach. So, everyone’s a literacy teacher, and you have to think of the ways literacy is incorporated. I think that’s really important.

At the end of her first year of teacher education studies Beth was asked how, if at all, her conception of literacy teaching had changed. Beth, like Robert, said she had come to recognize that “every teacher is a teacher of literacy.” She recognized that text
structures and reading/writing strategies vary by discipline. She saw literacy instruction as central to teaching and learning in the content areas. Beth remarked,

I mean, everybody is a teacher of literacy, and if they don’t see themselves as that there’s something lacking. But it’s actually, it’s, it’s a little overwhelming and scary, like thinking about how much I want and need to teach literacy. Literacy across the curriculum to me is huge. It’s something that’s really central to my belief now, that, that really has to happen everywhere. Like if you’re in history you have to teach them how to read a textbook or a primary source. And there was an ah ha moment at some point this year. I remember this realization, it was one of the questions of the ticket-out-the door, Did you teach literacy during practice teaching? And I checked no. Like, neither for my first or second [placement] did I teach literacy, but then I realized, wait a minute, that’s not true. Ok, I didn’t teach language arts but I still, I still taught literacy, in different ways. And so, that’s what I was saying before about how things might be happening but you might just not label it that way. So I think that’s, you know, a big change in my mind.

As Beth’s conception of literacy pedagogy extended beyond the parameters of the designated “language arts” block, she became more conscious of how reading and writing practices are taken up in specific discipline areas. Beth conveyed some trepidation and anxiety as she considers how to implement the concepts and strategies modeled in the literacy courses. At same time, however, the importance of facilitating students’ understanding of the diverse text structures, formats, and vocabularies used within particular disciplines has become central to her construction of a pedagogical practice.

Her narrative also highlights some of the challenges student teachers face as they endeavor to construct an approach to literacy teaching. Beth had initially assumed, she
had not been responsible for literacy teaching in either her first or second practice
teaching placement because she had not taught an ‘official’ language arts block/English
class. She was not alone in this assumption. Both the survey and the interview data
indicate that many student teachers had not initially identified the literacy instruction that
occurred outside the confines the “language arts/English” period as valid literacy teaching
and learning. They had not fully considered the range of literacy practices and spaces of
literacy operating within and beyond the school context. However, once many of student
teachers recognized the place of literacy in the content areas their understanding of
literacy learning became more nuanced. This finding will be explored further in an
upcoming chapter that discusses the student teachers’ experiences in their practice
teaching placements.

The literacy course invited student teachers to consider literacy as a dynamic
process of interaction whereby “each context poses different demands, offers different
opportunities, and requires different ways of communicating” (Barton et al., 2007, p. 15).
Accordingly, the student teachers participation in the literacy courses seemed to extend
their understanding of how reading and writing practices are embedded within social
contexts and are used to accomplish specific communicative goals. Beth noted the weekly
feedback form (i.e., ticket out the door) used in the literacy course provoked her to make
the connection between literacy learning and content area teaching. This mechanism of
reflection helped her consolidate the literacy course content, with her practice teaching
experience, to develop a deeper understanding of literacy as a multifaceted practice that
teachers and students engage in different discipline areas.
The literacy course also encouraged student teachers to recognize and value the wide range of linguistics resources and cultural experiences children/youth engage with beyond the classroom walls. For instance, as Zoe discussed what she believed to be the qualities of a good literacy teacher she emphasized the importance of acknowledging students’ out-of-school literacy experiences. Zoe commented,

Okay, the qualities of a good teacher of literacy are to first of all understand why she is teaching literacy. And I remember that as you and Abby [the literacy teacher educators] said literacy is all over the curriculum, it’s not just the language block, it’s all over. And, it’s really important to understand what this sentence means. We talked about literacy in physical education, and literacy in art, and literacy in math, and we really need to understand that link. As a teacher, we need to understand the need and the place for literacy teaching in different subjects. This is the first thing to know, the teacher needs to be aware of this. And if anyone wants to say that I’m a teacher, even a phys. ed. teacher [sic], needs to understand what literacy is. So, what I can tell you is that as a teacher I would be hunting for any opportunity or moments, in the hallways, in the schoolyard, to facilitate it. To bring to students’ attention the importance of literacy, not just by saying that it is important, [but] by giving them resources, by directing it toward what they do, like connecting to what they might like watching on TV, and how that might connect to what we do in the class, to connect to things they find interesting.

Zoe suggested the literacy course helped her realize how important it is for middle-school teachers to approach literacy instruction as an integral part of teaching and learning in all content areas; rather, than the positioning of literacy as an add-on or as an isolated set of skills detached from the disciplines. Zoe expressly noted how important it
is for all J/I teachers to recognize and facilitate literacy in different domains of knowledge. She acknowledged the diverse interests and rich cultural practices children/youth bring to the classroom. As a teacher, Zoe positions herself as a facilitator, rather the sole expect in the classroom, who is committed to engaging students’ diverse funds of knowledge as valid resources. She recognized the forging of such meaningful connections can deepen and enrich learning for both teacher and student (Campano, 2007; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Hull & Schultz, 2002).

Sue, a student teacher with a science teachable also suggested that her broadening conception of literacy had impacted her sense of herself as a teacher. She explained how her identification as a teacher of literacy had undergone a shifted:

I, I see myself as teaching literacy within each of my classes, and I hadn’t really thought of that before the literacy course. I think that’s the thing that stood out the most from the literacy course, was that every subject area teacher is also a literacy teacher. And so, as I went through the literacy course I always kind of keep that in mind, and I do see that. You have to teach students how to write reports, and teach them different reading skills, all those different things, it’s just going to be, you know, subject-area specific. So, I found the literacy course very useful.

As noted in the previous chapter Sue had initially found the prospect of teaching literacy quite daunting. She felt literacy teaching resided outside her realm of comfort, and she perceived it to be detached from her area of content expertise. The teaching of literacy became more accessible to Sue however, once she came to see literacy as relevant and integral to content area learning. She began to conceive of reading and
writing as purposive practices used to construct knowledge within a discipline and communicate with an intended audience.

As the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy broadened they came to see themselves as content specialists and teachers of literacy. They recognized the importance of teaching students how to strategically navigate the various ways in which literacies are mobilized within specific discipline areas to construct knowledge. Accordingly, they understood the necessity of scaffolding disciplinary literacy practices, in order to prepare students to negotiate the increasingly sophisticated text structures, formats, and specialized vocabularies they would encounter as they advanced in their studies.

Not all of the student teachers in the purposive sample (n=8), however, shared the belief that “every teacher is a teacher of literacy.” Lukas was asked during our final interview, at the end of his second/final year of teacher education studies, what he felt was the place of literacy in content area teaching and learning. Lukas responded,

It’s hard. I’m kind of in the middle, because part of me likes rotary just because you have a teacher who’s strength is in that subject area, and students can benefit so much more than in having lots of general teachers who have weaknesses, and you see the weaknesses throughout…But that’s what I like about rotary. You have a teacher who is good with something, they enjoy it, that’s what they teach. The students pick up on that. The bad part is everything is compartmentalized more, and it’s hard to integrate different things. So that’s one side. The other side, I think as general teachers, they should integrate literacy into different subjects. I guess it also makes it easier if you’re a generalist teacher to be able to integrate, but it’s not, you’re not integrating everything. For example, you could put something like procedural writing, you could mix it in with
science. It’s integrating different aspects. It’s not a huge component but it’s just infusing small, tiny little things to help with their learning, and I think that’s how you fit in literacy.

Lukas sets up an interesting dichotomy between the responsibilities of “generalist” and content specialist teachers when it comes to literacy teaching. Generalist teachers are often characterized as those who teach most, if not all, content areas of the curriculum to their students in a particular grade (e.g., grade 3). In contrast, some schools have content “specialists” teachers who exclusively teach their designated subject specialization (e.g., Science, Mathematics) on a rotary timetable to students in different grades (e.g., grades 6-8). Primary school teachers (grades K-3) are often referred to as “generalist” teachers because they typically teach the majority of the curricular content areas to the students in their class. Lukas seemed to believe that generalist teachers should be primarily responsible for the teaching literacy and “integrating literacy into different subjects.”

His narrative seems to position literacy as a detached set of strategies to be added-on to a content area at certain points of instruction. Rather, than recognizing how reading and writing practices as inextricably embedded within a discipline. He positioned literacy as “not a huge component” of content area teaching, but as “small” strategies a teacher could selectively “infuse” when need be. This framing of literacy teaching can be problematic because when literacy is positioned as an isolated entity, literacy instruction can become fundamentally divorced from the broader epistemic practices and goals of a discipline.
Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter examined student teachers’ shifting conceptions of literacy. The student teachers’ experiences with the literacy methods courses provoked them to meaningfully reflect upon and connect their past and present literacy experiences, as they constructed an approach to literacy teaching. The findings suggest the student teachers entered teacher education with restricted notions of literacy, due in large part, to their school literacy histories. However, as the student teachers mined their rich literacy histories they began to identify points of dissonance between the approach to literacy emphasized throughout much of their prior schooling and the approach to literacy teaching modeled in their teacher education studies. Indeed, the points of dissonance the student teachers identified between their school literacy histories and their present studies seemed to serve as a catalyst, effectively provoking them to rethink what counts as literacy.

Both the survey data and the interview data suggested the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy steadily broadened as they engaged with the literacy methods courses. The student teachers began to reframe reading and writing as an active process, whereby people use a range of resources and multiple forms of representation within different domains of life to make meaning. The majority of the student teachers also came to recognize literacy as relevant to teaching and learning in the content areas. They came to see the importance of teaching students how to navigate reading and writing practices in particular disciplines in order for students to understand how knowledge is constructed and communicated within different academic domains. Their recognition of the relevance of literacy to content area teaching and learning also
informed how they saw their role as teachers of literacy. Many of the student teachers came to see literacy teaching as an integral part of their work as teachers in the content areas. This insight also had implications for their evolving pedagogical practice.

Chapter Six will examine further how the student teachers’ engagement with the broader field of literacy through their literacy methods courses encouraged them to expand their conception of literacy and the potential for literacy pedagogy.
CHAPTER 6: STUDENT TEACHERS’ NEGOTIATING MULTIPLE LITERACIES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

This chapter will discuss the ways in which student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy became more nuanced as they entered into conversation with a broader field of literacy (e.g., multiliteracies, out-of-school literacies) during their teacher education studies. This chapter is organized into three main sections. The first section examines how the student teachers’ connected aspects of the multiliteracies framework to their evolving literacy teaching practice. The next section explores how the student teachers saw their role as teachers of literacy amidst the changing landscape of literacy. The final section reports on the specific aspects of the literacy courses the student teachers’ identified as impactful, and the recommendations they offered to improve the literacy courses. The next chapter of will examine student teachers’ experiences with literacy pedagogy in their practice teaching placements.

Connecting Multiliteracies To Pedagogy

“Our discussion in class of multiliteracies really expanded my view.” Lee

The literacy courses invited student teachers to actively consider the pedagogical implications of two key elements of the multiliteracies framework; namely, the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of learners and the changing landscape of literacy, including the growth of new technologies (New London Group, 1996). The literacy courses also encouraged student teachers to consider how their participation in a range of
literacy practices might inform their construction of a literacy teaching practice. A variety of pedagogical strategies and resources were utilized in the courses to explore these issues including: class discussions, collaborative in-class activities, videos, course readings, podcasts, childrens’/adolescent literature, and course assignments (e.g., literacy autobiography, creation of a multimodal *All About Me* text).

Student teachers bring a diverse range of personal interests and rich experiences with literacy to their teacher education studies, which can deepen and enrich their teaching practice. Table 6 provides a snapshot of the J/I student teacher cohorts’ (n=22) personal literacy practices and interests from the time-one (T1) survey data. While the table does not capture the full breadth of their experience it offers some insight into the literacy activities and commitments student teachers engaged with during their personal time. As illustrated in table 6 they engaged with multiple texts, modes of expression, communication resources, and interactive technologies.

Interestingly however, many of these multiliterate student teachers did not initially recognize the extent to which their rich linguistic repertories and diverse cultural experiences inform their approach to literacy teaching. For example, Zoe succinctly noted “I was aware of multiple literacy practices, however, the literacy course showed me how applicable and relevant it is to use those multiple practices in the classroom.” While the student teachers routinely engaged with a range of technological tools and linguistic resources, they initially did not fully recognize how these resources could be used to extend and enrich learning opportunities within their classrooms.
Table 6: Frequency distribution of student teachers’ personal interests and literacy practices for the Time 1 (T1) survey data (n = 22).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal interests &amp; literacy activities</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percent Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avid Reader</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Reader</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader of Fiction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader of Non-Fiction</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Writing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Writing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Emailer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keen Internet Surfer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avid Facebook User</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional Facebook User</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter User</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader of Online News</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader of Newspapers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avid Gamer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent User of video streaming sites</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual User of video streaming sites</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent User of online music sites</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual User of online music sites</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader of Magazines</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with the arts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged with fitness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the student teachers engaged with literacy through a multiliteracies lens they developed a more nuanced understanding of literacy pedagogy. The student teachers identified points of intersection between their literacy histories, their personal literacy practices, and their evolving approach to literacy teaching. The multiliteracies perspective served as a springboard of sorts propelling student teachers to reimagine the possibilities for literacy teaching and learning. This finding is evident across the following interview narratives:

Lee: I think as I mentioned in the other interviews, I guess that literacy is just so much broader than what I thought it was. And thinking about multiliteracies and broadening the definition of literacy that
we’ve discussed in literacy class, and thinking about so many different text types and modes of literacy. And, in terms of literacy teaching, definitely thinking of it in a much broader spectrum, and it definitely made me reconsider literacy in the junior grades.

Sue: Honestly I think it was one of the very first classes when we talked about multiliteracies and including things like Facebook, blogging, texting, recipes, manuals, or websites into literacy teaching, because again I had had such a narrow knowledge of what I thought “English class” was supposed to look like. Whereas now I feel like, I’m much more empowered to use everything around us because we are, we all need to be literate.

Beth: I remember clearly the class discussion with you and Abby about multiliteracies, the idea that it’s not just reading a novel the way that I was taught growing up as a child. That, that mind expansion for me I think was one of the most significant points in my literacy program. Just realizing, you know, that literacy is all around us, in and outside of school lives. I mean it’s so much a part of my outside of school life, but I don’t know if I realized that connection.

Lynne: Literacy just isn't what you can produce from text or what you can gather from text. It’s more a wide range of skills that you can get from a wide range of inputs, and you can convey through even a more broad range [sic] of sources. So, media, writing, self-expression, art, music, it’s all this. So it’s not just one specific subject.

Laura: Literacy is understanding. So, it’s a way to understand, so it can be, like we talked about in class, it can be literacy through
technology, through visual concepts, through body language, through words, through images, just different forms of literacy. Like, knowing how to do things and understand what you’re doing and hearing, just understanding all those different forms of literacy. I know it’s kind of, it’s very broad, but to me literacy means a way to understand.

Many of the student teachers noted the framing of literacy through a multiliteracies lens was a pivotal learning experience, which encouraged them think about literacy pedagogy in broader terms. For many of the student teachers the multiliteracies perspective served as a means to disrupt the restrictive boundaries used to define literacy during much of their prior schooling. As their conception of literacy broadened they endeavored to extend the space of literacy engagement beyond the walls of the classroom. Many of the student teachers’ reframed reading/ writing as an active process, whereby people use multiple forms of representation within different domains of social life to make meaning. Moreover, the student teachers reimagined literacy pedagogy as a space that should acknowledge children/youths’ interests and lived experience as valuable sites of knowledge. They began to situate students’ lived realities as central to literacy teaching and learning.

Accordingly, as the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy became more nuanced they questioned the markers conventionally used to define a “literate” person. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) suggest from a “multiliteracies” perspective “being literate involves much more than simply knowing how to operate the language system,” for the “cultural and critical facets of knowledge integral to being literate are considerable” (p. 12). In Sue’s narrative cited above, she foregrounded the various contexts in which
literacy practices are embedded as she called into the question the conventional parameters used to define what it means to be “literate.” She recognized the multifaceted ways people use literacies in their daily interactions to accomplish particular communicative goals. She felt “empowered” by the prospect of drawing on a range of resources and literacy practices to construct a meaningful approach to literacy teaching and learning.

As many of the student teachers engaged with the multiliteracies perspective they began to consider literacy pedagogy as a space possibility. A space to reframe the restrictive models of literacy that dominated much of their schooling, to situate students’ interests and needs as central to instruction, and to explore the pedagogical implications of new technologies. Each of these areas will be more fully examined in the sections that follow.

Not all of the student teachers, however, readily embraced the multiliteracies perspective presented in their literacy courses. Robert highlighted some of tensions that surfaced as he attempted to reconcile the framing of literacy through a multiliteracies lens. He voiced his concerns,

I think it’s true to some extant that all of these different types of literacy are really important, and coming to the fore in everything. Um, my only worry with these types of things is the use of the word literacy. And, I know we now have physical literacy and we have all these types of literacy. And, I do think it’s getting away from the original meaning of you know literacy, which sounds like it comes from Latin to read or to write or to engage with language. I think it’s important that student know all these different skills, but I don’t necessary know if I like calling them literacies. Like the digital ones, yes, and being able to communicate and
all that, but I’m not sure when it comes to physical literacy, like there’s learning through dance and all that type of thing, but it’s also the arts, and if you get into different, you know, music is a type of literacy, which it is, but it’s not with language. So, it depends on how you define literacy. So, I think they’re different, and by calling them both literacies it’s almost like we are saying it’s the same skill set, and I don’t think it is. I don’t think I’ll define literacy as broadly as some of [teacher education] courses like to, like all of the skills are important, but I don’t know that I’d call them literacy.

Robert’s experience can help advance our understanding of how student teachers engage with the notions of language and literacy presented in their teacher education studies. He contributes to the debates around what counts as literacy by situating his theorizing within the practical realities of the classroom. Robert is genuinely concerned that the framing of literacy as multiple could detrimentally effect literacy teaching and learning. He expressed apprehension over the use of the term literacy to characterize various learning activities because he fears it might reduce literacy to a metaphor for proficiency. Robert is not alone in this concern, as this point has also been raised in the literacy studies literature (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2012; Moje, 2009; Street, 2008).

Robert’s conception of literacy does seem to privilege the written word, and largely neglects how “people use written language in an integrated way as part of a range of semiotic systems” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012, p. 9). While, Robert positioned reading and writing as something that people do to “engage with language,” he does not seem to take into account the social structures and contexts in which these practices are embedded (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Street, 1984). His repeated use of the word “skills” gestures to a framing of literacy that privileges particular types of texts and an
authoritative notion of the author; rather, than the framing of literacy as a embedded
social practice, which people use to make sense of the world around them (Street 1993,
head as a set of skills to be learned, and it does not just reside on paper, captured as texts
to be analyzed” (p. 3). Robert does not seem to fundamentally engage with literacy as a
situated social practice, whereby people use reading and writing to participate,
communicate, and construct knowledge within different socio-cultural contexts (Barton

**Understanding Literacy As A Communicative Practice**

“Literacy means being able to navigate our communication world.” Sue

Many of the student teachers became increasingly attuned to the multiple ways in which
people use reading and writing practices to communicate and to make meaning within
different domains of life. They consciously considered how “language (words, literacy,
texts) give meaning to contexts and, dialectically, contexts give meaning to language”
(Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, p. 2). For instance, as student teacher Laura reflected on her
literacy course experience she noted, “I was reminded of how literacy is a way for you to
understand culture, it helps you understand people, it helps you understand how things
are organized and thought out.” Laura seemed to develop a deeper understanding of how
reading and writing facilitate social interactions and cultural participation. The literacy
courses prompted many of the student teachers to actively consider how people engage
with culturally recognized literacies practices as they navigate daily life (Barton et al., 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Street, 1993).

Many student teachers expressed a commitment to constructing a teaching practice that encourages children/youth to engage with literacy as a space to communicate with a broader audience. This represents an important pedagogical commitment as “actual writing for real audiences and real purposes is a vital element in helping students to understand that they have an important voice in their own learning process” (Delpit, 2006, p. 33). As Lukas envisioned his future teaching practice, he exhibited a clear resistance to the restrictive approach to literacy pedagogy he experienced during much of his prior schooling. He is motivated to reimage the possibilities for literacy teaching and learning. He asserted a commitment to encouraging children/youth to engage with reading and writing as a reciprocal space of communication. Lukas explained how he would like to approach literacy teaching:

I guess more literacy to express themselves, to be able to communicate, to express feelings, for students to feel like doing literacy served some sort of purpose. It’s not something that’s just stuck in school. Um, but to be relevant and to be able to express themselves. I guess for me it’s knowing what I’ve gone through, I want it to be different. When I went through school, it was read this, analyze this, write this because you need to, this is how you write it blah-blah-blah-blah [sic]. I want things to be more relevant there needs to be more reason behind what they’re doing. I want my students to be able to write not just for me but, for different audiences, for other peers, for other classes. So it’s using literacy for communication.
Similarly, Beth noted her participation in the literacy courses prompted her to engage with literacy as a dynamic communicative practice. She explained this complicated, in a productive way, how she thought about literacy learning:

So, if literacy is a form of communication, then it’s legitimate as long as you can communicate, but understanding that, that it depends on context, context is really important. So, understanding and teaching students how to navigate those contexts or teaching them skills that they’ll use in this context and in that context. Like, they can't just stick to the THX [sic] for thanks, that’s not going to cut it when writing to their [school] Principal about a problem that they’re having. I, I know for me what really stood out, I don’t remember where we read it but we read, you know, somebody who works in a salon reads hair. So, for me that’s been a really helpful way, an important way of understanding and reading our world, and understanding messages.

Beth’s response gestures to the understanding of literacy as a dynamic process. She highlighted the complex social positions people enact as they engage with others around reading and writing practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012). Beth recognized an integral part of literacy learning is the capacity to effectively apply and adapt language to a particular communicative circumstance and context (Genishi & Dyson, 2009).

Lastly, Zoe pointed to how the literacy courses encouraged her to consider the range of texts and multiple modes of representation children/youth routinely mobilize for specific communicative purposes. Zoe exhibited a genuine sensitivity for the multiple communication channels and numerous interpretative demands children/youth must navigate as they participate in contemporary culture. She highlighted how these insights altered the way she thought about literacy pedagogy:
I now see literacy as a very vast sort of knowledge. I don’t want to say subject because it is not [emphasis in tone], literacy applies to every subject at school, it also applies to everybody’s life after school, when they leave the school it is everywhere. It includes visual and media literacy as well. When I talk about media literacy, I’m not taking about those curriculum documents, but how I realized that’s why those advertisements and bill-boards have something to tell you, and just being aware of that, then maybe you can have control over things, that you would judge for yourself. What else can I tell you which has really changed my view. I also like the authenticity of the materials that were used in the literacy course. I was shocked for good reason. I thought oh my God, I could see this from a very different point of view, I could never have imagined before.

Zoe was asked to elaborate on her statement that she the “liked the authenticity of the materials” used in the literacy course. She explained,

Authenticity of the material is like, okay, I can use an available example of reading and writing in everyday life and bring that into my classroom. So, this is good because sometimes there are some financial restrictions, maybe I cannot afford or my students cannot afford getting all those books. But now, I know I can get newspapers, flyers, postcards, whatever, and lots of online resources as well, and bring it into the class, and then let those things work for me. So the ideas that I got in the literacy class are very important and invaluable.

The understanding of reading and writing as situated practices that people engage with at specific times, in varying social locations, to accomplish particular communicative goals seemed to fundamentally inform student teachers’ conceptions of
literacy teaching and learning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2011). They began to question, and in some cases sought to disrupt, the conventional boundaries used to define what counts as “legitimate” literacies. They exhibited a nuanced understanding of literacy teaching as they considered the diverse texts and multiple spaces of literacy children/youth routinely interact with to construct identities as readers and writers. Moreover, for many of the student teachers the recognition of how reading and writing are used to participate in various dimensions of daily life seemed to make the responsibility of literacy teaching more accessible and meaningful. They were inspired by the prospect of incorporating the texts of daily life into their literacy teaching (e.g., newspapers, flyers, postcards) because they saw it as an opportunity to acknowledge and connect with their students’ lives beyond the classroom.

This is not to say that the student teachers discounted the place of explicit literacy instruction. For instance, Lee expressly noted her intention to “find ways balance new interests, new literacies, with the more traditional” aspects of literacy teaching. Likewise, four other student teachers explicitly echoed this sentiment. Indeed, the teaching of literacy conventions and skills is still critical, as “students must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of [life], not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors” (Delpit, 2006, p. 45, italics in original). As the student teachers’ understanding of literacy teaching became more nuanced they recognized the importance of scaffolding children/youth’s facility with the linguistics codes and strategies required to meaningfully participate in different social realms.


Incorporating Students’ Linguistic And Cultural Resources

“I think it’s important that students can identify with what they’re reading.” Lee

The analysis of survey data collected from the J/I cohort (n=22) also provided the opportunity to examine the extent to which student teachers felt it is important for literacy teaching to incorporate students’ out-of-school literacy practices and lived experiences.

The student teachers were asked to score each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal). The survey data was collected at two points during the J/I cohort’s first year of teacher education studies. The time-one (T1) survey data was collected 12 weeks into fall term, after the first practice teaching placement. The time-two data (T2) survey data was collected at the end of the winter term.

Table 6.1 reports the mean scores and standard deviations. On average, student teachers reported it is quite important to incorporate students’ out-of-school literacy practices into literacy teaching (T1 M =4.45, SD=0.69; T2 M=4.75, SD =0.44). The student teachers also reported it is quite important for literacy teaching to acknowledge students’ diverse cultural backgrounds (e.g. language, ethnicity, race) (T1 M =4.40, SD=0.59; T2 M=4.25, SD =0.79). There was no statically significant difference in the mean rating from T1 to T2 in either instance (t = -1.55, p =.137; t =.767, p =.453).
Table 6.1: Mean scores of the extent to which student teachers’ felt it is important for literacy teaching to incorporate students’ out-of-school literacy practices and to acknowledge the cultural diversity of students for Time 1 (T1) and Time 2 (T2) survey data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min scale</th>
<th>Max scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1 Incorporate out-of-school literacies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1 Acknowledge cultural diversity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2 Incorporate out-of-school literacies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2 Acknowledge cultural diversity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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During the research interviews student teachers were also asked to discuss how they might address issues of cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion through literacy teaching. Lee emphasized the importance constructing a literacy teaching practice that not only acknowledged, but also strived to equitably represent the diversity of students and foster a sense of belonging (Delpit, 2006). She noted,

I think that, that some schools really aren’t taking into account the diversity of their student population. I think it’s important that students can identify with what they’re reading, and see themselves and their families represented, because otherwise, otherwise I think it leads to, or it could lead to, a feeling of not belonging. I think it is important that they’re represented, because in terms of, if you never see yourself than you may not feel like you’re valued, or really a part of the society and community, or think that certain opportunities are not open to you because of whatever identity marker. So, in that way I think it’s definitely very important that we’re reflecting the diversity of our students.

Some of the student teachers drew upon their school histories as they discussed the importance of developing a teaching practice that consciously engaged with issues of
diversity and inclusion. Laura gestured to how language operates as an important symbolic resource. More specifically, how interactions around language function to construct particular social positions through the conferring of contextually defined labels and categories of identification (de Fina et al., 2006). Within a school context labels such the “successful” or “competent” are often conferred upon students who skillfully perform institutionally prized language practices. Laura points to how the symbolic value placed on select language practices can operate to disadvantage students whose home languages are seen as detached from, or an obstacle to, school literacy learning.

Delpit (2006) emphasizes the important role teachers must play in helping students “learn the discourse which would otherwise be used to exclude them from participating in and transforming the mainstream” (p. 165). Laura asserts a commitment to helping her students navigate the linguistics codes and rules that often govern school based reading and writing practices. She positions students’ rich linguistic and cultural experiences as central to literacy pedagogy. Laura explained,

No. I never thought of myself as a teacher of literacy. I always thought that English would be the last thing that I’m capable of teaching, especially since I was not good at it as a child, and I was an ESL student. And so, I always thought it’s not my strength, I’m going to focus on other things. But realistically, now that I’m in the program I’ve learned that literacy is everywhere…We talk about it in literacy class, make whatever you’re teaching relate to the student’s life and the world around them. So, I’d really encourage students to draw upon their experiences, and write about something that means something to them. Not just a short story, because I hated doing those [laughs]. So, something more meaningful, something that they can relate to. And, help them realize that it’s not so hard you’re just sharing your thoughts, and it can be really simple, and
everyone has their own style. So like, I would take a lot of my own experience, and bring it into the classroom, and share that with kids, because I think a lot of kids, at least in the demographic that I plan to teach in, in [school district], will probably be what I was, a new immigrant to Canada or have parents whose first language isn’t English, and feel that they may not be so good in English because of their background.

During her teacher education studies Laura’s schooled literacy history became central to her construction of a literacy teaching practice. She utilized the experiences and challenges she faced as an immigrant to Canada and an English language learner. Laura noted many of her students might identify with who she “was.” She discursively positions her identification as an “immigrant” in the past tense. Perhaps, to signal the symbolic rebuking of the outsider status institutional systems often confer upon people whose linguistic commitments are perceived to not fit within the parameters used to define “legitimate” literacies. As indicated in chapter Four, at school Laura’s home language was often positioned as a deficit, perceived to interfere with her ability to adequately acquire and perform the reading and writing skills valued in the classroom. Laura in effect disrupts and transforms this deficit positioning. She draws on her rich cultural experiences as a valuable site of knowledge, which will help her understand the diverse literacy needs of her students.

Sue also called upon her school history to discuss the importance of constructing a teaching practice that is responsive to issues of diversity and inclusion. Sue drew upon specific examples from her prior elementary and secondary schooling to call attention to issues of representation. In so doing, she critically questioned which voices and perspectives are presented and which are excluded from school texts (Vazquez, Tate &
Harste, 2013). Sue explained how her teacher education studies prompted these reflections:

We were talking about the diversities of our learners, and how the education system is pretty slow to respond to the changing face of our students so to speak. And the majority of teachers are white, yet our students especially in [city name] are very multicultural. And unfortunately our pedagogy tends to reflect that too, and more so than maybe just pedagogy, I think it’s what we are actually teaching the students and how we reflect their cultures. Because like, even looking back on my own, we were having this conversation in diversity class the other day, looking at my own education we learned about our aboriginal populations up, until the white man came and settled, and from there, there were little infusions of what the aboriginal people were going through, but the primary topic of conversation was the rich white male in that textbook, and what they did, and it ignores a lot of atrocities that happened to our aboriginal population, or our Chinese immigrant population. And it paints this holier than thou picture of Canada, and how all that was wanted was this righteous, which isn’t the case. So, I think we need to respect the atrocities that happened and acknowledge them in order to move forward.

Sue felt as a teacher one way she could address issues of equity and inclusion in the classroom would be to include and inquiry into multiple perspectives. Indeed, Delpit (2006) suggests, “teachers must allow discussions of oppression to become part of language and literature instruction” (p. 165). Sue endeavors to collaborate with her students to question how the process of knowledge production often mobilizes particular cultural models, which operate to privilege certain perspectives and simultaneously oppress others (Vazquez, Tate & Harste, 2013). She recognized the importance of
consciously thinking about how issues of representation operate within texts and instructional strategies. She also astutely points to the challenges teachers must work through as they strive to construct a more equitable and inclusive classroom. Sue noted,

Even just talking about and showing different perspectives and identities and all those different things in our classrooms. Like, all of our models whenever we show diagrams, they’re always this white person, whether it’s a don't smoke campaign or a get physically active campaign. Even the diagrams of the male and female anatomy, like you look at it, it’s white, it’s not a person of color in any stretch of the imagination. So, we need to kind of get over that perspective. Again a lot of things that tend to be, like it’s the white heterosexual norm that is infused into our teachings, now unless we’re actually aware of it, it won’t change. We have to bring different perspectives, but that also means that as teachers we have to know about the different perspectives, which is also a problem, because we don’t. I mean, I don't know that I feel comfortable yet, being able to talk about to all these different perspectives that are out there, and why things happened. So, that’s why we automatically fall back on those textbooks.

Similarly, Lynne acknowledged the importance of developing a teaching practice that intentionally models and scaffolds students’ ability to inquiry into diverse topics and multiple perspectives. She intends to draw on her personal literacy practices as a resource to prompt students to explore current issues and consider how particular text strategies are used to frame an issue. Lynne highlighted how her practice of reading daily newspapers could be used to encourage students to engage with the world as informed and critical citizens. She said,
Well the newspaper reading. I really believe that kids need to know what is going on in their world. So that they don’t, you know, grow up to be Pollyannas I guess. Because we talked about that in diversity [class] today, just, not being completely oblivious about what’s going on around the world. And there’s so many different ways to get kids to read the newspaper, and be critical and thoughtful about what’s going on around them. You don't have to expose them to the terrible things, but I really think that my interest in knowing what’s going on in the world comes out in how I teach them, when I teach them, and the different perspectives. It makes it way more interesting. They don’t go, well gee, I hate History because it’s boring, it’s old, dead white people talking about one side of the story. And so that’s how I tried to do it this past placement experience too, was like okay, well let’s look at what’s going on with Britain, let’s get what’s going on with the Natives, and what’s going on with the French. Who got what? Why did they get it? And how is it relevant to now? Let’s make it relevant.

Lynne would like to use the practice of newspaper reading as a means to engage with issues relevant to students’ lives. She plans to incorporate newspaper reading into her teaching to help students approach texts as critical readers. In essence, she understands the value of encouraging students to consider how language can operate to maintain unequal power relations. Her modeling of a critical reading invited students to question who is represented, how are they represented, and who is excluded from a text. The critical reading of a text can assist students’ understanding of how issues of representation can function to substantiate certain perspectives and exclude others. Lynne endeavors to construct an approach to literacy teaching that is meaningful and relevant to
students’ lives (Delpit, 2006; Lapp, Moss, Roswell, 2012; Vazquez, Tate & Harste, 2013).

Hull and Schultz (2002) suggest that acknowledging students’ “diverse forms of out-of-school literacy – crossing class, race, gender, culture, and nationality – certainly enrich our definitions of literacy” (p. 44). Several of the student teachers identified the importance of constructing a literacy teaching practice that acknowledges and connects with students’ interests and out-of-school literacy practices. For instance, Lee recognized the value in constructing an approach to literacy teaching that encourages students to draw meaningful connections between their out-of-school literacy practices and school based literacy learning:

Well, I think that in order to keep it relevant for kids then we have to recognize what they are doing outside of school, how they’re communicating outside of school, then we have to validate it in the classroom as well. And, I mean everything is moving toward more technology, and something like writing letters is sort of becoming obsolete, so I think we do need to. I’m not sort of the most technologically skilled person, but I definitely, I think you have to adapt otherwise, otherwise it’s not useful. I think that school has to change, and adapt a bit, if they’re going to engage kids, because if that’s what they’re interested in doing outside of school, then it doesn’t make sense to ban it in school.

Lee voiced an interest in engaging with literacy as a multifaceted process. She suggested a literacy pedagogy that endeavors to be relevant to children/youth must strive to connect with the technologies and practices they routinely engage with.
Student teacher Sue also suggested her conception of literacy teaching shifted once she considered the complex ways children/youth use reading and writing to meet various communicative needs. She also appreciated the emphasis the literacy courses placed on creating opportunities for students to exercise choice regarding classroom based literacy activities. Sue stressed,

Honestly, I keep going back to it, but I think that literacy needs to be outside the walls of the classroom. And I think that was a really key understanding for me, because I came in thinking, oh, poetry is terrible [laughs], I hated writing essays, and I hated reading particular novels. But showing us that we don’t have to be confined by that, we can do literacy practices that engage students, rather than just conform to the teacher model, that “right way” what the teacher wants them to read. So I think that’s important…Anything, anything that they read, whenever they go online, whenever they read a sign or a billboard or they listen to rap or they do anything that has anything to do with communication that’s language arts. And it’s not about reading one fantasy novel that you know is tried, tested, and true all the way through, it’s about student choice, and it’s about encouraging that sense of learning and continual learning.

Similarly, Zoe also came to appreciate the importance of connecting classroom literacy pedagogy to students’ lives beyond the classroom in an effort to help students’ shrewdly navigate the varied literacy demands they encounter on a daily basis. Zoe recognized that literacy instruction that does not endeavor to connect with students’ lives could make reading and writing seem less accessible to some students. She identified this as a challenge of literacy teaching,
Literacy can be a challenge if literacy teachers have a boring sort of attitude or approach to literacy, as just seeing literacy as it was presented to them maybe in their own student experience, because times have changed. So, if students just get into literacy as something that you have to read and write and that’s it, it makes it quite boring, and it would detach them from literacy because it’s different from real life practices. So, it is important to have that connection, and if that connection is getting further and further for sure it would become a challenge.

When asked how literacy teaching might address this challenge Zoe emphasized,

It’s important for the students to know the value of being a literate person. Not because they can read the bible or because they can become a good student or go to university, but so we can make it more meaningful for them. So, when you read or write you can do these things in your life, like signing a cheque or not being taken advantage of by certain people. A more current example [laughs], I think of Facebook and literacy, you can have that sort of connection, and kids see if I write then I can post my ideas on that blog or Twitter and reach that audience. So maybe we can start there. I know it’s a little bit tricky because when it comes to Facebook and Twitter, I know some teachers say it’s not even writing, but you know, it’s not really easy to set these things apart, it’s getting to be part of everyday life.

Zoe’s narrative is quite compelling as it speaks to her understanding of literacy as a socially situated practice and highlights how this understanding informs her approach to literacy teaching. Lankshear & Knobel (2003) suggest children/youth “need to learn to ‘read’ media and information sources in specialized ways in order to ‘get what is really there’ or to avoid being ‘taken in’ (p. 15 quotes in original). To Zoe, literacy pedagogy
represents more than teaching a rigid set of language skills and rules. Rather, she approaches the teaching of reading and writing as purposive practices that are vital to adeptly navigate daily life.

She also suggested literacy pedagogy must consider how contemporary technologies and vast social networks have influenced how children/youth communicate, and how they construct and perform identities (boyd, 2007; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Davies, 2012; Jacobs, 2008; New London Group, 1996; Vasudevan et al., 2010). Notably, Zoe productively complicates what it means to be literate. She perceptively framed “being literate” as the ability to use of reading and writing to critically participate, communicate, and construct knowledge within different social spheres.

Some of the student teachers, however, identified tensions that surfaced as they considered the potential relationship between students’ out-of-school literacy practices and classroom literacy instruction. Robert expressed concern that forging connections between school-based literacy instruction and the digitally mediated reading and writing practices students’ participate in outside of school, might displace the teaching of standard language skills and conventions. He explained,

I guess one thing is, is recognizing the different forms of literacy, and kind of thinking of ways that you can use social media and all these types of technological literacy [sic] in the classroom. I think that’s important. My only concern with it is that students are already getting a lot of these types of literacy outside of school. And so maybe, while I think you should bring them in, I think they also need to learn more the traditional style of literacies in school because they might not do them on their own otherwise. I think students struggle with a lot of the traditional literacies. They’re used to texting and email, and I don’t think they can articulate
quite as well in group settings, and definitely in their writing. Like, I noticed at the grade six level of writing, on a lot of the science tests that I was getting back, and I expected a fair bit of writing for some of the questions, but the spelling, I could understand what they were saying, but for grade six it seemed, you know, common words were really misspelled in a lot of cases. Even students that were fantastic students had spelling issues. And, I kind of thought back to my grade six [year] and I’m pretty sure most of us could have spelled these words. So, I think with auto-spell or correct and all these types of things kids really aren’t learning some of the basic ideas.

Similarly, Lukas voiced concern over the potential implications students’ use of digital technologies might have on literacy teaching and learning. He acknowledged new technologies have “implications on the ways that we teach and the ways you communicate. You can blog instead of writing in a journal with paper and pen, you can actually type things, and then have it broadcasted worldwide.” However, trepidation also surfaced as he considered the perceived consequences for literacy instruction. He explained,

My only concern I guess with this communication is a lot of slang. So, I feel like although we’re encouraging different forms of writing through like blogs or even random posts on Facebook, or I have some friends who post poetry, you’re incorporating kind of the new generation of literacy which is where the slang comes in. And, when it’s brought back into the classroom we have to kind of say, you can’t have that slang, like you can’t say ain’t and you don’t want them to use too many contractions or short forms. Like, if you look at chatting and texting I feel like there’s a lot of acronyms and short forms that although it’s kind of the new or modern
literacy, it doesn’t really fit in with the school literacy that we have. So, that’s something that comes up.

The concerns of Robert and Lukas should not be discounted. They offer insight into some of the complexities student teachers face as they negotiate both their role as participants in contemporary communication practices and their role as teachers of literacy. As teachers, Robert and Lukas express a commitment to helping students learn the reading strategies and writing skills needed to access and contribute to different discipline areas. However, it is also important for student teachers to recognize how literacies practices continually evolve, and to consider how literacy pedagogy must respond to these changes in order to prepare students for their social futures at work, in their communities, and as participants in fluid public spaces of communication (Alvermann, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Luke (2003) for instance, points out “the texts of new technologies have mutated into complex, hybrid semiotic systems that have made new demands on reading, writing, viewing, social exchange and communication” (p. 401). Contemporary literacy pedagogy should take into account the diverse linguistic repertoires and experiences children/youth bring to the classroom.

As both Lukas and Robert express concern that the use of digital tools may be deteriorating youths’ writing skills, they in a sense, discount the inherent complexities of these contemporary literacy practices (Davis, 2012; Jacobs, 2008; Lee, 2007; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Simon, 2012; Sweeney, 2010; Vasudevan et al., 2010). The digitally mediated reading and writing practices (e.g., Facebook, texting, Twitter, blogs) youth participate in often demonstrate a complex use of text features, stylistic writing choices,
and the flexibility to adapt writing according to different contexts and audiences (Jacobs, 2008; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Sweeny, 2010).

The literacy practices youth participate in outside of school have instructional relevance as they are intimately connected to issues of identity, belonging, cultural participation, and knowledge production. Youth routinely engage with digital resources to express ideas, collaboratively build information, maintain social relationships, and construct and enact identities (Alvermann, 2010; Davis, 2012; Donath & boyd, 2004; Jacobs, 2008; Lee, 2007; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Sweeny, 2010; Vasudevan et al., 2010). A pedagogy of literacy teacher education that endeavors to help student teachers construct a multifaceted approach to literacy teaching should emphasize the importance of inviting pupils’ interests and lives into the classroom in order to create opportunities for meaningful learning.

**Negotiating The Place Of “New” Technologies In Literacy Teaching**

“Times are changing and you’ve got to keep up.” Lynne

The student teachers also exhibited a growing awareness of the potential implications contemporary technological tools and communication networks might have on literacy teaching. This is indeed a rather timely pedagogical consideration. In recent years, literacy scholars have suggested contemporary literacy pedagogy must engage with the complexities of our globalized society, wherein knowledge and social relationships are constructed amidst collaborative media platforms and novel information technologies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Knobel &
Lankshear (2007) note, “the world is being changed in some quite fundamental ways as a result of people imagining and exploring new ways of doing things and new ways of being that are made possible by new tools and technologies” (p. 10). These “new ways” of communicating provoke questions around how student teachers negotiate both their role as participants in contemporary technologies and their role as teachers of literacy.

Hull & Schultz (2002) emphasize the importance of “preparing teachers to think differently about what counts as literacy,” and to encourage the “integration of new media and Internet use into schools in ways that allow youth culture and its varied literacies to flourish alongside, as well as to influence academic genres” (p. 48). Many of the student teachers suggested literacy teachers must remain aware of the technologies relevant to children/youth, and actively consider how to meaningfully connect these resources to the classroom to deepen learning. For instance Laura explained how her community involvement helps her remain connected with youth literacy practices. She noted,

As a teacher you just have to be more aware of what kids are referring to now, and get familiar with that yourself first in order to teach it. So I think teachers now a days just have to be more aware of what’s out there, even before the kids do because if we’re not familiar with it than how can we guide them. So it is, it is difficult….I’m a high school councilor at church, and I actually have a lot of high school kids on my Facebook group. So seeing how they interact, seeing the language they use, seeing the acronyms, and asking them what it means afterwards has helped a lot, because otherwise they’re not common acronyms that I would use. So, it’s helped me understand other students in their age group and how they communicate, a lot [prolonged pronunciation]. So I’m really thankful for that.
Laura positions the role of a literacy teacher as a guide who should value students’ diverse linguistic resources and encourage them to draw on these rich funds of knowledge to deepen their learning (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Many of the student teachers sought to move beyond restrictive conceptions of authority, which position expertise as a fixed and stable entity (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). The student teachers recognized children/youth as active producers of knowledge and dynamic participants in literacy learning. In so doing, the student teachers advanced a more fluid, distributed, and inclusive conception of expertise and learning.

As student teacher Zoe discussed the role of a literacy teacher she resisted positioning the teacher as the sole purveyor of knowledge. Rather, Zoe likened her role as a literacy teacher to that of a facilitator who scaffolds students’ learning (Lapp et al., 2012; Larson & Marsh, 2005). Accordingly, she conceived of literacy pedagogy as a reciprocal process. Zoe felt the widespread use of prevailing communication technologies, has to an extent, shifted the very nature of literacy teaching. She explained,

Absolutely it has changed it, and it will change. I, I don’t think it is an entire change, but I can tell you that the change has started for sure. And, with the new generation of the teachers who are especially more expert on those technologies, and the students who are already more advanced than the teachers, there would be a change in the way that literacy is approached. So, I mean already the role of the teacher as providing the knowledge has shifted and is shifting very fast into facilitating the learning in the classroom. The body of knowledge is available and it’s out there, right. What teachers of the next century, or even this century, are going to do is find different techniques, and strategies to help students use those knowledges, have access to that, and know how, when and why to use
those knowledges. So, the knowledge is there. I [the teacher] am not the one who comes here and tells you I know all the answers, whatever I say is right because I have studied and that’s it.

Zoe utilized the intensifiers “absolutely” and “for sure” to accentuate the strength of her conviction (Gee, 1991, 1989, 1986; Riessman, 2008). She speaks to how emerging technologies have disrupted conventional sources of expertise and conceptions of authority. In other words, the proliferation of technological tools, which enable the instant transmitting of information and facilitate collaborative content generation on a wide scale, has extended the conventional boundaries used to define authority and expertise (Alvermann, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Notably, Zoe recognized how access to such diverse spaces of interaction has enabled children/youth to enact roles as both consumers and producers of knowledge. As a teacher of literacy Zoe endeavors to help students strategically navigate and critically engage with various domains of knowledge.

Similarly, Lynne emphasized the importance of incorporating “new” technologies into literacy teaching. She felt a literacy teaching practice that strives to be accessible and meaningful to all students must not restrict the definition of literacy to conventional notions of text. Lankshear & Knobel (2007) argue “conventional social relations associated with roles of author/authority and expert have broken down radically under the move from ‘publishing’ to participation, from central author to mass collaboration” (p. 14). The student teachers recognized how the shifting literacy landscape holds both advantages and challenges for literacy teaching. Indeed, as Lynne situates her literacy theorizing within the practical realities of the classroom she helps deepen our understanding of the complexities of literacy teaching. A sense of urgency is palpable as
Lynne contemplates the potential relationship between “new” technologies and contemporary literacy pedagogy:

Well, technology has to be used way more, and you can get to way more kids going the route they know, rather than relying on how we were taught in I guess you could call it the old school way, because it’s different. I’m going to sound so old but times aren’t what they used to be [laughs]. Times are changing and you’ve got to keep up. It’s like survival of the fittest, if you don’t keep up, your kids aren’t going to keep up, and you’re toast…There are things that exist now that didn’t exist when I was in school, digital literacy it didn't even exist. I had to handwrite my projects. You didn't have the Internet to go on to research things, it was you go to the library, and that was it, you knew how to be literate through texts. And now kids are responsible for so much more. So that mile wide, inch deep curriculum, is now five miles wide, and it’s crazy to think how much more they’re responsible for knowing. But it’s good at the same time because they will know much more, and hopefully be wiser and more intelligent than past generations that didn’t have the capacity and the multiliteracies. Now kids have so may access points.

While Lynne acknowledged that children/youth have access to an abundance of information resources, she also gestured to the pressure inherent in critically navigating these complex spaces. She suggested contemporary teaching must assist children/youth to strategically navigate and critically engage with the varied information technologies available to them. She stressed,

You’ve got to do as much cross-curricular as possible. History cannot be just history, history has to be multimedia, multiliteracy, multiplatform, because you have to be able to get at the concepts, not just the content. So,
the literacy concepts, and media, and critical thinking concepts. They [students] want to be able to use the things that they know, see the things that they know, be critical of the things that they know, and think for themselves. And it has to be relevant and applicable and interesting or else it’s gone in one ear [and] out the other.

A sense of anxiety is present as Lynne strives to negotiate the relationship between new technologies and contemporary literacy teaching. Likewise, a sense of trepidation was evident as Lukas considered the place of new technologies in literacy teaching. He identified tensions that surface when institutional mandates and government initiatives are used to define the communication practices deemed appropriate between teacher and students. He grappled with the complexities of simultaneously occupying both roles, as a participant in contemporary communication networks, and as an educator working with impressionable children/youth. Lukas expressed a sense of disconnect and uncertainty as he confided,

I feel like lines have been drawn. So like what you do in school is distinct from what you do outside of school. Even if you look at recently the whole Ontario College of Teachers’ [policy] no Facebook at all, I think no Twitter also. The concern was if you develop a relationship with students that’s more personal, then they might take advantage of that or they might read what you say differently. I feel like that makes sense, but at the same time, you need to make that connection with the students, that you as a teacher aren’t just someone that they see in school, you’re a real person, and by them valuing you as a person, you also value them as a person. I think it would be great to have Facebook with your students, you could connect with them, see how they’re doing socially and academically but that’s kind of gone. So, I feel like the line is drawn once you step into
school. I think it’s a negative thing that they’re drawing a huge line. So I don’t know, I feel like if you have the technology there, there is at least one aspect the students can relate to. So, they might not really relate to the content, but they know how to use the technology so they can somewhat put the content to use.

Lukas’ repeated use of the phrase “lines have been drawn” highlight tensions associated with enacting his role of a teacher who is at once compelled to act in accordance with school district and government mandates, but who is also committed to forging a holistic connection with his students. As a teacher Lukas appreciated the potential vulnerabilities connected to the use of public communication platforms; however, he also voiced resistance to the imposition of restrictive boundaries, which limit a teacher’s opportunity to engage students in learning as a reciprocral process. The data discussed above provides constructive insight into how student teacher’s construct and negotiate their role as teachers of literacy. This research also reveals some of challenges beginning teachers confront as they negotiate how, where, and when to incorporate prevailing communication technologies into contemporary literacy teaching.

**Fostering A Critical Consciousness**

“Students need to know how to read between the lines and beyond.” Laura

The research interviews asked student teachers to discuss what they felt were the literacy needs of the children/youth they have taught and will be teaching in the future. The findings suggest student teachers developed a nuanced understanding of their students’ literacy practices and needs during their teacher education studies. Many of the student
teachers suggested literacy pedagogy must foster children’s critical awareness of how the language used in texts operates to advance particular perspectives and position readers (Comber, 2001, 2006; Lapp et al., 2012; Vasquez et al., 2013).

While student teacher Sue appreciated children/youths’ proficiency with various digitally mediated technologies, she emphasized the need for literacy teachers to facilitate students’ understanding of the non-neutrality of contemporary communications networks and tools. She accentuated the need for teachers to scaffold students’ ability to critically read and evaluate the various information tools and social media platforms they routinely access. Sue emphasized,

> Everything is going into social media and everything is at the palm of your hand now, and if we’re not teaching to that, if we’re still expecting kids to get answers out of text books or to communicate through a written letter, we’re not teaching to their needs. We need to teach them how to evaluate information especially on Facebook or websites. Skimming and scanning is something that is much more useful to them, it’s applicable, because there’s so much information out there. Teaching them how to be critical of their environment because they have to evaluate so much. So they need to be able to know what’s the motive behind the information they’re reading. And I think that speaks to critical awareness.

Sue was asked to elaborate on how she thought literacy teachers could facilitate students’ critical awareness. She noted,

> To me that speaks to why we shouldn’t just be teaching content, we need to be teaching students how to use that content to their own advantage. And, I mean content is important, they need to know certain things so that they can build on their knowledge, and so that they can use their prior
knowledge to activate it, and think critically. But, they need to be able to learn how to be strategic, because they can find all the information on the web now. If you don't teach them that critical literacy perspective, then they are going to take things at face value, and that’s not what we want for our students, we want them, our next generation to be critical thinkers.

Sue recognized students as active and proficient participants in a variety of collaborative media platforms; however, she asserted the need for a literacy pedagogy that can deepen students’ ability to inquiry by encouraging them to question the motives, biases, and perspectives inherent in a text. As a teacher of literacy, Sue is committed to fostering students’ critical awareness of the how text practices and modes of representation are strategically mobilized to communicate particular perspective and to position the reader. Students’ could then apply this critical awareness as they navigate various sites of knowledge production (Alvermann, 2010; Comber, 2003, 2001; Janks & Comber, 2006; Vasquez et al., 2013).

Correspondingly, several of the student teachers suggested literacy teaching should utilize question-posing strategies to scaffold the critical reading of a text. Posing questions to the text can prompt students to interrogate intent and consider multiple perspectives. For instance, Robert noted, “I think getting students to ask questions and asking really good questions of students is important. Also bringing in a wide variety of materials, and being interested in what the students have to say, and what they’re interested in is really important.” Student teacher Lee also emphasized the need for contemporary literacy teaching to acknowledge youth as active consumers, producers, and distributors of knowledge in online spaces. However, she also felt literacy teachers must scaffold students’ ability to critically evaluate the veracity of the online spaces they
routinely consult. Lee’s repeated use of the intensifier “definitely” signals her commitment to taking up a critical stance (de Fina et al., 2006; Gee, 1991). She emphasized,

> Literacy teaching definitely needs to incorporate technology, and being literate in that sense because now as students get older so much of their communication is going to be online, and they do need to know how to navigate that. And also in terms of doing research, and in that sense with critical literacy, there’s so much information that is at your fingertips, so really being a critical consumer, and being able to look at it and say well. Who’s writing it? and Do I know who’s writing it? Why are they writing it? And not just accepting all the information they get sort of thrown at them. So, definitely, I think that the classroom needs to adapt more to what kids are doing outside of school, because they have so many things happening so quickly.

Lastly, Beth also emphasized the use of question posing as a literacy strategy to foster students’ critical reading of a text. Like Lee, Beth also suggested a critical literacy approach could help bridge the boundaries separating students’ out-of-school and in-school literacy learning. Beth pointed out that the critical literacy approach discussed in the literacy courses fundamentally informed the way she thought about literacy pedagogy. She explained,

> Well I think the critical literacy component, especially navigating the Internet and thinking about reliable sources is just huge. Also, media literacy, and understanding advertisements, understanding what the message is that they're receiving. It’s interesting like, the way the school bubble is in a lot of places, definitely my school wasn’t a very technology
focused kind of place, so it was this little bubble, where I mean there are still messages being received everywhere, even within that bubble, but it’s like you have to bring in that outside world, because it’s really part of world outside. Um, for me that’s the major thing.

Beth emphasized that literacy teachers play a vital role in fostering students’ capacity to critically read and to question the varied information technologies available to them. She suggested,

In terms of the responsibility of a teacher, they [students], they know how to find information, but they don’t necessarily know how to read it critically. I think that’s one of the major things we need to teach them. Their research is, you know, go to Google, go to Wikipedia, and we shouldn’t say that they can’t do that, like that’s the reality, and there’s amazing benefits from that as well. But, they need to learn how to question. I mean, I don’t necessarily know how to always do it myself right, or how to teach it, but that they really need to look at the source. Who is writing this? Is this a professional? Is this just some random blogger ranting? Is this a white supremacist? They need to really look at the source of the information. I think that’s the major thing.

The student teachers advocated for a contemporary literacy pedagogy that engages children/youth as critical readers, who should actively question and analyze the intent of a text (Comber, 2003; Vazquez, Tate, & Harste, 2013). As teachers of literacy they emphasized the importance of teaching students to question the values, perspectives, and beliefs represented within a text, as well as those that have been omitted. The student teachers understood the benefit of encouraging students to actively consider the intended audience, namely who benefits and who is disadvantaged, if a text’s message is accepted.
They endeavored to cultivate students’ critical awareness in an effort to deepen and extend their learning.

**Impactful Aspects Of The Literacy Courses**

“The use of picture books in any subject and with any age, it’s something I had never thought about, it’s a strategy I’d definitely use.” Laura

Student teachers were also asked to identify specific aspects of the literacy courses they found impactful. This section will highlight aspects the literacy course (e.g., activities, instructional strategies, assignments) the purposive sample of student teachers consistently identified as influential in advancing their understanding of literacy teaching and learning. The data presented in this section is representative of the elements of the literacy course the majority, if not all, of the purposive sample repeatedly identified as impactful.

All the student teachers found the class discussions useful. The particular discussion topics mentioned most frequently by the student teachers included: multiliteracies, critical literacy, literacy teaching in the content areas, out-of-school literacies, and literacy instruction at the middle school level. They reported that these discussions provoked them to rethink what counts as literacy and to consider literacy teaching through a broaden lens. Student teacher Robert noted the class discussions, in general, provided him with the opportunity to express his ideas, and simultaneously encouraged him to consider the perspectives of his colleagues. He said,

I always liked the group discussions because people bring different ideas and you get to say your own ideas. And I think both, both listening to
other people’s ideas and getting to say your own ideas kind of clarifies your position on things in general. So I found those helpful in the literacy courses.

All of the student teachers specifically referenced the discussion of critical literacy in the second year literacy course as an impactful learning experience. Laura remarked the “discussion about critical literacy has been beneficial because we were able to see another side of literacy, but also because it reminded us of what we learned last year in the literacy course.” Similarly, Sue also highlighted the discussion of critical literacy as a pivotal dimension of her literacy studies experience. She explained that in second year literacy course,

Debra [course instructor] talked about critical literacy, and I think that’s really important for all subject areas is to think critically about the world around us. And again, it took it outside of just reading a book and commenting about it. She brought in things from the media literacy strand that critiquing ads and ad campaigns, and what messages are there, and what are the underlying messages and things like that. I think that’s really important.

Beth also identified the discussion of critical literacy in the second year literacy course as particularly influential and informative. She noted “the discussion of critical literacy stood out” to her because she came to realize “critical literacy is not a just component of literacy, it’s a way of thinking, and for me, I see that as across the board, cross-curricular, it’s just in everything that you do.” Similarly, Robert also suggested the
discussion of critical literacy was impactful because it helped him bridge theory and practice. He commented,

I liked the critical literacy component that I think was one of the more important things I learned about this year [year 2]. Debra [course instructor] brought in some different pieces, like media texts and some different articles, and we looked at them, and we critically analyzed them, and then looked at how we were doing that, and then how we would teach that to students. I guess to always, always think critically about any type of literacy, and even for younger students, you can just analyze something in the newspaper, you can analyze an ad or a picture. And you always think about it, but I don’t think younger students especially are as aware of it or at least I wasn’t. I think often people in society will look at something, and maybe not think critically about it, especially kids they’ll just accept it as truth or accept it as, you know, I read this in a book it must be true. And, obviously so much of it isn’t, and so much is just opinion, and I think for them to realize that is a really important life lesson.

The student teachers also stated it was particularly useful when their literacy course instructors modeled how to select and effectively read aloud picture books, and how to use children’s/adolescent literature in the content areas. Lee noted, “I guess one thing was all the picture books Abby brought in because I would never have thought of using picture books in J/I before, but I really love some of them, so I think that’s definitely something I’d like to use.” Sue also identified Abby’s modeling of the how to read a picture book aloud to J/I students as both an enjoyable experience and important component of her literacy studies. This instructional strategy helped extend her
understanding the variety of texts that could be used with students in the senior grades.

Sue recalled,

There are so many things that had impact, there’s so many. I liked when Abby would read to us [laughs] because I think it’s important as an intermediate, and hopefully one day a secondary teacher, I would like to bring picture books into my classrooms regardless of whether it’s for literacy or for science or anything because I do believe we love being read to even as adults, and I think that, that could be a benefit at the secondary level too. I had never thought of using picture books prior to this course as a way to actually instruct, like as an instructional practice for courses and for J/I students.

Zoe also indicated that Abby’s modeling of how middle school teachers could incorporate a variety of genres and texts into different content areas served to enhance her understanding of the possibilities for literacy teaching and learning. Zoe explained,

I really enjoy how different genres are discussed, no genre is considered more important or valuable than the other one to be discussed, to be read, to be taught in the schools. And also, I really like the way that different storybooks were brought to the class, read to us, and the cross curricular links that this story could make, and exist for the students to learn. I really enjoyed the way that something that we are going to practice as a student teacher was first practiced on us. I really like this very much. And, before starting the course I could never imagine that a recipe could be important or interesting for any teacher or student, but this is what I learned here, which changed my view towards literacy.
Many of the student teachers also identified the following literacy activities and instructional topics as impactful: the course instructors in both the first and second year literacy courses modeled poetry instruction and provided instructional resources, as well as the student teachers had the opportunity to actively participate in a literature circle to study a young adolescent novel in the first year literacy course (Daniels, 1994; Daniels & Steineke, 2004). When Lynne was asked to identify a literacy course experience she found impactful, without hesitation she said “poetry.” She highlighted this element of her literacy course experience during several of our interviews. Lynne explained the poetry instruction provided in “both the first and second” year literacy courses was particularly useful during her practice teaching placements. She stressed,

I did a poetry unit for my second placement, and if we didn’t go over that in Abby’s class I would have drowned. We did the little booklets we got in class with examples on how to do it, and how to have appropriate lessons, and how to make it more learning based instead of product based that was really helpful. We did poetry in second year as well. And, for two out of the four practicum, I’ve had to do poetry, and both times I did amazing units because of what I learned in both classes.

Likewise, Laura also reported that a pivotal experience in her literacy studies was when Debra, the literacy instructor in the second year literacy course, guided the student teachers through poetry instruction. Laura noted,

In terms of this year, one thing I really liked, and I think a lot of us in the class will really remember, is poetry. So Debra walked us through the sharing of poems and how to read poems. One activity that I remember is the Vanilla poem it was a poem about vanilla. So she had us think about
where we could get it, what it reminded you of, and all this other stuff. And she grouped words, phrases, and had individual students read parts of it, as well as choral reading for certain sentences and phrases, and it was just a lot of fun.

Many of the student teachers identified the literature circle activity they participated in, during the first year literacy course, as impactful because they enjoyed having the opportunity to actually enact the activity in small groups. They could envision how this literacy strategy could be readily applied to the classroom. For instance, Lukas highlighted how this approach to novel study was unlike anything he had experienced during his prior schooling. He said, “I think it goes back to the different ways of teaching literacy because when I was in English [class] it was kind of like, here’s a book, let’s read it together as a class, or like, you read one page and then somebody else reads another. I’ve never had literacy circles where people have different roles.”

Student teacher Zoe repeatedly highlighted the literature circle activity as a memorable and impactful experience. She found both the novel selected and the literature circle approach itself engaging. She could also see how this approach could be implemented in a classroom:

Something that stands out right away, it was the experience of the Joey Pigza book and the literature circles. I was so much engaged in reading that book, the role that I had in the literature circle, I was very much engaged in it. And then at the end, I felt wow that was a good experience, and now I can do the same thing with my students. Like in a week, I learned what it is, how it works, how meaningful and understandable and related to the reader’s experience it could become, how I can modify it and change it to meet the kids’ needs, and my needs…As the time passed, and
I got into the second year, and I got into the practicum when I saw the link, that learning was internalized.

Zoe astutely pointed out the importance of student teachers having opportunities to connect the literacy course content with their practice teaching experience, in order to consolidate their knowledge of literacy instruction. This issue will be explored further in the next chapter as it focuses on student teachers’ experiences with literacy teaching during their practice teaching placements.

**Recommendations To Improve The Literacy Courses**

“I see what I wanna do but I don’t see how I can do it.” Sue

Literacy is a complex concept, and it is not possible to cover every dimension of literacy teaching and learning within the limited time frame of a teacher education program. Difficult choices must be made with regard to the core concepts and specific topics addressed within an individual literacy course. It is important for Literacy Teacher Educators to continuously evaluate how the content and structure of their literacy course can best support student teachers as they develop the knowledge and dispositions needed to construct a literacy teaching practice.

During the research interviews student teachers were asked to offer recommendations on how they felt the literacy courses could be improved. Four of the eight student teachers said that while they appreciated the abundance of strategies and resources provided in the literacy courses, they felt the courses should have provided more explicit direction on how to actually translate and apply these resources to the
classroom. Zoe stated, “it was too much, like too many things to consider about literacy, in too compact a time.” Lukas indicated he was “overwhelmed” by the wealth of resources provided because he felt not enough time and explicit instruction was provided in class on how to implement the resources into a J/I classroom. Lukas stressed,

I felt like the literacy component was a lot of stuff. When I looked at the binder it was gigantic, and there were all these handouts, which I didn’t really get to look at. I felt like it was a bit maybe too much information. Although it was nice to have all that information, but to then be like, okay go home and read it. I didn’t find that I had the time to do that. So, I didn’t benefit from so much information. I just remember feeling it would be nice to slow down. We got a lot of handouts, and it would have been nice to slow down the pace, go through everything step-by-step. So, it would be nice to go through it more in-class instead of being, here’s some resources, and then just talk about it quickly, and then go to the next resource. It’s overwhelming.

Additionally, all eight of the student teachers recommended the literacy courses should provide more explicit direction on literacy program planning. Although the student teachers received instruction on key concepts and specific literacy strategies they felt overwhelmed and unprepared to develop long-range plans for a comprehensive literacy program. For example, Lynne noted she had learned a great deal from the literacy courses, however, she felt unsure about where to begin when it came to literacy program planning. Lynne pointed out,

I did notice that for J/I’s [student teachers] there’s a little bit missing in the sense that we need to look at the beginnings of where things start in the literacy program. There’s a lot of focus on what to do in the middle, and I
think there needs to be a little bit more of a rounding out of how to approach the very beginnings of a literacy program. I think we need to look at that a little bit more in depth.

While Robert appreciated the guidance he received regarding lesson planning and literacy teaching strategies, he was perplexed by the prospect of putting the various pieces together to construct a cohesive literacy program. He was uncertain about how to effectively select, implement, and sequence the key components of a literacy program. He recommended long-range literacy planning should be explicitly addressed in teacher education to prepare student teachers for the realities of the classroom. Robert pointed out,

Just organizing my whole program, I feel like I have some great lesson ideas and skills in a bunch of different areas, but just kind of getting a sense of okay when should I have them [students] do their reading time. And, it seems like a huge thing right now, just thinking about how I would actually plan out the whole year for literacy, and I think that type of thing would be really useful if I had a little bit of that year-plan type of experience.

Sue echoed these sentiments. Interestingly, she astutely pointed out that the completion of an assignment on unit planning would not have helped her understand how to develop a long-range literacy program. Sue noted,

I think I’m still, uh, I see what I wanna [sic] do but I don’t see how I can do it. I’m still, I, there are so many things that we learned over the year. And I haven’t had a ton of practice in literacy unit planning. I’m not suggesting that we should have done a unit plan for literacy class because
it is a very fake environment to just stay, oh here’s this random literacy unit. But, I still, I don’t know that I can see exactly how I would put it together, and put it together in a non-time absorbing way.

Lastly, student teacher Beth recognized the value of engaging with an expanded conception of literacy, however, she expressed a sense of trepidation and discomfort over how to now translate and enact these insights in the classroom. Beth explained,

It was so important for us to just have this like mind opening experience, and that I really got, but in a lot of ways the more we expand literacy, the more freedom we have, the more creativity that we’re allowed, it’s a little overwhelming. I just keep thinking about, you know, that first year as a teacher where do you begin? And I know that there are no right answers. And, I want to think about new literacies, but actually thinking about, okay on a day-to-day basis what should I be doing? How do I cover certain things? You know How do I sequence things? Um, I feel like we’ve expanded it now how do we sort of put the pieces back together.

The recommendations offered by the student teachers are insightful and supported in the literature on teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2008, 2009; O’Neill & Geoghegan, 2011; Williamson, 2013; Wilson, Floden & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). The student teachers emphasized the need for teacher education to both, address key aspects of literacy pedagogy in depth, and provide explicit instruction on how to directly apply the literacy strategies/resources to the middle school classroom. The student teachers recognized it takes time to develop a repertoire of teaching strategies, to deepen one’s pedagogical knowledge, and to develop confidence as teacher; yet, they were also acutely aware of the important role literacy teacher education
must play in helping beginning teachers build the foundation that will support their literacy teaching practice.

Conclusion

The findings presented in chapters Five and Six examined the ways in which the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy broadened and their understanding of literacy pedagogy became more nuanced. Many of the student teachers reported the framing of literacy through a multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) lens was a pivotal learning experience, which encouraged them think about literacy pedagogy in broader terms. They began to reframe reading and writing as an active process, whereby people use a range of literacy practices within different domains of life to make meaning. The understanding of reading and writing as situated practices that people engage with at specific times, in varying social locations, to accomplish particular communicative goals seemed to fundamentally inform student teachers’ conceptions of literacy teaching and learning.

Accordingly, the student teachers began to reimagine literacy pedagogy as a space that should acknowledge students’ interests and lived experience as valuable sites of knowledge. They began to situate students’ lived realities as central to literacy teaching and learning. The student teachers seemed to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of connecting with the literacy practices students engage with out-of-school, to help create meaningful learning opportunities within the classroom. However, they also identified both advantages and challenges they might encounter as they endeavored to connect with students’ out-of-school literacy practices.
In addition, while the student teachers recognized children/youth as active producers and distributors of knowledge, particularly in online spaces, they emphasized the need for contemporary literacy pedagogy to foster students’ critical navigation of diverse texts and technologies tools. Many of the student teachers emphasized the importance of developing a teaching practice that intentionally models and scaffolds students’ ability to inquiry into diverse topics and multiple perspectives. The student teachers also drew attention to the complexity of negotiating both their role as participants in contemporary communication practices, and their role as teachers of literacy.

They also identified specific aspects of the literacy courses (e.g., multiliteracies framework, critical literacy concepts, poetry instruction, literature circle activity, assignments) they found influential in advancing their understanding of literacy teaching and learning. They also provided recommendations for how to improve the literacy courses. For instance, all eight of the student teachers recommended the literacy courses should provide more explicit direction on long-range literacy program planning.

Chapter Seven will examine the student teachers’ experiences with literacy teaching and learning during practice teaching. Attention will be focused on both the opportunities and the challenges student teachers negotiated as they attempted to observe and enact literacy teaching in their practice teaching placements.
CHAPTER 7: STUDENT TEACHERS’ ENACTING AN APPROACH TO LITERACY TEACHING IN A PRACTICE TEACHING CONTEXT

“So it’s nice that I know all of these things, but I need to personally put it to use to realize if it will work for me as a teacher.”

Lukas (interview data)

“I was surprised by how much my vision and thoughts about actual teaching changed.”

Sue (interview data)

This chapter examines student teachers’ experiences with literacy teaching during their practice teaching placements. The findings will highlight both the opportunities and challenges student teachers negotiated as they constructed and enacted an approach to literacy teaching during practice teaching. Attention will also be focused on the ways in which the student teachers actively drew upon available resources (e.g., literacy course concepts, resources, strategies) and translated this knowledge as they engaged with the practical realities of the classroom. As the student teachers engaged in this dynamic process of teaching and learning it informed their understanding of themselves as teachers of literacy.

The findings presented draw primarily on the four phases of interview data. Although the interview data included only those student teachers that comprised the purposeful sample (n=8) their experiences offer productive insights into the complex process of learning to teach literacy. While only a select number of student teacher interview responses (i.e., direct quotes) will be represented in this chapter, it is important to note, these findings are representative of key themes and recurrent patterns identified in the data as a whole.
This chapter is organized into four main sections. Section One will discuss the student teachers’ experiences teaching literacy during their practice teachers placements. Section Two will consider the instances in which the student teachers had only a limited opportunity to teach literacy or did not have the opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching. Section Three will highlight the student teachers’ experiences with teaching literacy in the content areas. The final section will consider the ways in which both the facilitating and inhibiting of literacy teaching opportunities in practice teaching, informed student teachers’ confidence and sense of preparedness to teach literacy as future middle school teachers.

Student Teachers’ Experiences With Literacy Teaching During Practice Teaching

In each of the four interviews the purposeful sample of student teachers (n= 8) was asked if they had taught literacy during their practice teaching placement. The response to this question was typically not a direct yes or no. Rather, the student teachers’ responses distinguished between three types of opportunities to teach literacy in the context of practice teaching. The student teachers also noted instances in which they did not have the opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching.

More specifically, the findings indicate the student teachers reported on three types of opportunities to teach literacy in practice teaching: 1) “Officially” teaching literacy during practice teaching represented instances in which the student teacher directly planned and/or implemented a series of connected literacy lessons (i.e., “a unit”) on a particular topic/strand in the provincial language curriculum (e.g., poetry, media literacy). This literacy instruction typically took place within the time allotted for the
teaching of language on the school timetable (e.g., the “literacy block”). 2) A limited opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching represented instances in which the student teacher taught one or two isolated literacy lessons (e.g., a spelling lesson, grammar mini-lesson). 3) Teaching literacy in the content areas represented instances in which a student teacher reported they intentionally integrated literacy instruction into content area teaching (e.g., Science, Health). In addition, student teachers indicated they did not teach literacy during practice teaching in instances in which they felt they were not directly involved with literacy instruction. The following sections of this chapter will examine each of these categories in further detail.

Officially Teaching Literacy During Practice Teaching

“I felt totally supported in taking risks and just pushing to the edges of my limits.”

Lynne

As noted in the previous data chapters, the student teachers developed a more nuanced understanding of literacy pedagogy as they entered into conversation with a broader field of literacy through their literacy courses. They engaged with literacy learning as a multifaceted process, whereby children/youth use multiple forms of representation to construct meaning within different domains of life. Accordingly, the student teachers began to reimagine literacy pedagogy as a space to engage with students’ diverse interests and linguistics resources as rich sites of knowledge. This chapter considers how student teachers applied the knowledge and resources from their literacy courses to enact an approach to literacy pedagogy during practice teaching.
Zoe was the only student teacher in the purposive sample (n=8) to report she had taught literacy in each of the four practice teaching placements. Zoe’s associate teacher had assigned her to take on the literacy instruction in her second practice teaching placement in a fourth grade classroom. Zoe noted she developed a “language unit” focused on “short stories, fables, and non-fiction” texts. As she discussed her experience teaching literacy in her second placement she highlighted how she applied pedagogical strategies modeled in the literacy course in an effort to respond to students’ needs. Through classroom observations, Zoe had noted the students in her fourth grade placement classroom did not seem to enjoy the literacy/language period. She commented, “so the kids in general, did not like language [arts class] very much, that’s what I found in those first days when I was observing. They did not really enjoy writing, and my AT [associate teacher] gave them worksheets so they could just write things in.”

Zoe was asked why she thought the students did not enjoy language arts. She suggested, my AT was a very easy-going person and also he was a good friend of the students. So during math or science or social studies, he was always fun and loud, and trying to make children get into the lesson very cooperatively, and doing something, shouting together or laughing. But then in language, most of the time he was writing instructions on board like, get a piece of paper, write a paragraph about this, you need these many sentences in it, don’t forget this and that in your paragraph. And kids were just copying and doing it. So, they didn’t have as much fun in literacy as they had in the other periods. And I really did not see him read them any books ever.
Zoe noted, when she took over the literacy teaching from her associate teacher, she initially “tried to find out about their [the students] needs, then after the first week [she] decided to change things because they were bored and they did not really like language.” She applied some of the instructional strategies modeled in the literacy course, and also integrated drama activities into her literacy teaching in an effort to draw students into reading. She also endeavored to build connections between the books she selected to be read aloud and the content she was teaching in science. Zoe explained,

Since I have been read a lot of books in my literacy class as an adult, I really wanted to read books to them. So, the first time I started reading something and walking around the class, I found out that they were listening very attentively. So then I decided to go to the library, the school library, and get some books, I got two and started reading to them just the next day in the language period, after lunch. I was teaching them the Boreal Forest, I found out it is named after the God of the North Wind called Boreas, and I shared that piece of information with them during science. And I found a book which was called the *Northern Wind* in the library, and then I started reading them that book. And I asked them questions, started reading to them stopped it asked them questions, and then showed them the pictures, just like what Abby did in the literacy class. So after that story was over, I started showing them the pictures and asking them to act it out, they really liked it. So to me, it was for those kids, it was a little bit of the kids and the book meet each other and greeting [each other], and then finding out what kind of fun you might have with the book.
Zoe also noted the use of drama activities helped her cope with some of the initial challenges she faced as she incorporated reading aloud into her literacy teaching. She described,

When I started reading to them, they started mocking me and teasing, the whole thing, but then it made sense to them by the end of the book, when the story was over they were trying to respond to it. And then, I just took those kids who were the least engaged in the class, but they showed a lot of interest, and they really acted it out [the drama activity] without teasing or mocking or anything else. So, I really think that experience worked, and after that, I was trying to build on that.

She felt the students really responded to her efforts to integrate drama activities and to connect the books she read aloud to the content she was teaching in science. Zoe highlighted the response of one student in particular,

I remember that once I used drama during language and it was about something that they studied in science, they responded to that, they showed a lot of interest, they wanted to learn. One of the kids came to me and said, Ms. so you were teaching language? And I said, yes, that was your language period. And then she said, oh, I really did not even recognize that you were teaching us language and I really liked it.

As Zoe reflected on her experience teaching literacy in her second placement, she characterized it as “a most successful experience in general, in terms of teaching for me.”

The findings suggest the practice teaching context served as a dynamic space within which the student teachers endeavored to bridge theory and practice. During practice teaching many of the student teachers actively applied the broader concepts and
the instructional strategies modeled in their literacy courses as they negotiated the practical realities of the literacy classroom. For example, student teacher Lynne suggested the opportunity to teach poetry in her fourth practice teaching placement, coupled with a supportive Associate Teacher (AT), offered her the space to interpret and enact the resources and strategies presented in the literacy courses. Lynne enthusiastically noted,

All of the things that I wanted to try from what we talked about, what we read about, what we did in the literacy courses, all that stuff I got to try it. And my AT he was like, you want to try it, no problem. Let’s do it, absolutely… This last practicum was amazing. With my AT, it was a team-teaching kind of thing, and so he was totally supportive of whatever I wanted to do.

In her fourth placement Lynne was responsible for teaching a “poetry unit” to eighth grade students. She characterized the literacy teaching experience as a “success.” She eagerly interpreted and applied the poetry resources from the literacy courses, and in so doing, enacted her own unique approach to poetry instruction. Lynne highlighted the “culminating task” she developed,

I did a poetry slam [as the culminating task] and breaking down the literary devices that were leading up to that culminating task. I used different things that we learned in the second-year literacy class, so read alouds, different poetry reading strategies, talking about different ways to present poetry, and then the poetry slam, the actual thing it worked out so well that my AT said “I’m using this, it’s now mine.”
Lynne suggested her approach to the teaching of poetry was motivated, in part, by the intention to make poetry accessible to students. In an effort to achieve this goal, she incorporated genres of poetry (e.g., spoken word) youth might find interesting and media (e.g., YouTube videos) youth would be familiar with. She elaborated on what the “poetry slam” involved:

It was an entire month of different components of poetry….I introduced, the poetry slam at the very end of the unit. Basically, I brought it [slam poetry] up in three ways. We watched YouTube videos of something that was not so good and something that was really amazing. And then we watched the really exceptional, outstanding poetry slams, the Def Jam poetry that we talked about [in the literacy course] the I can’t read poem [video]. The kids flipped their lids, they went crazy, they took it and went with it. And there were actually some kids that took that and they wrote their own song, and they performed it, it was amazing.

Lynne provided further detail on how the “poetry slam” event unfolded. She noted how impressed she was by the creativity the students exhibited and the diverse forms of poetry they chose to perform.

I had a flyer with a microphone on it, and I had the date and our room number where the slam poetry would take place… And for this culminating activity the students did a performance of poetry. So we had already gone through the different devices that they were going to do. I had them write a playbill so there was a written component. And the performance of the poetry was [either] solo, duet, or trio. And they could do an original, copy, or remix. And if it was a remix, they had to write about what they did, and why they picked it, and how they’re going to make it different. Some of them did one of the poems that we had already
done and they changed it into a different language, into Portuguese…
Some of them did spoken word, two of them made a song. We did onomatopoeia as well so they incorporated a lot of that. Oh, my God, it was amazing. Some of them did a flipbook with actions and pictures, some of them did a three-part choral reading, we had looked at that. It was amazing. It was amazing. They really liked it.

Lynne was asked why she thought the students seemed to respond positively to the poetry instruction. She said,

Because it was cool, they realized, oh right cool people can do cool stuff. Poetry isn’t just reading from a book. It’s like the Dead Poets Society when Robin Williams had them rip out the introduction, same thing, it’s like there’s no square fit into a box kind of thing… And it made even the kids that went, [hushed tone] “God I hate poetry,” go okay, I can dig it. We talked about that, too, I said, you don’t have to love poetry at the end of this, that would be great, but I just don’t want you to hate it, that’s it.

Lynne’s approach to poetry teaching endeavored to create opportunities for students to connect their interests, creativity, and aspects of their out-of-school lives (i.e. home language) to learning within the classroom. Her culminating poetry performance celebrated students’ rich linguistic resources and inventive talents as valuable sites of knowledge, which can deepen and extend learning for both students and teacher. She enacted a literacy pedagogy that was focused on engaging students in meaningful literacy learning opportunities.

Lynne also felt this practice teaching placement was particularly successful because of the support provided by her Associate Teacher (AT). She emerged from this
practice teaching experience feeling much more confident in her abilities as a teacher and had a stronger sense of preparedness to teach literacy. Lynne explained,

Well, I felt much more supported, and my AT he really encouraged me to just take as many risks as possible. And I felt safe to say yah that was a terrible lesson. I felt totally supported in taking risks and just pushing to the edges of my limits. So I feel way better now about doing cross-curricular links, using technology, using as many resources as possible to make the richest lessons because I was able to take those risks…It’s so good. I can’t praise this practicum enough. For every single lesson, my AT would take notes, and he would give it back to me, and we would talk about it…Yah it was amazing. He pushed me so far outside of my comfort zone.

Several of the student teachers keenly utilized the practice teaching context to actualize some of the broader literacy concepts and frameworks that had resonated with them in the literacy courses. As reported in the previous chapter, many of the student teachers emphasized the need for contemporary literacy pedagogy to foster children/youths’ critical awareness of how texts can position a reader and advance a particular perspective. For instance, Lee felt literacy teaching should facilitate students’ ability to critically engage with a variety of texts. Accordingly, when Lee was offered the opportunity to teach literacy during her practice teaching placement she endeavored to enact critical literacy connections.

In her second practice teaching placement Lee’s associate teacher (AT) asked her to complete a novel study with a class of grade seven students. Lee readily identified two fundamental constraints she faced in this placement. Namely, the novel assigned by the
associate teacher, and the associate teacher’s expectation that Lee should assign students prescribed comprehension questions to study the novel. Lee explained,

I had to teach a novel study, *The King’s Daughter* [novel title]. It’s set in New France, and it’s about this French orphan that gets sent over basically to marry a settler to help populate. So she’s the main character, exciting stuff [laughs]. And so, it’s a lot about her, her relationship with her husband. I never would’ve taught this book… She [the associate teacher] did seem to have a fairly traditional view, wanting me to do different sets of comprehension questions, which was a bit dull.

Lee was concerned the grade seven students would neither connect with the novel’s subject matter nor the style in which the novel was written. Based on her classroom observations Lee was also concerned the instructional strategies the associate teacher expected her to apply to the novel study would not effectively address students’ literacy needs. She noted,

I think they need, from what I’ve seen of the way the teacher’s been teaching it’s, it’s mainly independent work, like they’re writing journal entries type of thing. And I think they need to have more, kind of lively discussion around topics and literature, rather than just answering comprehension questions and that type of thing… Or they’ll talk about character, setting, but not getting at the really interesting issues in the book. Maybe letting them, kind of make more connections to it and see why it’s important in a broader sense.

Lee attempted to overcome these constraints by applying a critical lens to the novel study. She noted, “I tried to make it interesting and started off by talking about
some of the larger themes and more controversial issues in the novel, which seemed to work.” Her approach to literacy teaching encouraged students to question the particular values and perspectives communicated in the novel. She facilitated a critical reading of the novel by asking students to consider how the structure of the story functioned to privilege certain voices, while simultaneously excluding others. Lee elaborated upon the social issues her students examined as part of the novel study,

Well in the book there are lots of gender issues, the roles of men versus roles of women. And also the treatment of the First Nations people in the book it’s problematic because they don’t get a voice at all…So everyone’s afraid of the Iroquois, so you get a sense that they’re just evil and killing people, but you never get the other side at all. Most of the characters, they don’t have names, they’re just referred to as the Iroquois. It’s never explained why they might be angry at the settlers or what their viewpoint is. So, I guess to bring up discussion around those issues to get them to think about that, and also connect it to the historical context as well.

Lee extended the literacy strategies used to study the novel beyond the comprehension questions her associate teacher typically employed, which Lee felt did not facilitate a deep reading of the text. Rather, she invited students to draw on their prior knowledge and engage in active discussions around social issues present in the novel. Lee noted, “we had lively discussions, like from Grade 6 they were familiar with First Nations.” She also asked the students to complete a “character interview” to encourage them to think about the novel from a different perspective. Lee stated, “I also had them do character interviews, so they got to think about the character’s perspective, and they had fun with that. They did a good job”.

It should be noted, that Lee’s commitment to enacting a critical approach to literacy pedagogy was not isolated to one placement, but rather, was also evident in her other practice teaching experiences. For instance, in her fourth practice teaching placement Lee was asked to teach poetry to a grade six class. She decided to use poetry teaching to explore “social messages” and “social justice” issues. Accordingly, she intentionally engaged students in the reading of “Langston Hughes poems” because she wanted them to “look at poetry that dealt with social issues.” Lee also attempted to connect students’ out-of-school interests to the study of poetry by inviting students to “look at songs with a social justice message and make connections between how poetry is similar to lyrics.” Lee noted, “the students really got into the activity.” Her approach to literacy teaching endeavored to engage with students as active participants in the construction of knowledge. She exhibited a commitment to fostering meaningful connections between broader social issues and curricular content in an effort to deepen and extend literacy learning.

The opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching also prompted Lee to recognize the complexity of literacy teaching. With an English specialization (i.e., teachable) Lee had initially expected to be quite comfortable teaching literacy. Unlike many of her student teachers colleagues Lee had the opportunity to teach literacy in three of her four placements. After each one of these placement experiences she confided literacy teaching was “much harder than I thought.” As Lee reflected on her experience with the novel study in her second practice teaching placement she described her new understanding:
It was Grade 7. So I knew boys wouldn’t be that interested in the novel, but I guess it was hard, too, when I was reading it, like I read it [aloud to the students], which sounds really stupid, but I forgot how the language was sort of difficult. So when the kids started to read it, then they were having difficulty. Like, there were so many words I assumed they would know but they had no clue. So then I had to do way more with vocabulary than I thought. And, I don’t know, at first I thought it was going really terribly, and it was really painful sometimes [laughs], but yeah, it got better as we got through it. And then at the end, actually, because it was taking so long, it was taking so long to read it, I ended up doing sort of a jigsaw [reading activity] to finish the end of the novel, which I wasn’t sure would work, but it actually did work, and they all did their parts, and they did the little presentations. So it was good.

Lee gained several important insights into the complexity of literacy pedagogy as she constructed and enacted an approach to literacy teaching during her placement experience. She was surprised by how slowly the class’ reading of the novel progressed and by the extent of explicit vocabulary instruction students required in order to make sense of the text. While, she was initially discouraged by the difficulties she encountered with the novel study, she astutely adjusted her instructional practices to meet the needs of her students. Lee applied some of the instructional strategies (e.g., read alouds; jigsaw cooperative learning technique) modeled in the literacy courses to facilitate and complete the reading of the novel.

Similarly, student teacher Lukas also noted the complexity of literacy teaching as he discussed his experience teaching poetry during his second practice teaching placement. Lukas described how he felt about his experience with literacy teaching.
Um, hmm, I guess it’s a mixed bag of emotions. So it’s kind of like, I felt like I’ve learned a lot, but at the same time learning so much I feel like I don’t know very much at all. So, because teaching seems so complex now, and especially because I was more of like a generalist for second placement, it just seems like there’s so much to know, and then for every single subject there’s a different way of teaching it. So, like when I did science, it was pretty much science for my first practicum, I come from a science background. So, when I was asked to teach for example poetry [in second placement] I took more of an analytical approach [laughs] to teaching it, which I guess wasn’t the best way of doing it. But it’s just that there’s so many different ways of teaching things, I just felt slightly overwhelmed.

The influence of the J/I fallacy discussed in previous chapters is evident in Lukas’ narrative. Upon entering the teacher education program Lukas, like many of the student teachers, had initially expected as a J/I teacher he would be exclusively responsible for teaching science, his area of subject specialization, on a rotary timetable. He had considered the teaching of literacy to be the responsibility of a “generalist” teacher; that is, a teacher who teaches the majority, if not all, of the curriculum content areas (e.g., Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, Art) to students in a particular grade division/class (e.g., grade 4). When confronted with the prospect of teaching poetry in his second practice teaching placement, Lukas felt “overwhelmed” because he perceived literacy teaching as residing outside of his area of specialization (i.e. science). To teach poetry in his second placement Lukas applied instructional strategies he typically used to teach science, which in hindsight he felt was not particularly successful.

Lukas was asked to elaborate upon his experience teaching poetry in his second practice teaching placement. He explained,
I felt lost, because it’s kind of like, literacy was something that I didn’t like, and I got it over as soon as possible. So like, in grade eleven I did grade eleven and twelve English and I was done. So I haven’t really touched English or literacy, I guess besides like magazine reading, for like quite awhile, seven years, six years or so. So when I came back to it, it was hard because I was kind of like, I don’t want to teach how I was taught and here’s poetry. How should I teach it? So, unfortunately because I came from such an analytical background, when I taught poetry it’s like, here is the poem, compare the different poems. So I had three poems and they were the same types so I got students to, kind of, see the similarities between them, so that’s how they learned poetry. So it was quite analytical. Um, Debra [practicum supervisor] was saying how it should’ve been more verbal, which I kind of didn’t get to. So, her feedback was good for my next placement. But in terms of, like, going through it my AT [associate teacher] didn’t really say anything.

Lukas felt ill prepared to teach literacy, in part, because of his negative experiences with literacy during his prior schooling and his perception that literacy teaching resided outside of his subject specialization/expertise. Lukas attempts to reconcile the complex process of learning to teach literacy; namely, he rejects the restrictive literacy instruction he received throughout his prior school, as he endeavors to reconstruct the possibilities for literacy teaching. He explicitly stated, “I don’t want to teach how I was taught.” This process of negotiation represents a “site of struggle between [the] past and present,” between the rejection of a schooled literacy history he felt disconnected from, and the possibility to construct an inclusive and validating literacy pedagogy (Briztman, 2003, p. 88).
Ultimately, however, Lukas fell back on the instructional approach utilized during his training in science. He applied the instructional strategies he felt most familiar and comfortable with (e.g., “analytical approach”) as a means to cope with his feelings of being overwhelmed by literacy teaching. Unlike Lynne and Lee, Lukas did not draw upon the resources or the instruction strategies modeled in the literacy course. When asked if he had considered using any of the resources provided in the literacy course to support his poetry teaching he said, “I remember the rap stuff, but the poetry that I was doing was like the haiku, the limerick, and all those things, I don’t remember covering it [in the literacy course].” The various styles of poems (e.g., haiku, limerick) Lukas referred to had been covered in the literacy course, but he did not recall this. In the previous chapter, Lukas noted he felt overwhelmed by the volume of resources provided in the literacy course, and he also felt not enough explicit instruction was offered on how to apply the resources in the classroom. Perhaps, these factors prevented him from drawing on the resources provided in the literacy courses to assist his practice teaching.

Lukas was also asked how the students in his second practice teaching placement responded to his poetry teaching. He said,

Um, I think for the most part they enjoyed the fact that it was kind of like, they’re trying to figure out the mystery of what connects all three poems together, but, I guess in terms of verbalizing it they were lacking that, because Debra [practicum supervisor] did, kind of, a verbal read aloud activity and the students seemed to really enjoy that too. So I felt like, although it touched on one aspect for the more, the analytical thinkers, I kind of missed out on the verbal and kinesthetic.
As he reflected upon the feedback he received from his practicum supervisor, Lukas recognized his “analytical” approach neglected some fundamental aspects of poetry teaching and learning. Namely, the importance of providing students with opportunities to verbalize and to listen to the rich figurative and expressive language conveyed through poetry.

Not “Officially” Teaching Literacy During Practice Teaching

“I haven’t taught literacy officially.” Beth

As previously noted, in each of the four interviews the student teachers were asked if they had taught literacy during their practice teaching placement. Often, student teachers reported they did not “officially” teach literacy over the course of their placement. This typically meant they either had limited opportunity to teach literacy or they did not directly teach literacy during practice teaching.

Student teacher’s seemed to describe a limited opportunity to teach literacy as instances in which, they were responsible for teaching one or two isolated literacy lessons (e.g., a spelling lesson, grammar mini-lesson). For example, student teacher Lukas said in his third practice teaching placement he taught a couple of “mini-lesson” on spelling. He explained,

I did some spelling my first week…Um, it was pretty much they had the Nelson Spelling 5 [spelling series]. So it was pretty much turn to the page, and I would read to them what they had to do. Um, my AT, when I saw him do it, he just read through it really quickly, and said this is what you had to do. What I did, was I ended up reading it but I also wrote the question in different words so that the students knew what was expected.
Yah, I thought it was kind of boring in a way, because it was kind of like you would do something on like double consonances or look at words that end in le [sic]. Yah, it wasn’t that (pause), I didn’t find it that engaging, but a lot of students were still okay with it, because a lot of their instruction was fairly traditional, like math was somewhat traditional too.

The student teachers also suggested they did not officially teach literacy during practice teaching, in instances in which they did not design and/or directly teach the literacy lessons. While, a student teacher often acknowledged they had assisted their associate teacher (AT) with aspects of a literacy lesson, they did not seem to qualify this as directly teaching literacy because the associate teacher had been the one who developed and implemented the literacy lesson. For instance, after her second practice teaching placement Sue suggested she had not taught literacy. She elaborated,

I did some things but it was mostly, it was mostly my AT lead the literacy portion of it, however I did quite a bit of poem correcting and items like that with the students. So, I didn’t actually teach the lesson, which would have been maybe five, ten minutes, but I helped facilitate it for the remainder of the time when the kids were actually doing the work.

Similarly, when Robert discussed his experience with literacy teaching in his second practice teaching placement, he noted he was not involved in “direct instruction” but rather, “was kind of on the sidelines.” Robert explained,

I mainly did, uh, the literacy circles I went around to different students groups and commented on their discussion, and I got to evaluate their discussion as well. So, I enjoyed getting to hear what they had to say. I didn’t do a lot of direct instruction, it was all small group work, and I
didn’t design the activities either. That was mainly it, other than just helping with individual questions.

The data suggest there seem to be two primary, albeit closely related, criteria the student teachers used to define “official” literacy teaching opportunities within the context of practice teaching. The student teachers did not seem to consider themselves as officially teaching literacy unless literacy was one of the content areas the associate teacher assigned them to teach, and/or they were responsible for directly developing and enacting a literacy “unit” (e.g., as series of connected lessons) related to a strand of the provincial language curriculum.

The student teachers completed various methods and content courses, within their teacher preparation program, which focused attention on unit planning. In some of these courses the student teachers were asked to develop a unit plan as a course assignment (e.g., a unit on flight in science). The literacy courses did not require student teachers to complete a unit plan. Within the teacher education program unit planning was at times used as a pedagogical strategy in some methods and content areas courses as a means to facilitate student teachers’ understanding of how to cluster related curriculum expectations, structure the sequencing of lessons, design complimentary assessment strategies, and develop a culminating task that integrated the various components covered throughout the unit.

The student teachers tendency to use the development of a “unit” plan as the gauge to define what counts as official literacy teaching, in some respects, lead them to discount the literacy teaching they had enacted. Moreover, the use of a unit plan to qualify what counts as legitimate literacy teaching opportunities, might at times, obscure
a student teacher’s ability to recognize the multiple spaces and various ways in which literacy teaching and learning occur within the classroom context. It is important for literacy teacher education to foster student teachers’ understanding of literacy as a dynamic process, which teachers and students constantly use to engage with various spaces of learning.

In our final interview, Lukas acknowledged he felt as though he “never got to teach literacy because [he] never actually had gone through a complete unit of literacy.” He noted,

I never actually got to teach, I never taught literacy. Like, I taught small components of it, like mini-lessons, but I never taught like here’s the unit for this. Poetry, that was the closest I got, I taught maybe half of a unit, but that was it. So there’s a lot of unknowns.

As student teacher Laura discussed her third practice teaching placement, she also suggested she had not really taught literacy, as literacy was not one of the “main subjects” her associate teacher had assigned her to teach and she had not developed a literacy “unit.” She noted “language wasn't one of the main subjects I taught, I just taught it for one or two lessons.” Laura was asked how it had been determined what subjects she would be responsible for teaching during the placement. Laura’s response gestures to the connection she drew between the development of a “unit” plan and the official teaching of a specific subject area within the context of practice teaching. She said,
when I first met her [the AT], I asked her, what would you like me to
 teach? And she said you can teach Drama, and do a little bit of History and
 Politics. So I thought okay, then I guess I’ll do a unit on drama.

As student teacher Beth reflected on her practice teaching experience she noted, “I
haven’t taught literacy officially.” Beth emphasized in each of her four placements her
associate teachers had not assigned her to teach literacy directly. She noted Mathematics
was a subject her associate teachers had assigned her to teach in each practice teaching
placement. Beth was asked why she thought literacy teaching had not been assigned. She
suggested, perhaps the associate teachers felt it was more feasible for a student teacher to
teach content areas, such as “math,” because concise “units” (e.g., measurement) could be
developed and implemented over the finite period of a practice teaching placement. Beth
elaborated,

when you do a measurement unit [mathematics] there’s however many
expectations, you may not cover all of those, but you know that’s the unit.
It’s just, okay you finish up math and have a test, and now we can start the
new unit, whereas with literacy I’m not going to cover writing in a unit.
You’re going to be covering writing the entire year. So it’s not like you
can feel like, okay I’ve done that block and now that’s checked off.

Beth also suggested associate teachers might feel more comfortable assigning
student teachers to teach content areas, such as “math and science,” because a textbook
could be used to guide instruction and a test could be administered to assess students’
content knowledge. Beth noted, “the way I’m thinking is that math seems more doable. A
lot of teachers don’t necessarily feel like they’re great math teachers but you can fall back
on a textbook.” In contrast, she felt literacy teaching did not lend itself to a finite unit/test structure.

In our third interview, Robert emphasized his wish to explicitly teach literacy in his final practice teaching placement because he felt this opportunity had been missing in his previous placement experiences. He stressed,

One thing is to get to teach literacy in a placement. I still, I’m looking for that in my last placement because I really [expressive tone used] want to. I’ve taught it for a couple of classes but I’ve never had a good solid unit in it, and my third placement was more math and science, and I worked literacy into science, but it still wasn't, you know, a lot of in-depth stuff.

While Robert had completed advanced studies in English at the University level, which technically qualified him for a teachable/subject specialization in language/English, his designated teachable within the teacher education program was science. Robert suggested that often his associate teachers had not afforded him the opportunity to teach literacy because his “specialization subject is science and every time I go in for practicum it’s like, oh you can teach a science unit.” Robert felt the opportunity to teach literacy was an important part of his development as a future middle school teacher. He noted, not having ample opportunity to teach literacy “is a bit limiting, because obviously I’m going to be teaching everything, and I’m not just going to be a science teacher.”

In our final interview Robert reported, in spite of his readiness to teach literacy, he again did not have the opportunity to “directly” teach literacy in his final/fourth practice teaching placement. He remarked, “this last practicum, I unfortunately really didn’t get to teach literacy again. Not directly, I was doing math and science.” While
Robert made a conscious effort to teach literacy in the content areas (e.g., Science), he felt the opportunity to engage in “direct” and “in depth” literacy instruction during practice teaching was an important part of developing the pedagogical foundation upon which, he would build his practice as a middle school teacher. Unfortunately, he felt the opportunity to teach literacy eluded him time and time again.

**Unofficially Teaching Literacy During Practice Teaching**

“I enjoy building literacy through student interests and connecting it cross-curricular that to me seems a lot more feasible.” Sue

Several of the student teachers actively engaged with literacy teaching as a multifaceted practice that was relevant across the curriculum. They consciously endeavoured to integrate literacy instruction into content area teaching to facilitate student learning. For some of the student teachers the enactment of reading and writing instruction in the content areas represented a way into literacy teaching. In other words, it made literacy teaching accessible to them during practice teaching.

As student teacher Beth reflected upon her experiences with literacy teaching over the course of her four practice teaching placement, she noted while she did not teach literacy in “the literacy block,” she intentionally integrated literacy instruction into content area teaching. Her recognition that literacy instruction is a critical dimension of teaching and learning in the content areas signified a fundamental “progression” in her development as a J/I teacher. Beth reflected,
Over the two years [of teacher education studies] I really feel there’s been a progression for me in terms of my thinking of literacy and literacy instruction. I remember after my first block where I didn’t teach literacy, I felt like I didn’t teach literacy. And then in my second block, I didn’t teach the literacy block, and I realized, I had included some of it in my social studies and in my math, that I was starting to do that. And in my third block, I realized I didn’t teach literacy, but I did teach literacy because I really used it in my research unit for science, they [students] had to do a research report, and I was doing it. So I didn’t teach the literacy block, but I’m a literacy teacher, and I’m going to try to find ways to make it happen, not just happenstance that I’m a literacy teacher, no I’m a literacy teacher even though I’m not teaching a literacy block.

For many of the student teachers the enactment of literacy instruction within content area teaching represented an opportunity to bridge theory and practice in the classroom context. They endeavoured to translate their nuanced understanding of literacy into the middle school classroom. When Sue was asked if she had taught literacy in her third practice teaching placement she reported that she taught literacy within the content area of health education. In her third practice teaching placement she engaged with literacy as a space to undertake issues of equity and inclusion within the classroom.

Sue’s associate teacher had assigned her to teach various strands of the physical education and health curriculum to males students in grades “seven, eight, and nine, in a junior high school.” However, Sue astutely adjusted her initial teaching plans to respond the needs of her students. Sue explained,

My grade sevens were supposed to get [instruction on] puberty but then in the first week we had a bullying incidents, so I asked my AT to switch the
curricula, so I could teach the personal safety and injury prevention unit, that one is in bullying and anti-bullying and harassment [strand of the curriculum].

Sue intentionally integrated specific reading and writing practices into her health instruction to communicate and enact many of her pedagogical goals. Through her teaching she hoped to encourage students to reflect upon the potential role they may have played in a “bullying incident,” and to consider how they might be implicated in these instances of inequity and exclusion. She stated,

There is a smaller percentage that is either the victim or the bully, compared to the mass which is the bystanders, the bystanders that do nothing or bystanders that might join in, but I was trying to get them to be the bystanders that would help the victim, that was kind of one of my other goals.

Sue explained as part of her instructional practice she showed students a video clip of political satirist Rick Mercer’s (i.e., Rick’s Rant) passionate response to the suicide of a teen who had been bullied because he was gay. Sue then used various writing strategies to encourage students to consider the complexities inherent in these social issues and the relevance of these issues to their lives. Sue elaborated,

I showed them a clip from Rick Mercer, because he himself is gay, and this one [Rick’s Rant] was on teen suicide, the suicide of a teen that was gay and bullied. And I had them do a retell-relate-reflect [writing activity]. I also had them write a personal commitment to a safer school…And I got them to write a scenario, a bullying scenario as their major assignment.
Sue explained that one of her students used the written reflection as a call for help. Sue confided, “I had one student write about his own thoughts of committing suicide, this is a grade seven [student], and he had been bullied in school.” Sue along with school faculty, a social worker, and the youth’s parents subsequently sought out the appropriate supports to assist the student. As Sue reflected on this incident she revealed a powerful pedagogical insight,

I, I, it just made me think that it’s more than content that we’re teaching, and if I hadn’t had them consolidate their knowledge at the end and write that reflection, than I would have never known, and maybe nobody would have ever known that the student was still having problems. So, it just kind of again reaffirmed that literacy it’s communication, and in each of these subject areas we have to be teaching communication.

Throughout her practice teaching experiences Sue enacted a relational approach to teaching, which endeavored to be responsive to students’ needs and meaningfully connect to students lives both within and beyond the classroom. Sue noted, “again it’s about being real with them, right. The kids can see through you if you’re not being real.” She explained, “I mean I am very open about myself, being, identifying as a lesbian…So, I think it’s like, you kind have to open yourself up in order to allow them to open up.”

In her fourth practice teaching placement Sue applied a critical lens to content area teaching. For example, in the teaching of health education and media literacy, she utilized question-posing strategies to scaffold students’ critical reading of “drug awareness” and “mental health awareness” advertising campaigns. She engaged with reading and writing activities and lively class discussions as a space for students to
“critique the ad campaigns” and to contribute their thoughts on “what would be a more effective campaign.” In so doing, she engaged with reading and writing in the content areas as a means to facilitate students’ understanding how knowledge is constructed and communicated within different domains.

Robert also noted, while his associate teacher had not assigned literacy as one of the subject areas he was responsible for teaching, he “integrated literacy into science” in his third practice teaching placement. In planning his “eco-systems unit” for a grade seven class, he “looked at the literacy expectations [from the provincial language curriculum] and thought I can draw this in.” He explained how he utilized reading and writing in content area teaching to guide students’ understanding of how to research, effectively organize, and communicate information:

They [the students] had to do a National Parks project, and they did research on a National Park in Canada or the United States, and they pulled information from different sources and then had to write about their park. So they gave me a nice little passage talking about a description, and the animals they'd find there, and some of the things the park was doing to protect that area. It was a good non-fiction writing and you know using research [activity]. So, I helped them a lot with, with how to organize their paragraphs and what information to include.

Robert also encouraged students to engage with science as an active body of information which had relevance to their lives. He used the national parks project as an opportunity to provoke students to consider issues of sustainability and environmental impact. He noted,
We also had a lot of discussions. We had the kids talking and debating, we'd talk about issues like how humans are affecting the earth, and the kids would get to talk about their sides and defending their positions. So that was literacy. And we did labs in the class where the kids came up to look at different specimens, they had a fantastic collection of specimens there, and they got to describe what they were seeing and talk about it. So it was all very non-fiction, scientific literacy.

Lastly, Robert incorporated poetry into his eco-system instruction. Robert writes poems in his free time and has had some of his poems published in literary periodicals. He shared his poems with his students in his third practice teaching placement. He explained,

I read my poems. A few of them [the poems] were science related, I had some that were nature poetry. So I used a couple of mental sets to get the kids thinking about the environment and connections, but they really liked them…The poems, as soon I started [reading] they [the students] were amazing, it was the quietest they’ve ever been, like you could hear a pin drop during the poem, which was amazing. I don't know if it was the respect thing or you know that I was vulnerable reading it, but they loved the poems. They got to see a different side of me in a way through the poetry.

While, Robert had intended to use his poems to encourage students’ to think about environmental issues, the sharing of his poetry became an opportunity for students to engage with him on a more personal level, as they witnessed the vulnerability often associated with acts of writing and reading.
The Importance Of Enacting Literacy Teaching

“I need to personally put it to use to realize if it will work for me as a teacher.” Lukas

Throughout the research interviews the student teachers highlighted the importance of enacting literacy teaching during practice teaching. The opportunity to construct and enact an approach to literacy pedagogy within the context of practice teaching seemed to represent an important part of student teachers’ professional development as future middle school teachers. Throughout their placement experiences the practical realities of the classroom served to both facilitate and inhibit the student teachers’ opportunities to enact literacy concepts; consciously consider what counts as literacy pedagogy; revise their practice in respond to students’ needs; and negotiate the complexity of literacy pedagogy across the curriculum.

Zoe suggested the opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching helped her to connect and translate many of the literacy concepts and strategies presented in the literacy courses into the classroom context. She pointed out,

Speaking of literacy, I had no idea how comprehensive really it could be… And to be honest, I think what we do here in the [teacher education] courses is great, but if we don't have this connection into practice there is a gap. So things that I hear in the literacy class now with Debra [year two literacy course instructor] make sense or the things we talked about in the literacy course last year make sense. I just connect, like everything’s starting to connect and make sense and that aha moment is just happening very often.
Zoe was the only student teacher in the purposive sample to report she had directly taught literacy in each of her four practice teaching placement. She suggested this experience meaningfully informed her development as a teacher for it provided her with the opportunity to consolidate her conceptual and practical knowledge. She contrasted her placement experiences with the student teachers who did not consistently have the opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching,

So I think those of us, actually I was very much blessed because in my four practicums, I had an opportunity to teach literacy. But those of us who really didn’t have a chance to teach literacy in the practicums, and they were maybe touching on some other subject areas, and especially those of us who were not very much comfortable with teaching literacy, I’m not sure how much they gained or benefited from the literacy courses in the year one and year two… I really think that it’s not just the course, the beauty of it all was the link that the course had with my practicum, and then that ah-ha moment happening basically in the second year for me... I liked having the opportunity and the freedom to practice as many of those ideas as I can in the classroom.

Correspondingly, Lukas one of the student teacher’s who reported having limited opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching, indicated his perceived lack of literacy teaching experience left him feeling anxious and insecure about the prospect of teaching literacy as future middle school teacher. He suggested the lack of opportunity to teach literacy throughout his practice teaching placements inhibited his ability to apply the broader concepts and the pedagogical strategies modeled in the literacy courses. In our final interview he expressed this sense of discomfort,
I feel a little bit more comfortable, but not that much, like even in my last placement I didn’t get a chance to teach that much of the language block. So, I didn’t really teach literacy, I feel like in terms of experience I haven’t had that much, and because I don’t have that much experience all of these terms and theories, and whatnot, just seem to fly by…Yah, because even with math or with science which I’m stronger in, it’s different when you’re in class and you’re hearing a theory, and then when you actually go into it, it’s a lot different. So it’s nice that I know all of these things, but I need to personally put it into use to realize if it will work for me as a teacher, that’s hard.

Overall, the student teachers seem to feel having ample opportunity to explicitly teach literacy during practice teaching was an important part of developing the confidence and sense of preparedness to teach literacy as future middle school teachers. For instance, as Robert reached the end of his teacher education studies, he felt his limited exposure to literacy teaching over four practice teaching placements represented a gap in his professional knowledge. He commented,

I haven’t really had a chance to, to prove to myself that I’d be a good literacy teacher…I feel prepared in some respects, like I think I have a good sense of myself and a philosophy of kind of how I’d like to teach literacy. I’d obviously like to get some more ideas about lessons and that. My biggest thing, I guess I don’t feel that I got that much experience in practice teaching, and I think it would have been a lot more beneficial if I’d have had a whole month solid in some type of literacy placement to teach it. I think I would have more confidence to do it that way. So yah, philosophy wise I think I’m good, but in terms of practical teaching strategies I would certainly like some more experience.
Similarly, while Beth had actively endeavored to teach literacy within the content areas during practice teaching, she confided that not having the opportunity to directly develop and enact a comprehensive series of literacy lessons left her feeling anxious and insecure about her ability to develop a comprehensive literacy program. Beth explained,

I feel mixed, I mean I've learned so much but I haven't yet taught literacy officially. Um so, I think in that sense I sort of still feel like, like I didn't teach it, and so I still feel insecure and confused about that because I hadn't yet had the opportunity to see what I can do with it, and to get passed some of those apprehensions, but also to find successes. So with literacy, it’s still just a scary beast to me. Um, like there’s so many things that I'm excited about, you know, how different it is than my own schooling. I love of all the things we are learning about, but it also just the idea of having to plan a year of literacy, you know I have a decent sense now of a lot of the different components of literacy, but how to put those all together, and how to teach a unit of literacy, like I haven't done that yet. So it’s, that’s just really scary, and overwhelming.

Lastly, Sue highlighted how her experience with both the course work and the practice teaching components of her teacher education studies broadened her understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy. As Sue constructed and enacted a more nuanced understanding of literacy pedagogy she ostensibly rebuked the restrictive framing of literacy encountered throughout her prior schooling. Sue gestured to the progression in her development as a literacy educator,

I mean I’m sure you could go back to the very first interview that I did, I wasn’t very comfortable teaching literacy, I don’t think I still am completely comfortable teaching literacy, but I’m a lot more comfortable
with it. Um, I was very hung up on the fact that I wasn’t, and I’m still not a very good speller and grammatically I’m not very sound, and I don’t feel comfortable writing on a chalk board because I don’t have a little red swiggly [sic] line correcting me, from Word right. And so, to that point that had kind of keep me back, and that I’m not a teacher of literacy type of mentality, but I’m starting to get past that. I think it’s just knowing that literacy and teaching literacy is much broader than what I remember it to be in public school, in my elementary school, doing spelling tests, and doing grammar work sheets, and reading and stating the main idea, the plot, the characters, like kind of those boring dry things, that it can be more than just that.

As Sue began to rethink and extend the possibilities for literacy teaching, her initial identification as a student who “struggled” with reading and writing in school, no longer defined her relationship to literacy. As she enacted a broader approach to literacy pedagogy through her placement experiences the prospect of a literacy teaching seemed much more feasible and meaningful.

Conclusion

The findings discussed in this chapter speak to the importance of providing student teachers with multiple opportunities to translate the instructional approaches presented in their literacy courses to the actual classroom context, with the guidance and support of an experienced mentor teacher. As reported in the findings, the student teachers emphasized the importance of being able to apply what they had learned in the literacy courses to the middle school classroom. Many of the student teachers sought to translate their expanded
conceptions of literacy to the classroom during practice teaching. This was evident with both the student teachers who had the opportunity to “officially” teach literacy in the “language block,” as well as the student teachers who intentionally integrated literacy teaching within the content areas during practice teaching.

The findings also revealed that a number of the student teachers felt they did not have enough opportunity to teach literacy during practice teaching. This left several of them feeling overwhelmed and anxious about the prospect of teaching literacy. This finding provides insight into how the student teachers assessed and defined what it meant to teach literacy in a practice teaching context. Several of the student teachers did not seem to consider themselves as having “officially” taught literacy unless literacy was one of the content areas their associate teacher assigned them to teach, and they were responsible for developing a literacy “unit” (e.g., as series of connected lessons) related to a strand of the provincial language curriculum.

Overall, the student teachers seem to feel having ample opportunity to explicitly teach literacy during practice teaching was an important part of developing the confidence and sense of preparedness to teach literacy as future middle school teachers.
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

My dissertation research seeks to contribute to our understanding of the role literacy teacher education plays in the lives of beginning teachers; in particular, the points of intersection between student teachers’ conceptions of literacy, their literacy histories, their current literacy engagements, and their evolving approach to literacy teaching. This longitudinal qualitative research examined how a group of junior-intermediate student teachers constructed conceptions of literacy and enacted literacy pedagogy over the course of a two-year teacher education program.

As outlined in the data analysis chapters (Chapters Four to Seven), this research considered how the student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy informed their expectations of literacy teaching and learning. This research also examined the ways in which student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy shifted as they entered into conversation with the broader field of literacy (e.g., multiliteracies, out-of-school literacies, content area literacies) during their teacher education studies. Attention was also directed to the ways in which student teachers’ experiences in teacher education informed how they came to understand their role as teachers of literacy.

In this final chapter I identify the broader implications of this research for the practice and study of literacy teacher education. In the first section of this chapter I discuss how the research findings could inform the construction of a pedagogy of literacy teacher education. In the second section I offer recommendations for future research.
Implications for A Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education

In this section, I consider how findings from this research contribute to the construction of a pedagogy of literacy teacher education. I envision a pedagogy of literacy teaching education that actively takes into account student teachers’ diverse experiences with literacy, facilitates student teachers’ engagement with literacy as a multifaceted process, and scaffolds the foundational knowledge and dispositions necessary for student teachers to build a comprehensive and inclusive approach to literacy teaching.

My thinking in this regard has been influenced by the work of John Loughran (2006) a proponent of the concept of a pedagogy of teacher education. Loughran (2008) states, “a pedagogy of teacher education involves knowledge of teaching about teaching and a knowledge about learning about teaching and how the two influence one another in the pedagogical episodes that teacher educators create to offer students of teaching experiences that might inform their developing views of practice” (Loughran, 2006, p. 1180). Developing such a pedagogy can assist in rendering visible some of the complexity and nuance inherent in the process of “teaching and learning about teaching” (Loughran, 2008, p. 1180). The development of a pedagogy of literacy teacher education seems particularly timely and relevant.

In recent years literacy scholars have suggested that contemporary literacy pedagogy must engage with the shifting landscape of communication wherein youth have access to novel spaces for social interaction, knowledge generation, and identity construction. The multifaceted nature of contemporary communication practices provokes the consideration of how teacher education might effectively support student teachers to develop a literacy teaching practice that is attuned and responsive to the
diverse literacy needs of children and youth. The construction of a literacy teaching practice that meaningfully connects with the plethora of technological tools and linguistic resources youth routinely navigate on a daily basis, will likely require beginning teachers to conceptualize and enact literacy in ways they did not experience during their prior schooling. That said, teacher education should also take into account the diverse experiences with literacy that student teachers bring with them to their studies, which can deepen and enrich their future teaching practice. While, there have been persistent calls to integrate a multiliteracies approach in teacher education to prepare beginning teachers for the demands of contemporary literacy teaching (Ajayi, 2011; Cervetti et al., 2006; Comber, 2006; Luke, 2000; Rowsell, Kosnik & Beck, 2008) a comprehensive understanding of how to actualize this approach into practice, has yet to be fully articulated.

Developing a pedagogy of literacy teacher education may assist in clarifying how multiple literacies concepts (e.g., multiliteracies, out-of-school literacies, content area literacies) could be utilized in teacher education to help beginning teachers construct a comprehensive approach to literacy teaching and learning. In this chapter I will consider the implications of this research on four interconnected and overlapping dimensions of a pedagogy of literacy teacher education: 1) Knowledge of the autobiographical; 2) Knowledge of literacy theories, concepts, and curriculum content 3) Knowledge of pedagogical approaches, resources, and dispositions; 4) Knowledge of pupils’ diverse literacy needs and rich literacy resources. The aim of this chapter is not to mandate a perspective formula for literacy methods courses, but rather to deeply consider how teacher education might work with student teachers to engage with literacy as a dynamic
practice, and to consider how their own temporality informs the process of learning to teach (Huebner, 1967).

**Knowledge of the Autobiographical**

A pedagogy of literacy teacher education that is committed to working with student teachers to deeply consider the multifaceted nature of literacy pedagogy, should endeavor to gain insight into the varied perspectives and experiences that inform how student teachers think about the place of literacy in their future classrooms. Student teachers bring their own complex literacy histories to teacher education, which greatly inform their conceptions of what counts as literacy and their expectations of what it means to teach literacy. The findings from my dissertation research point to the importance of providing student teachers will multiple opportunities to critically examine how their experiences with literacy, both within and beyond the school context, are deeply connected to their understanding of teaching and learning. These findings align with related research in the area of literature teacher education (Brown, 1999; Edwards, 2009; Ghiso et al., 2013; Kinloch, 2013; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Le Fevre, 2011; Leland, 2013; Mathers, Benson, & Newton, 2007; Norman & Spencer, 2005; O’Neil & Geoghegan, 2011; Penn-Edwards, 2011; Williamson, 2013; Yandell, 2012).

Research investigating the ways in which student teachers’ literacy histories inform their understanding of literacy learning, have reported that student teachers initially held restricted conceptions of literacy learning due in large part to their prior school literacy experiences (Brown, 1999; Edwards, 2009; Mathers, Benson, & Newton, 2007; Norman & Spencer, 2005; Roe & Vukelich, 1998). The findings reported in my
dissertation research are consistent with these studies. As outlined in my findings chapters, both the survey data and the interview data revealed that student teachers’ initial conceptions of literacy were considerably informed by the restrictive models of literacy they encountered throughout much of their prior schooling. While the student teachers had also participated in a rich array of literacy practices in their out-of-school interactions (e.g., home, peer, community) their initial conceptions of literacy were grounded in their school-based encounters with reading and writing.

The student teachers seemed to associate literacy with the rigid approach to language instruction they experienced in school. This approach emphasized the acquisition of a narrow set of language skills and isolated structural components largely detached from context, use, and social function. The student teachers’ schooled literacy histories served as a filter of sorts, effectively narrowing their initial conceptions of what constitutes relevant and legitimate literacy practices. For instance, upon entering their teacher education studies many of the student teachers conceived of literacy as an isolated set of activities that only occurred in “English class;” rather than literacy as a contextually situated practice that is relevant across the curriculum.

The student teachers’ initial tendency to define literacy learning in accordance with their schooled literacy experiences also influenced their expectations for the literacy component of teacher education program. The majority of the student teachers initially expected the literacy methods courses to advance a teacher as technician approach to literacy teaching, whereby they would be required to rigidly adhere to curriculum expectations, and unwaveringly transmit a toolkit of concrete literacy strategies.
The examination of student teachers’ literacy histories also highlighted the ways in which their school-based encounters with reading and writing powerfully informed how they constructed identities as readers and writers. This finding holds particular relevance for literacy teacher education. Notably, the student teachers’ perceptions of themselves as readers and writers (e.g., “struggling” reader, “successful” reader) held very real consequences for the way they viewed literacy teaching and their potential to teach literacy. For instance, many of the student teachers who identified as “successful” readers and/or writers had initially expected their transition to literacy teaching to be quite natural and seamless because learning to read/write had come easily to them, they achieved “good grades” in school, and they derived enjoyment from these activities. In contrast, the student teachers who self-identified as “struggling” readers and/or writers, based largely on their negative school literacy experiences, voiced feelings of anxiety and self-doubt in their ability to teach literacy.

One of the implications of this dissertation research is it speaks to the importance of developing literacy teacher education courses that actively engage with student teachers’ literacy histories as a point of entry into literacy teaching and learning. As William Pinar (1994) theorized the relationship between curriculum and one’s lived experience he astutely noted, “the curriculum is not comprised of subjects, but of Subjects, of subjectivity” (p. 220). Literacy teacher education should offer student teachers multiple opportunities to critically consider the complex intersections that exist between their literacy autobiographies, their conceptions of literacy, and expectations for literacy teaching and learning. If student teachers are to engage with curriculum and pedagogy as an autobiographical process they must be provided with the space and
direction to actively reflect upon their past, identify points of dissonance and continuity
between their past and present, and draw meaningful connections to their future teaching

As reported in the findings from this research specific assignments and learning
opportunities that the student teachers participated in as part of the literacy methods
courses seemed to assist this process of reflection and (re)construction. Some of these
experiences included: composing a literacy autobiography, designing and sharing of a
multimodal identity text/project, engaging with theoretical frameworks (e.g.,
multiliteracies, out-of-school literacies), and participating in small group activities and
class discussions that explored the diverse spaces of literacy and range of literacy
practices. These learning opportunities served to disrupt, complicate, and extend student
teachers’ conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy.

As the student teachers mined their rich funds of autobiographical knowledge they
began to identify points of dissonance between the approach to literacy emphasized
throughout much of their prior schooling, and the approach to literacy teaching modeled
in their teacher education studies. Interestingly, the points of dissonance student teachers
identified between their school literacy histories, their out-of-school literacy
engagements, and their current literacy practices served as a catalyst effectively
provoking them to conceive of literacy in broader terms and reimage the possibilities for
literacy teaching and learning.

For instance, throughout student teacher Laura’s prior schooling the literacy
classroom often operated as a site of exclusion. Within the classroom space her home
language was positioned as a deficit thought to hinder her mastery of school-based
literacy practices. The influence of the deficit labels associated with her prior schooling seemed to persist; for, as Laura began her teacher education studies she still saw herself as a “struggling” reader and writer. This perceived inadequacy caused her to feel anxious and insecure about the prospect of teaching literacy. During her teacher education studies however, Laura was invited to consider her literacy accomplishments through a broader lens. As she began to rethink what counts as literacy, she recognized that her diverse literacy engagements (e.g., home language, studies aboard, work as youth mentor and tutor) were an asset to her evolving teaching practice. Indeed, her rich lived experiences became central to her construction of a teaching practice. Laura drew on her experiences as an immigrant to Canada and as an English language learner as a valuable site of knowledge, which helped her to appreciate and support the diverse literacy needs of her current and future students.

Knowledge of Literacy Theories, Concepts, and Curriculum Content

This dissertation research invites us to consider what notions of literacy and literacy pedagogy are presented to student teachers throughout their teacher education studies. The findings highlight the importance of providing student teachers with access to a multifaceted pedagogy of literacy teacher education that engages with the shifting nature of contemporary communication practices, wherein knowledge and social relationships are constructed through a plethora of interactive technologies. Contemporary literacy teachers must be prepared to facilitate students’ strategic navigation of the diverse text structures, terminologies, and integrated modes of representation they will encounter as they participate in different sites of knowledge.
The findings from this research suggest that engaging with literacy as a dynamic process that varies according to cultural context and use provided a cohesive theoretical orientation for literacy instruction, which informed the goals and objectives of the literacy courses (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; New London Group, 1996; Street, 2005, 2003, 1984). This finding is consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of establishing a cohesive vision to guide program development and instruction in teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Lacina & Collins Block, 2011; Lenski et al., 2013). As Feiman-Nemser (2001) argues, a conceptual framework “is the cornerstone of a coherent program” for it “provides a guiding vision of the kind of teacher the program is trying to prepare” (p. 1023).

To actualize this overarching frame the literacy course instructors identified a set of key concepts and topics to guide literacy instruction. The selection of these core topics was guided by literacy theory, relevant research, feedback from prior students, and the course instructor’s professional experience. The intention was to develop a set of organizing themes that would encourage student teachers to think deeply and broadly about literacy, question their assumptions about literacy learning, and connect theory and practice. The course instructors also modeled pedagogical strategies and provided instructional resources, which student teachers could implement in their practice teaching placements. The literacy courses were designed to help student teachers develop both a theoretical knowledge (e.g., multiliteracies concepts, out-of-school literacies) and a repertoire of instructional approaches (e.g., poetry instruction).
As as outlined in the finding chapters, many of the student teachers noted the framing of literacy through a multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) lens was a pivotal learning experience, which encouraged them think about literacy in broader terms. The literacy courses invited student teachers to engage with literacy as a dynamic process that people use throughout their lives as they navigate the distinct demands of various socio-cultural contexts. The framing of literacy from a social practice perspective served as a means to disrupt the restrictive boundaries used to define literacy during much of the student teachers’ prior schooling. The student teachers began to question what it means to be literate, and to consider how conventional notions of competence come to be defined and legitimized within school contexts.

The positioning of literacies as multiple served as springboard of sorts propelling the student teachers to reimagine the possibilities for literacy teaching. They actively considered how as beginning teachers they might effectively engage with various dimensions of literacy pedagogy including: content area literacies, critical literacy, out-of-school literacy practices, and technological resources. As the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy broadened they recognized the importance of offering students multiple entry points into literacy learning. Accordingly, they endeavored to extend the space of literacy engagement by integrating a range of representational formats and genres, offering students choice, and acknowledging students’ interests and lived experiences as valuable sources of knowledge.

As the student teachers developed a more nuanced understanding of literacy teaching and learning it also influenced how they positioned themselves in relation to the teaching of literacy. Both the survey and interview data revealed that upon beginning
their teacher education studies many of the student teachers did not see themselves as
teachers of literacy. However, their growing awareness of the complexity of literacy
teaching seemed to facilitate their construction of identities as teachers of literacy. For
instance, the student teachers came to recognize literacy as relevant to teaching and
learning in the content areas. Many of the student teachers cited the literacy courses as
instrumental in facilitating the understanding that literacy instruction is a critical
dimension of middle school teaching. They recognized the importance of teaching
students how to strategically navigate reading and writing practices within particular
discipline areas. This insight seemed to mark a shift away from seeing literacy as an
isolated set of skills that teachers transmit to students, to an understanding of literacy as a
complex process. The student teachers began to consciously consider how reading and
writing practices function to establish the values and norms of practice within particular
disciplines.

A pedagogy of literacy teacher education should assist beginning teachers to
develop a knowledge of core concepts and literacy theories, a repertoire of instructional
approaches rooted in an understanding of child/adolescent literacy learning, and a flexible
disposition that is responsive to students’ needs. The construction of a multifaceted
approach to literacy teaching is a complex process developed over time, and in concert
with the daily realities of the classroom. However, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions
beginning teachers develop during their teacher preparation are a vital part of the
foundation upon which they can build a rich and inclusive pedagogical practice.
Knowledge of Pedagogical Approaches, Resources and Dispositions

Literacy teacher education should also provide student teachers with explicit guidance on how to translate the instructional approaches presented in literacy courses to the actual classroom context. In an evaluation of the programmatic features of six literacy educations programs, Lacina & Collins Block (2011) reported, “the programs that guided prospective teachers to apply content from their methods courses to their placements developed stronger pedagogical knowledge than less well-structured experiences” (p. 321). The student teachers participating in this dissertation research offered a similar recommendation. Half the purposive sample noted that while they appreciated the abundance of instructional strategies and resources provided in the literacy courses, they felt the courses should have offered more explicit direction on how to apply these pedagogical approaches to the classroom. These student teachers said they were, at times, “overwhelmed” by the wealth of resources provided in the literacy courses, and felt they needed more explicit instruction on how to implement the resources into a middle school classroom.

Additionally, all eight of the student teachers recommended that the literacy courses provide more explicit direction on literacy program planning. While the student teachers valued the knowledge they developed regarding key literacy concepts and instructional approaches, they felt unprepared to develop long-range plans for a literacy program. The pedagogical thinking and decision-making experienced teachers exercise in the design of long-range literacy program planning needed to be made more visible to these beginning teachers to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and their sense of preparedness to teach literacy. An important part of literacy teacher preparation is the
explicit scaffolding of the pedagogical knowledge needed to both facilitate literacy instruction and to develop a comprehensive literacy program (Kosnik & Beck, 2008, 2009; Kosnik et al., 2013; Linek et al., 1999; Louden & Rohl, 2006; O’Neil & Geoghegan, 2011; White & Cranitch, 2010).

The practice teaching placement experience is also an important part of teacher preparation. In practice teaching student teachers can enact and extend the pedagogical concepts and approaches encountered in their course work. During practice teaching student teachers should be provided with opportunities to observe, enact, and reflect upon literacy teaching and learning in an actual classroom setting with the support of an experienced mentor teacher (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Lacina & Collins Block, 2011; Lenski et al., 2013; Wolsey et al., 2013). As Darling-Hammond (2005) argues, practice teaching placements should provide student teachers with access to an “expert cooperating teaching” who “offers modeling, co-planning, frequent feedback, repeated opportunities to practice, and reflect upon practice while the student teacher gradually takes on more responsibility” (p. 409). In order to develop their literacy teaching practice student teachers need recurrent opportunities to engage in literacy teaching, work directly with children/youth, receive feedback from a supportive mentor teacher, and modify literacy instruction in response to pupils’ learning needs.

As reported in the findings chapters, the student teachers emphasized the importance of being able to apply what they had learned in their coursework within the practical realities of the middle school classroom. However, the enactment of literacy teaching in their practice teaching placements was often not a straightforward endeavor.
Throughout their practice teaching placements the student teachers reported on instances in which they had the opportunity to teach literacy, instances in which the opportunity to teach literacy was “limited,” and instances in which they were not provided with the opportunity to teach literacy.

The student teachers who reported they had the opportunity to directly teach literacy during practice teaching felt the experience was an important part of developing the confidence and sense of preparedness to teach literacy. They suggested the chance to teach literacy in an actual classroom setting offered them a dynamic space to translate, enact, and extend the instructional approaches modeled in the literacy courses in accordance with students’ needs. For several of the student teachers the practice teaching context effectively served as a site to bridge theory and practice.

In contrast, the student teachers also described practice teaching experiences in which they either did not have the chance to teach literacy or they taught literacy “unofficially.” Interestingly, this finding provides insight into how the student teachers assessed and defined what it meant to teach literacy in a practice teaching context. For instance, the student teachers suggested they had not officially taught literacy during practice teaching in instances in which they had not designed and/or directly taught the literacy lesson(s). While, the student teacher acknowledged they had assisted their associate teacher with aspects of the literacy lesson, they did not seem to qualify this as explicitly teaching literacy because the associate teacher had been the one who developed and implemented the literacy lesson. As well, the student teachers did not seem to consider themselves as having “officially” taught literacy unless literacy was one of the content areas the associate teacher assigned them to teach, and they were responsible for
developing a literacy “unit” (e.g., as series of connected lessons) related to a strand of the provincial language curriculum.

This is a troubling finding, for the student teachers tendency to use the construction of a “unit” plan as the gauge to define what counts as official literacy teaching often lead them to discount the literacy teaching they had enacted. The use of a unit plan to qualify what counts as legitimate literacy teaching opportunities can also serve to obscure a student teacher’s ability to recognize the various ways in which literacy teaching and learning occurs within a classroom setting. It is important for literacy teacher education to foster student teachers’ understanding of literacy as a dynamic process, which teachers and students constantly use in multiple spaces to accomplish particular communicative goals.

Knowledge of Pupils’ Diverse Literacy Needs and Rich Literacy Resources

A pedagogy of literacy teacher education that seeks to be responsive to the complexities of our globalized society must also advance a commitment to teaching for equity and diversity. Student teachers should have access to learning opportunities that facilitate the development of an inclusive approach to literacy teaching; namely, a literacy teaching practice that recognizes a multiplicity of linguistic resources, acknowledges cultural and socioeconomic differences, and responds to the varied literacy needs of diverse learners.

As Goodwin & Kosnik (2013) argue, “we need teachers who are diverse not just in how they look, where they come from, the language they speak, and the histories they embody, but in how they think, interact with Other(s), and embrace a world where
citizenship is ‘differentiated’ (p. 341, italics & quotes in original). While a teacher preparation program may endeavor to help student teachers develop the knowledge and dispositions to work with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the meaningful translation of this laudable goal into practice can represent a challenge for beginner teachers (Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Kosnik et al., 2013; Lacina & Collins Block, 2011; Lenski et al., 2013; Wolsey et al., 2013). For instance, research examining the strengths and challenges of ten literacy teacher preparation programs in the United States reported “teacher candidates felt unprepared to work with diverse populations” (Wolsey et al., 2013, p. 218).

Literacy teacher education should design learning opportunities that intentionally guide and support student teachers to construct a pedagogical approach that situates literacy teaching and learning around issues that are relevant to students’ lives and communities. The findings from this dissertation research suggest a fruitful place to begin is to work with student teachers to disrupt the restrictive framing of literacy learning many encountered in their prior schooling, and to utilize their broader literacy experiences as a resource.

As outlined in the findings, several of the student teachers drew upon their literacy histories as they consciously engaged with issues of diversity and inclusion in the classroom. As they became increasingly aware of how literacy instruction can operate to marginalize students’ linguistics commitments and cultural identities they endeavored to construct an approach to literacy teaching that integrated a multiplicity of literacies and perspectives. They emphasized the importance constructing a classroom space that valued and equitably represented the diversity of students and fostered a sense of
belonging. Many of the student teachers articulated a commitment to connect literacy teaching to students’ interests, lived experiences, and out-of-school literacy practices in an effort to deepen learning.

Moreover, the student teachers’ conceptions of literacy teaching broadened as they considered the complex ways children/youth use reading and writing to meet various communicative needs, disseminate information, and enact social identities. The literacy courses prompted student teachers to actively consider how people engage with culturally recognized literacies practices as they navigate daily life. The framing of reading and writing as situated practices that people engage with in different social domains seemed to productively complicate student teachers’ assumptions about expertise and what it means to be literate (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2011; New London Group, 1996). Accordingly, their understanding of potential for literacy teaching and learning broadened. Several of the student teachers noted they were inspired by the prospect of incorporating the texts of daily life in their literacy teaching (e.g., newspapers, recipes, text messages, advertisements) for they saw it as means to connect with students’ lives beyond the classroom. They also engaged with these texts as a vehicle to facilitate students’ critically reading and meaning making.

Indeed, several of the student teachers eagerly sought to translate their expanded conceptions of literacy to the classroom during practice teaching. For instance, student teacher Lynne endeavored to make poetry instruction appealing and accessible to students by incorporating genres of poetry (e.g., spoken word) that youth might find interesting, and media (e.g., YouTube) with which youth would be familiar. The culminating poetry performance she designed incorporated students’ rich linguistics resources (e.g., home
languages), and their creativity as sites of knowledge, which could deepen learning for both students and teacher.

Literacy teacher education should facilitate opportunities for student teachers to learn about and with students, their families, and their communities (Comber, 2009; Ghiso et al., 2013; Rogers, 2013; Vasquez, Tate, & Harste, 2013). Encouraging student teachers to situate their teaching practice around issues relevant to their students and their communities can help to foster meaningfully learning. Some of the ways that student teachers can inquire into how literacy operates in the lives of their students is by engaging with samples of student work, talking with students about their interests and concerns, actively observing student learning, and drawing on resources available from the communities within the school district to inform their teaching.

**Implications for Future Research**

The findings from this dissertation research offer important insight into the ways in which student teachers’ conceptions of literacy steadily broadened and their understanding of literacy pedagogy became more nuanced as they engaged with a multiple literacies framework (e.g., multiliteracies, out-of-school literacies, content area literacies) over the course of their teacher education studies. This research also points to directions for further investigation.

I am interested in pursuing further longitudinal research with the goal of examining the ways in which student teachers translate their shifting conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy into their initial years of teaching. I would like to conduct longitudinal research that follows student teachers as they graduate from their teacher education
programs and enter into the teaching field. This type of longitudinal research would inform our understanding of the extent to which student teachers’ engagement with a multiple literacies lens during their teacher education studies becomes enacted, transformed, and sustained within their first few years of teaching.

I am interested in further understanding the range of ways beginning teachers might explore, interrogate, and enact broader conceptions of literacy in their practice over time. What supports and challenges do beginning teachers face (e.g., colleagues, administrators, school resources, parents) as they endeavor to construct a multifaceted and inclusive approach to literacy teaching and learning? Many of the student teachers who participated in my dissertation research expressed a strong interest in integrating various technologies tools into their future teaching as way to connect with students’ out-of-school literacy practices. Further longitudinal research would allow me to examine the ways in which these beginning teachers integrate various technologies tools into their teaching to create meaningful learning opportunities.

One of the main findings from my dissertation suggested student teachers’ growing awareness of the complexity of literacy teaching and learning influenced how they saw themselves as teachers of literacy. More specifically, as many of the student teachers came to recognize literacy as an integral part of content area teaching and learning, they understood the importance of teaching students discipline-specific literacy practices. Across the interviews the majority of student teachers voiced the phrase “every teacher is a teacher of literacy”; ostensibly, signaling their recognition that as content area teachers they must scaffold students’ understanding of how to effectively read, write, analyze, and communicate within specific disciplinary domains.
The student teachers also expressed a commitment to integrating a critical literacy lens into their future teaching practice. I would like to pursue further longitudinal research to examine the specific strategies and methods beginning teachers utilize to enact a critical literacies stance in content area teaching. Moreover, I am interested in examining how beginning middle school teachers’ commitment to enacting a critical literacy stance continues to evolve and/or is challenged by the realities of the daily classroom teaching (e.g., negotiating multiple curricular strands; administrative agendas).

I am also interested in implementing the research design used in this dissertation research with student teachers in the primary division (i.e., grades K-3). I would like to investigate the ways in which elementary student teachers’ understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy shift (or not) as they engaged with a multiple literacies framework during their teacher education studies. This research would contribute to the understanding of the ways in which elementary student teachers translate the complex concepts of “new literacies” into their work with young children. Gaining insight into the literacy teaching experiences of both junior-intermediate and primary-junior student teachers would provide further direction on how to tailor teacher education programs to effectively meet the needs beginning teachers in the different grade divisions.

Lastly, literacy teacher educators are an under-researched group. I am interesting in pursuing research on literacy teacher educators with a pedagogical practice that is informed by a multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) perspective. I would like to examine the ways in which literacy teacher educators take up multiliteracies concepts and enact this framework in their work with student teachers. How do these literacy teacher educators articulate course goals and actualize them in their literacy methods courses?
What theoretical concepts, instructional strategies, technological tools, and pedagogical resources do these literacy teacher educators utilize to enact a multiliteracies approach to literacy teacher education? The potential findings from this research could extend our understanding how to effectively prepare beginning teachers for contemporary literacy teaching.

My program of research will continue to be inspired by my work with student teachers. I am committed to carrying out research that explores the kinds of opportunities teacher education can create for student teachers to explore literacy in their lives, in their classrooms, and in the lives of the children and youth they will be teaching.
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Appendix A Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent

Exploring Student Teachers’ Conceptions of and Experiences with Literacy Teaching and Learning

Dear Student Teachers,

I am a Ph. D. student at OISE/UT who is conducting the research project entitled *Exploring student teachers’ conceptions of and experiences with literacy teaching and learning*. The study is part of my dissertation research focused on student teachers’ experiences of literacy teaching and learning during their teacher education program. The purpose of the project is to gain a deeper understanding of junior-intermediate (J/I) student teachers’ perceptions of literacy, personal literacy practices, and developing understanding of literacy pedagogy during the teacher education program. More specifically, I’m interested in understanding 1) What are J/I student teachers’ conceptions of what constitutes literacy and relevant literacy practices? 2) In what ways do J/I student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and literacy pedagogy change over the course of their studies? 3) How do J/I student teachers see their role as teachers of literacy?

I invite you to participate in this study. The first part of the study invites J/I student teachers to complete two questionnaires; one questionnaire in the Fall term and another questionnaire in the Winter term. Completing the survey will take approximately 20 minutes. In addition to the questionnaires, I am seeking eight J/I student teachers to participate in four interviews during the teacher education program. The eight student teachers will be interviewed after each practice teaching placement. Each interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes. Interviews will be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for the participating student teachers. The researcher will audio-record the interviews and take notes. The interview phase of the study provides a means of further understanding how J/I student teachers’ conceptions of literacy and their knowledge of literacy teaching/learning develop throughout their course work and practical teaching experiences. If more than eight J/I student teachers volunteer to participate in the interview phase of the project the researcher will attempt to select a balanced representation of the J/I cohort (e.g. a representative sample of teachable subject qualifications, gender, age).

I will write a report of this study and submit it to OISE/UT to complete the requirements of my doctoral dissertation. I will also use the data collected for this study for scholarly publications, conference presentations, and future research and writing associated with teacher education and literacy education.

Involvement in the project is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate without having to give a reason. Participation or non-participation will not affect your grades or status in the teacher education program. You are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. You may decline to answer any specific questions.

Confidentiality will be maintained. Pseudonyms will be used in place of participants’ actual names in any written work, oral presentations, or publications to protect participants from
identification. You and your institution will not be identified in any way. There are no known risks to you for participating in the project. Some benefits from participation may include the opportunity to reflect on your teacher preparation and practice.

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy. The data will remain confidential and secure. All raw data will be kept in a locked file cabinet and electronic data will be kept in a secure server environment at all times. No one will have access to the data other than my doctoral supervisor and myself.

In order to go forward with your participation you must sign and return the attached consent form. There are two copies; please keep one for your records. If you agree to participate in this project, you will have the following commitment depending on your chosen level of involvement:

**Questionnaire Only**
- Complete the attached consent form
- Complete the questionnaire

**Questionnaire and Interviews**
- Complete the attached consent form
- Complete the questionnaire
- Be interviewed by the researcher

Please return the questionnaire and consent form (whether completed or not), in the envelope provided, to me directly. Thank you for your time and willingness to be involved. I look forward to working together. If you have any questions, please contact Lidia Menna at lidia.menna@utoronto.ca or 416 506 1644; or you can contact my doctoral supervisor Clare Kosnik at clare.kosnik@utoronto.ca or 416 978 0227. If you have further questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the University of Toronto’s Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416 946 3273.

Sincerely,

Lidia Menna
Ph. D. student at OISE/UT

Clare Kosnik
Professor at OISE/UT and Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor
Informed Consent Form

I have read the attached letter and agree to participate in the study *Exploring student teachers’ conceptions of and experiences with literacy teaching and learning*. I agree to let Lidia Menna use the data I have provided for the purposes of research and to quote from the data. I also agree to let her refer to the research data gathered in this project for future work on teacher education and literacy education. I am also aware that I may withdraw from the research study at anytime without having to give a reason and without personal consequence to me.

**Please Check One:**
- ☐ Questionnaire Only
- ☐ Questionnaire and Interviews

Name (please print): ……………………………………………

Signature: ………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………………

Please indicate the email address (if any) you would like to use.

Email Address: …………………………………………………

Please indicate phone number (if any) you would like to use.

Phone Number: ………………………………………………


Appendix B Questionnaire #1

J/I STUDENT TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE #1

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. It should take about 20 minutes to complete, including the open-ended questions.

A. Background Information

1. Gender: __________________________

2. What is the focus of your teacher education program? ○ Junior/Intermediate Cohort
   Teaching Subject: __________________________

3. What grades do you hope to teach upon graduating from your teacher education program? (select all that apply)
   ○ JK/SK ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ 10 ○ 11 ○ 12

   Other: __________________________

4. What is your educational background? (Please circle degrees completed)

   Other: __________________________   Major area of study: __________________________

5. How long ago did you complete your undergraduate degree?
   ○ Less than 1 yr ago ○ 1-5 yrs ago ○ 6-10 yrs ago ○ 11-15 yrs ago ○ 16 or more years ago

B. Previous Experience with Language Arts/Literacy

6. In your undergraduate university program how many English courses did you complete?
   ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 or more

For the next five questions please use the following scale:

1 = Not at all    2 = A Little    3 = Neutral    4 = A Fair Amount    5 = A Great Deal

7. To what extent do you feel comfortable with language arts/literacy?
   ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

8. As a student in the primary school to what extent did you enjoy language arts?
   ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

9. As a student in junior school to what extent did you enjoy language arts?
   ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

10. As a student in intermediate school to what extent did you enjoy language arts?
    ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

11. As a student in high school to what extent did you enjoy English Courses?
    ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
12. Thinking back to your own experience as a school student what language arts teaching and/or literacy practices do you most vividly recall?

13. Which of the following best describes you? (Select as many as apply)

○ An avid reader
○ A casual reader
○ A reader of fiction
○ A reader of non-fiction
○ A Journal Writer
○ A poet. Please specify the type of poetry: __________________________
○ A blogger
○ A frequent e-mailer
○ A keen Internet surfer
○ An avid Facebook user
○ An occasional Facebook user
○ A Twitter user
○ A reader of News Online.
○ A reader of Newspapers.
○ An avid Gamer
○ A frequent user of streaming video sites (e.g. YouTube)
○ A casual user of streaming video sites
○ A frequent user of online music sites (e.g. iTunes)
○ A casual user of online music sites
○ A reader of magazines (e.g. fashion, sports, music, etc). Please specify the magazine type: __________________________
○ You engage with arts practices. Please specify the type of arts (e.g. visual, dance, drama, galleries):

Other: __________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
C. Teaching Literacy

Teacher Education Program:

For the next set of questions please use the following scale:

1 = Not at all  2 = A Little  3 = Neutral  4 = A Fair Amount  5 = A Great Deal

14. To what extent has your understanding of literacy changed since you began the Teacher Education program?

15. To what extent have your views of literacy teaching and learning changed during your time in the Teaching Education program?

16. To what extent has your comfort with teaching literacy increased since you began the Teacher Education program?

17. To what extent do you see yourself as a literacy teacher?

18. To what extent is it important to incorporate students’ out of school literacy practices into classroom literacy education? (e.g. on-line communities, social networking)

19. To what extent do you feel students’ cultural backgrounds (e.g. race, ethnicity) influence their literacy choices and practices?

20. How have your views of literacy and literacy teaching changed during your time in the Teacher Education program?

21. What surprised you most about literacy teaching and learning since you began the Teacher Education program?

Practice Teaching Placement:

22. Please select the grade you taught in your first Practice Teaching placement?

   ○ JK/SK  ○ 1  ○ 2  ○ 3  ○ 4  ○ 5  ○ 6  ○ 7  ○ 8  ○ 9  ○ 10  ○ 11  ○ 12
   Other: ________________________________

23. Please select the grade you will teach in your second Practice Teaching placement?

   ○ JK/SK  ○ 1  ○ 2  ○ 3  ○ 4  ○ 5  ○ 6  ○ 7  ○ 8  ○ 9  ○ 10  ○ 11  ○ 12
   Other: ________________________________
For the next set of questions please use the following scale:
1 = Not at all  2 = A Little  3 = Neutral  4 = A Fair Amount  5 = A Great Deal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24. To what extent did you teach literacy in your first Practice Teaching (PT) placement?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. To what extent do you expect to teach literacy in your second PT placement?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. To what extent has your PT placement experience changed your view of literacy teaching and learning?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. To what extent did you follow the practices of your Associate Teacher during your practice teaching placement?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. To what extent did you follow a language arts program during your PT placement? (e.g. spelling series, reading series)</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. To what extent did the literacy program in your practice teaching program incorporate students’ out of school literacy practices?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. To what extent was the literacy program in your practice teaching placement culturally responsive or informed by students’ cultural backgrounds (e.g. race, ethnicity)?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. To what extent do you feel you saw strong and effective literacy instruction in your practice teaching placement(s)?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. To what extent do you expect to find technology used in your second Practice Teaching (PT) literacy program (e.g. smart boards, web, on-line communities)?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. To what extent do you expect to use or incorporate technology in your second PT literacy program?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. To what extent are you comfortable teaching literacy in your second PT placement?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. To what extent was there consistency between the approaches to literacy education advocated in your teacher education program and the practices in your practice teaching classroom(s)</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. To what extent has the literacy course been helpful in preparing you to teach literacy in your PT placement(s)?</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. What concerns you most about teaching literacy in your next Practice Teaching placement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Expectations of Students’ Literacy Practices:

38. In your next practice teaching placement what forms of out-of-school literacy practices would you like to address or include (e.g. personal blogs, on-line communities, social networks)?

39. Additional Comments:

40. Would you be interested in participating in interviews about your experiences with literacy teaching and learning throughout your teacher education program (please check off a response)?

Yes: ______  No: ______

Email address (if any) you would like me to use: ________________________________

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.
Appendix C Questionnaire #2

J/I STUDENT TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE #2

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. It should take about 20-30 minutes to complete, including the open-ended questions.

A. Background Information

15. Gender: ____________________________

16. What is the focus of your teacher education program?  ○ Junior/Intermediate Cohort

   Teaching Subject: ____________________________

17. What grade do you hope to teach upon graduating from your teacher education program?

   ○ JK/SK  ○ 1  ○ 2  ○ 3  ○ 4  ○ 5  ○ 6  ○ 7  ○ 8  ○ 9  ○ 10  ○ 11  ○ 12

   Other: ____________________________

B. Language Arts/Literacy Practices

For the next set of questions please use the following scale:

1 = Not at all    2 = A Little    3 = Neutral    4 = A Fair Amount    5 = A Great Deal

3. I think of myself as:

   as a teacher of literacy or language arts?

   as someone who incorporates a variety of literacy practices into my professional teaching practice:

   as someone who is comfortable teaching literacy and/or language arts:

   as someone who thinks about my students literacy and/or language arts needs:

   as someone who thinks about my students out-of-school literacy practices:

   as someone who engages with a variety of literacy practices in my personal life:

4. In what ways have your personal literacy practices (e.g. reading novels, reading on-line newspapers, journaling, blogging, video, music, social networking i.e. Facebook, Twitter, others) informed or been incorporated into your literacy or language arts teaching practice?
C. Teacher Education Program:
For the next set of questions please use the following scale:

1 = Not at all    2 = A Little    3 = Neutral    4 = A Fair Amount    5 = A Great Deal

5. To what extent has your first year in the Teacher Education program in general, had an impact on you and your teaching practice?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

6. To what extent has your first year in the Teacher Education program, specifically in the area of literacy education, had an impact on you and your teaching practice?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

7. To what extent has your experience in the Teacher Education program, specifically in the area of literacy education, informed your understanding of literacy and literacy practices?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

8. To what extent did you agree with the approach to literacy presented in this literacy course?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

9. To what extent did the readings you completed as part of your this literacy course inform your understanding of literacy teaching and learning?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

10. To what extent did the assignments you completed for this literacy course inform your understanding of teaching and learning?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

11. To what extent did small group and class discussions in this literacy course assist your understanding of literacy teaching and learning?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

12. To what extent did you acquire literacy teaching strategies through your experience in the this literacy course?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

13. To what extent has your comfort with teaching literacy increased since you began the Teacher Education program?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

14. To what extent has your comfort with teaching literacy decreased since you began the Teacher Education program?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

15. To what extent has your experience in the Teacher Education program, specifically in the area of literacy education, informed your understanding of the complexity of literacy teaching and learning?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

16. To what extent has your experience in the Teacher Education program, specifically in the area of literacy education, informed your understanding of various forms/modes of communication (e.g. linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial)?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

17. To what extent has your experience in the Teacher Education program, specifically in the area of literacy education, informed your awareness of incorporating students’ out-of-school literacy practices into the classroom teaching and learning?  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

18. To what extent is it important to incorporate students’ out-of-school literacy practices into classroom literacy education? (e.g. personal blogs, on-line communities, social networking)  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
19. To what extent has your experience in the Teacher Education program, specifically in the area of literacy education, increased your knowledge of children’s literature/young adolescent literature?

20. To what extent have your views of using picture books in literacy teaching changed?

21. To what extent has your experience in the Teacher Education program, specifically in the area of literacy education, informed your understanding of the issues of diversity (e.g. race, ethnicity, linguistics) and inclusion in the classroom?

22. To what extent has your experience in the Teacher Education program, specifically in the area of literacy education, informed your understanding of using technology in literacy teaching and learning?

23. In what ways have your views of literacy and literacy teaching changed through your experience in the Teacher Education program?

24. What are some of the challenges of literacy teaching and learning that you identified and/or encountered through your experience in the Teacher Education program?

D. Practice Teaching:

25. Please select the grade you taught in your second Practice Teaching placement?

○ JK/SK  ○ 1  ○ 2  ○ 3  ○ 4  ○ 5  ○ 6  ○ 7  ○ 8  ○ 9  ○ 10  ○ 11  ○ 12

Other: ________________________________

For the next set of questions please use the following scale:

1 = Not at all  2 = A Little  3 = Neutral  4 = A Fair Amount  5 = A Great Deal

26. To what extent did you teach literacy in your second Practice Teaching (PT) placement?

27. To what extent were you comfortable teaching literacy in your second PT placement?
28. To what extent have your PT placement experiences changed your view of literacy teaching and learning? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

29. To what extent did you follow the practices of your Associate Teacher during your practice teaching placement? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

30. To what extent did you follow a language arts program during your PT placement? (e.g. spelling series, reading series) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

31. In your Practice Teaching placement to what extent were the reading and writing programs connected? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

32. To what extent did the students in your practice teaching placement have choice in what they read as part of the literacy teaching and learning program? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

33. To what extent did the literacy program in your practice teaching program incorporate students’ out-of-school literacy practices? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

34. To what extent was the literacy program in your practice teaching placement culturally responsive or informed by students’ diversity (e.g. race, ethnicity, linguistics)? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

35. To what extent did you use technology in your second PT placement in the literacy program? (e.g. power point, smart boards, web, on-line communities) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

36. To what extent did your Associate Teacher use technology in the literacy program? (e.g. power point, smart boards, web, on-line communities) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

37. To what extent did the students in your second PT placement use technology for their final graded projects in any subject? (e.g. powerpoint, imovie, wikis, blogs, digital photos, video, etc.) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

38. What extent of time did students in your practice teaching placement spend using computers specifically in literacy teaching and learning? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

39. What extent of time did students in your practice teaching placement spend using computers in general? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

40. How engaged in literacy were the students you taught in your practice teaching placement? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

41. To what extent do you feel you saw strong and effective literacy instruction in your practice teaching placement(s)? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

42. To what extent was there consistency between the approaches to literacy education advocated in your teacher education program and the practices in your practice teaching classroom(s) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

43. To what extent was this literacy course helpful in preparing you to teach literacy in your practice teaching placement(s)? ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
44. Reflecting back on your first year in the Teacher Education program please describe a pivotal literacy teaching or learning experience that affected you?

E. Students’ Literacy Practices:

45. What types of genres were the students reading in your practice teaching placement (e.g. sports, novels, fantasy, etc)?

46. In your practice teaching placement what forms of out-of-school literacy practices were students participating in?

47. Please describe what types of literacy skills and/or practices you expect students will need to learn to participate in their social future (e.g. career goals, workplace, cultural life, leisure activities, civic engagement)?

Additional comments welcomed:

Thank you very much for sharing your thoughtful insights.
Appendix D Interview #1

J/I STUDENT TEACHER INTERVIEW #1

Introduction
Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. I appreciate your time. This interview will take about 45-60 minutes, but you may ask to stop the interview at any point. The purpose of this interview is to talk about your perspectives and experiences with literacy education throughout your teacher education program.

I’d like to ask for your permission to record our conversation. This interview is confidential, and only I will have access to this recording, which I will transcribe. A pseudonym will be used in place of your actual name. If you would like to stop recording at anytime please let me know. Is this okay with you? Do you have any questions before we start?

Please state your name, area of focus in the teacher education program (e.g. J/I, subject specialty) and what stage you are at in the teacher education program (e.g. 1st year)?

1) History/Background
   1) Thinking back to your time as school student (elementary, high school), what positive experiences with literacy or language arts stand out to you?
   2) Thinking back to your time as school student (elementary, high school), what negative experiences with literacy or language arts stand out to you?
   3) What out-of-school-literacy practices (e.g. home, peer) do you recall having access to or engaging with?

2) Literacy Course Experience:
   4) Thinking back to when you began the teacher education program, how did you view or think of literacy?
   5) How have your thoughts on literacy changed during your time in the teacher education program?
   6) When you first began the teacher education program, what did you expect the literacy course would look like or involve?
   7) What do you feel you still need to know about literacy teaching and learning?

3) First Practice Teaching Placement Experience:
   8) Were you responsible for any literacy teaching in your first practice teaching placement?
   9) If so, what did you teach (Examples)? How did you feel about teaching it?
   10) What were your general impressions about the way literacy was taught in the first practice teaching school you were at?

4) Literacy Teacher Identity
   11) At this point, how comfortable are you with teaching literacy? Tell me about that?
   12) Do you see yourself as a literacy teacher? Tell me about that?

5) Expectations for Students’ Literacy Practices
   13) Thinking about the students in this next practice teaching block what do you think their needs are?
6) **Conception of Literacy**

14) Do you think the emergence of communication technologies or new forms of communication (e.g. social networking sites, the internet) have had implications on the ways we teach? Why? Why not?

**Wrap Up**

Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about your views on literacy? Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for giving me your time and sharing your experiences with me. I really appreciate your willingness to participate in this research.
Appendix E Interview #2

J/I STUDENT TEACHER INTERVIEW #2

1) General Impressions of Teacher Ed Program
   1) In general, how do you feel about your experience in the teacher education program so far?
   2) What has surprised you about your experience in the program?

2) Literacy Course Experience:
   3) In general, how do you feel about the literacy component of the your teacher education program?
   4) Reflecting back on your first year in the teacher education program please describe a pivotal literacy teaching or learning experience that affected you?
   5) In what ways has your conception of literacy changed through your experience in the teacher education program?
   6) What are some of the challenges of literacy teaching and learning that you identified and/or encountered through your experience in the teacher education program?
   7) What do you feel you still need to know about literacy teaching and learning?
   8) Did interactions (social, work related) with your colleagues in the teacher education program inform your perspective on literacy teaching and learning?

3) Second Practice Teaching Placement Experience:
   9) Were you responsible for any literacy instruction during your second practice teaching placement?
   10) If so, what did you teach (Examples)? How did you feel about teaching it?
   11) What were some successes when you taught literacy? What were some of challenges?
   12) When you needed resources to plan your literacy program/teaching where did you go or who did you contact for suggestions, information or assistance?
   13) What were your general impressions about the way literacy was taught in the second practice teaching school?
   14) Where there any constraints that kept you from teaching literacy?
   15) In what ways have the literacy teaching & learning practices you experienced as a school student differed from the literacy education practices emphasized in your teacher experience? Please explain.

4) Literacy Teacher Identity
   16) In what ways has your understanding of being a teacher changed since you began the teacher education program?
   17) Have there been any changes in your motivation as a teacher over the past year?
   18) In what ways has your view of yourself as a teacher of literacy changed over the past year?
   19) At this point, how comfortable are you with teaching literacy? Tell me about that?

5) Personal Literacy Practices:
   20) What communication technologies or technological tools do you use most often in your daily life?
   21) Have your personal literacy practices informed or been incorporated into your literacy/language arts teaching practice? Tell me more about that?
Follow up: What social media practices do you engage with? Do these practices have any implications for your teaching practice?

6) **Expectations for Students’ Literacy Practices**
   22) In your practice teaching placement what forms of out-of-school literacy practices were students participating in?
   23) What forms of literacy did you expect students to be engaged in?
   24) What implications did (or could) the literacy practices students bring with them have for teaching and learning in the classroom?
   25) What types of literacy skills and/or practices do you expect students will need to learn to participate in their social future (e.g. career goals, workplace, cultural life, leisure activities, civic engagement)?

**Wrap Up**
Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about? Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for giving me your time and sharing your experiences with me. I really appreciate your willingness to participate in this research.
Appendix F Interview #3

J/I STUDENT TEACHER INTERVIEW #3

1) General Impressions of Teacher Ed Program
   1) In general, how do you feel about your experience in the teacher education program so far?

2) Literacy Course Experience:
   2) How do you feel about the literacy component of the teacher education program?
   3) I understand that you have only had a limited number of literacy classes so far this year, but is there a class activities/reading/discussion that you have found useful or helpful to date?
   4) In what ways has your conception of literacy changed through your experience in the teacher education program?
   5) What do you feel you still need to know about literacy teaching and learning?

3) Third Practicum Experience:
   6) Were you responsible for any literacy teaching during your third practice teaching placement? A) If so, what did you teach (Examples)? B) How did you feel about teaching it?
   7) If not, where there any constraints that kept you from teaching literacy?
   8) What were some successes when you taught literacy? (Can you give me an example?)
   9) What were some of challenges when you taught literacy? (Can you give me an example?)
  10) When you needed resources to plan your literacy program/teaching where did you go or who did you contact for suggestions, information or assistance?
  11) What were your general impressions about the way literacy was taught in the your third practice teaching school? Prompt: What was a good or successful activity/lesson you saw?
  12) To what extend did the approach to literacy instruction in your practice teaching school correspond with or differ from the approach presented in the teacher education program?
  13) Did you use technology in your teaching during third practice teaching placement?

4) Literacy Teacher Identity
   14) In what ways has your understanding of being a teacher changed since your began the teacher education program?
   15) At this point, how comfortable are you with teaching literacy? Tell me about that?
   16) Do you see yourself as a teacher of literacy?
   17) In what ways has your view of yourself as a teacher of literacy changed over the past year?
   18) What makes being a teacher of literacy enjoyable?
   19) What makes being a teacher of literacy a challenge?

5) Personal Literacy Practices:
   20) What types of reading and writing practices do you engage in?
   21) What is your favorite way to get information and communicate with friends and family?
   22) Have your personal literacy practices informed or been incorporated into your literacy/language arts teaching practice? In what ways?
6) **Students’ Literacy Practices**
   23) Thinking about the students you worked with in your last practice teaching placement what do you think their literacy needs were?
   24) In your practice teaching placement what forms of out-of-school literacy practices were students participating in?
   25) What forms of literacy did you expect students to be engaged in?
   26) What implications could the life experiences or practices that students bring with them to the classroom have for literacy teaching and learning?
   27) What type of literacy practices do you expect students will need to prepare them for their future?

7) **Conception of Literacy:**
   28) Please read the following quote and tell me your thoughts about it? (See separate sheet)

**Wrap Up**

Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about your thoughts or experiences with literacy?
Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for giving me your time and sharing your experiences with me. I really appreciate your willingness to participate in this research.
Question 28: Please read the following quote and tell me your thoughts about it?

“New technologies are producing different text-types and new forms of narratives. Increasingly, literacy is no longer a mere mastery of decoding skills but a concept with broader meanings and wider educational, cultural, and social implications for students. These wider interpretations of literacy have resulted in different connotations and views, including digital literacy, new literacy, multiliteracies, visual literacy, computer literacy, and cultural literacy with different teaching approaches” (Ajayi, 2010).
Appendix G Interview #4

J/I STUDENT TEACHER INTERVIEW #4

1) **Literacy Course Experience:**
   1) How do you feel about the literacy component of the teacher education program overall?
   2) Was there a literacy activity/topic covered in the teacher education program that you felt had real impact on you? Tell me more about that?
   3) How did you feel about the literacy course this year?
   4) Tell me about a key moment or turning point in your understanding of literacy teaching?
   5) What do you feel you still need to know about literacy teaching and learning?
   6) What does literacy mean to you?
   7) Has your experience in the teacher education program caused you to rethink literacy teaching at all? Tell me about that?
   8) What recommendations would you offer for how the literacy component of the teacher education program could be improved?

2) **Fourth Practice Teaching Placement Experience:**
   9) Were you responsible for any literacy teaching during your last practice teaching placement? **If so, A)** What did you teach? (Examples)  
      **B)** How did you feel about teaching it?
   10) If not, where there any constraints that kept you from teaching literacy?
   11) What was a success when you taught literacy? (An example)
   12) What was a challenge when you taught literacy? (An example)
   13) Thinking back to your fourth practice teaching experience, to what extent did you see good literacy teaching (Examples)? (Prompt: What does good literacy teaching look like?)
   14) To what extent did you feel pressure to adopt your associate teacher’s (AT) literacy teaching practices/strategies?
   15) Did you and/or your AT use technology to support literacy instruction? Tell me about that?

3) **Students’ Literacy Practices**
   16) Thinking back to the students you have worked with in your last practice teaching placement what do you think their literacy needs are?
   17) In your practice teaching placement what forms of literacy practices were students participating in?
   18) In your forth practice teaching placement what forms of out-of-school literacy practices were students participating in?
   19) What literacy practices did you expect students to be engaged in?
   20) In your future practice as a teacher, how would you like the students in your classroom to describe their literacy learning experiences?
4) Literacy Teacher Identity
   21) How has your view of yourself as a teacher of literacy changed through your experience in the teacher education program?
   22) What are some qualities of a good teacher of literacy?
   23) What makes being a teacher of literacy enjoyable?
   24) What makes being a teacher of literacy a challenge?
   25) How prepared do you feel to teach literacy? Tell me about that?
   26) Do you think literacy should be taught in the content areas? (Why/Why not?)

Wrap Up
Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about your thoughts on or experience with literacy? Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience in the teacher education program?

Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for giving me your time and sharing your experiences with me. I really appreciate your willingness to participate in this research.