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A CASE STUDY OF SECONDARY DISTRICT-LEVEL LITERACY COACHES'  
BELIEFS ABOUT HOW TO TEACH READING

by

Pamela Sharp Crawford

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education  
(Curriculum and Instruction)

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2012

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## ABSTRACT

A Study of Secondary District-Level Literacy Coaches' Beliefs about  
How to Teach Reading

by

Pamela Sharp Crawford, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2012

Major Professor: Dr. Kay Camperell  
Department: Teacher Education and Leadership

This was a qualitative case study that compared data across six district-level literacy coaches' epistemological and ontological beliefs about how to teach reading. All six coaches were working as a cohort of literacy coaches on the development and implementation of a secondary reading intervention program for seventh-grade struggling readers. Data were collected over a 6-week period where the coaches responded to questions and vignettes through a think-aloud protocol. The data collection instruments addressed personal, work, and educational experiences that influenced the development of their beliefs about how to teach reading. A survey of their professional library was also taken. The coaches responded to three other instruments and questions to glean epistemological beliefs about knowledge and to address the instructional needs of a struggling reader. There were three major findings. First, the report of the National Reading Panel (NRP) was very influential to the forming or affirming of their beliefs

about how to teach reading. The findings of the NRP were privileged in instructional decision making by the coaching cohort, while the adolescent literacy research was ignored or marginalized. Second, self-stated instructional choices were made by the literacy coaches based upon three models that reflected their perspective about how to teach reading. These models were: (a) a skills development model that focused on beginning reading skills, (b) a deficiency model that focused on intervention and remediation, and (c) a proficiency model that focused on social-constructivist learning. Third, the literacy coaches' epistemological and ontological beliefs about how to teach reading to struggling were either flexible (changing) or rigid (unchanging) as reflected by whether they changed their instructional approaches or choices across grade levels or populations.

(343 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

A Study of Secondary District-Level Literacy Coaches Beliefs about  
How to Teach Reading

by

Pamela Sharp Crawford, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2012

This case study explored the knowledge and beliefs held by six district-level reading coaches about how to teach reading at the middle-school level. It narrowed in on the possible influence past personal experiences, past academic and work experiences, and the influence of domain specific knowledge (i.e., English, social studies, elementary education, special education, ESL, etc.) might possibly have had upon the development of their knowledge and beliefs about how to teach reading. Finally, the study looked at how these influenced practice and decisions made in their roles as a cohort of district-level literacy coaches involved in developing and implementing a district-wide seventh-grade reading intervention program for struggling readers.

The aim of this study was to add to the professional literature concerning literacy coaches functioning specifically at the secondary level. By identifying and describing the personal literacy beliefs held by these six literacy coaches, it is possible to shed light on a phenomenon dealing with how these beliefs develop, how they impact the professional development choices made by these coaches, and how these might be affecting instruction in curriculum development dealing with literacy at the secondary level. Such knowledge about a literacy coach would assist teacher educators in planning effective professional development workshops, especially those involving issues of conceptual change and reform. It would also assist literacy coaches of how to effectively transition their knowledge about how to teach reading across the grade levels. Principals hiring literacy coaches at the secondary level would also be more informed about the diversity inherent in teaching reading and the impact experience and beliefs might have upon a literacy coach's ability to transition effectively from teaching reading at the elementary level to the secondary level.

Data collection protocols involved the taping of common interview questions, a survey and taped interview dealing with of the literacy coach's professional library, the taping of think-aloud responses to a vignette dealing with a struggling student, and the taping of

think-aloud responses to two scales to measure epistemological and ontological beliefs and determine worldviews about the nature of knowledge. The cost of the research for this study involved the time spent interviewing six participants, the transcription of the data, and the time it took to write up the findings. The only out-of-pocket expenditures involved the transcription process, which came to about \$1,600. The remainder of the work was executed within the confines of the dissertation coursework and process.

DEDICATION

To my beloved aunt, V. Helen Fleming.

Her almost daily encouragement  
and love got me to this point.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My widespread thanks must reach out across the nation to individuals who live from Hawaii to New York. I am humbled by all the friends and relatives, brothers and sisters, and home teachers and visiting teachers who prayed for the successful completion of this dissertation. Thank you.

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Finally to my beloved husband, Truman Jay Crawford—I simply could not have done this dissertation without having you in my life. You have made all the difference. Finally, to my mentor and friend of 10 years, Dr. Kay Camperell—no single individual did more to give me the opportunity to embark upon this intellectual adventure. It has truly changed my life forever. Thank you, Kay. Thank you all.

Pamela Sharp Crawford

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescent literacy has been classified as a hot topic by leading literacy research scholars surveyed by the International Reading Association (IRA) every year since 2001 (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2006). Hot refers to the level of attention given to the topic. Whether adolescent literacy has annually been considered hot or very hot, 75% to 100% of the respondents over the years having agreed that it should be hot, another consideration has been addressed in this annual survey (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Though this survey addresses the relative attention given to various topics and not their importance, a recent volume of the *Harvard Educational Review* (Ippolito, Steele, & Samson, 2008) was dedicated to adolescent literacy, addressing specifically its current importance in education in general and reading research more specifically. Ippolito and colleagues, the editors of this volume, asked two questions in their introduction: “Why literacy?” and “Why adolescent literacy in particular?” (p. 1). They stated their belief that “literacy is power” and “literacy is a cornerstone of our freedom” (p. 1). This supports the premise that reading well will allow our students access to today’s digital age. In a free society, access to all forms of written texts allows for an informed citizenry that can protect those freedoms and grow and prosper. They go on to note that at grade four U.S. students transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” (p. 2). This involved a shift in instructional practice from an emphasis upon decoding words on a page to grappling with complex ideas and information gleaned during interactions that occur when dealing with written texts.



Ippolito and colleagues (2008) noted two distinct challenges faced by the adolescent learner. First, an adolescent learner was asked to read and study across multiple disciplines such as social studies, science, math, English, and so forth, where literacy difficulties increase because effective literacy skills differ across disciplines and the mastery of general literacy skills are usually necessary for academic success. One report on the challenges of adolescent literacy referred to this as “disciplinary literacy” (Lee & Spratley, 2010, p. 2). Each discipline requires a different reading approach from the literary and personal narratives emphasized during the early elementary experience (Marsh et al., 2008).

Second, Ippolito and colleagues (2008) acknowledged the challenge faced by secondary teachers to address the learning needs of adolescent students during those years when they develop from a child to a young adult. Instruction must relate to them personally, allow them to interact with challenging content, and promote critical, independent thinking. The editors warned, however, that teaching, instruction, and content that was reminiscent of what worked for small children was not likely to hold the attention and prove as effective with adolescents on the brink of adulthood. Therefore, they noted how important it was to study how reading was taught at the middle school and secondary levels to make sure the needs of the adolescent reader as identified by research and experts in the field of adolescent literacy was properly addressed (Beers, Probst, & Rief, 2007; Christenbury, Bomer, & Smagorinsky, 2009).

### Statement of the Problem

Current perspectives on adolescent literacy from the last decade have often cast this topic in the language of crisis (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006; Jacobs, 2008; Marsh et al., 2008). Though the term “adolescent literacy crisis” was first coined in 2004 by the authors of the landmark *Reading Next* report (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 7), references to such a crisis also appeared in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), a national report that contained statistics about adolescents’ reading abilities. The report claimed that “about 13 percent of all 17 year olds in the United States [could] be considered functionally illiterate” (p. 11). The report also stated that for minority students that same statistical classification could run as high as 40%. Several key reports from the last decade have continued this language of crisis when referencing adolescent literacy (Alliance for Excellent Education, n.d.; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Kamil, 2003; Kamil et al., 2008). In 2003, the Adolescent Literacy Funders Forum also addressed the urgency of this issue.

Adolescent literacy is undergoing a renewal of interest as a focus for research and instruction. This renewal is due in large part to continued failures to close the achievement gap between privileged and not-so-privileged high school students. Educational researchers have proposed and tested a number of solutions to this problem, many of them addressing students’ need for better literacy instruction, and have identified areas where further research and development are needed. Private and public organizations have also tackled the problem from a variety of angles and perspectives. (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003, p. 1)

In addition, the possession of at least proficient, but preferably advanced, literacy skills is becoming a key to success in our current economy. “The U.S. Department of Labor...estimates that 70 percent of the 30 fastest growing jobs will require some

postsecondary education and 40 percent of all new jobs will require at least an associate's degree" (Marsh et al., 2008, p. 1). This observation suggests a possible negative social impact for both individual students and the nation as a whole if U.S. schools do not prepare their students for the realities and needs of today's job market.

From a survey conducted in 2003, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy found that the higher the literacy level, the greater the levels of full time employment, the higher the income levels, and the lower the levels of public assistance (cited in Kutner et al., 2007). This ability to prepare for and access success in our digital age supports Ippolito's and colleagues' (2008) emphasis and sense of urgency about addressing adolescent literacy issues. The 2009 National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP) reported little change in reading scores for our eighth graders since 1992. Highlights from 2009 national results showed that the average reading score for all twelfth-graders was only two points higher than in 2005 and actually four points lower than in 1992. The gaps between White students and other minority groups remains the constant across those 17 years. In the face of growing workplace literacy demands that lack of change could actually represent a negative gain. It is critical that our schools provide our students with the literacy skills needed in both postsecondary education and today's labor market.

In response to this crisis in adolescent literacy, the publishing and research world has responded with a plethora of books and reports on adolescent literacy: (a) handbooks (Christenbury et al., 2009; Israel & Duffy, 2009); (b) books that focus primarily on reading instruction (Alvermann, Hinchman, & Sheridan-Thomas, 2008; Conley,

Friedhoff, Sherry, & Tuckey, 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007; Lewis & Moorman, 2007; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005; Torgeson et al., 2007b); (c) books that focus primarily on reading research (Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, & Waff, 2006; Jetton & Dole, 2004; Pressley, Billman, Perry, Reffitt, & Reynolds, 2007); and (d) reports (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2009; National School Boards Association [NASB], 2006). In addition there have been influential position and policy statements made by various organizations during the last decade addressing adolescent literacy issues: (a) International Reading Association (IRA, 2000a, 2000b; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999); (b) National Endowment for the Arts (NEA, 2004, 2007); (c) Rand Corporation (McCombs, Kirby, Barney, Darilek, & Magee, 2005; Snow, 2002); (d) Alliance for Excellent Education (2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007); National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE, 2004, 2006, 2007); (e) Carnegie Corporation (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; McCombs et al., 2005); (f) National Association of Secondary School Principals (2005); and (g) National Governors Association (2005). There have been a myriad of solutions proposed to address this crisis across the publications, which have dealt primarily with the instructional practices for teaching students how to improve their literacy practices. One solution to this crisis has continued to grow in popularity, but deals with improving student achievement on a larger scale by improving the quality of the teachers' practice.

The call for highly qualified teachers through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation has contributed to increased attention on how to improve students' literacy skills through improving teachers' teaching skills. Literacy coaches have been

recruited to bridge this gap and to better help teachers meet the literacy needs of adolescents at the middle and secondary levels (Frost & Bean, 2006; Marsh et al., 2008). A literacy coach is a school-based, specially trained master teacher who incorporates a professional development model to provide leadership for the school's literacy program. The coach needs to have a mastery of both reading research and age-related reading teaching experience. This involves on-site and ongoing support for teachers and administrators to address the need to improve literacy instruction. The following true scenario occurred during my years as a middle school language arts teacher. I believe it illustrates the importance a literacy coach plays in determining how reading could be taught in a school or district.

A case in point, a uniform chorus of young students' chanting filled the hallways with that day's spelling words at a small, rural middle school in the Intermountain West. The choral voices alternated with those of the teacher, who led the class through the scripted, direct instruction-style lesson. It was reminiscent of an earlier time and reminded me of the young Danish students who chorally sang "Two plus two is four, four plus four is eight..." in the 1950s Hollywood version of "Hans Christian Anderson." It might have been cute, if it was not so sad.

Why was it so sad? It was sad because the students were seventh graders at a middle school in a general language arts classroom. The class's demographic composition was heterogeneous, including students along a continuum between those who struggle and the academically gifted. The scripted program being used was *Morphographic Spelling* (Dixon, 1976), a direct instruction spelling program developed

for special education students with learning difficulties (Westwood, 2003). The Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE) recommends the use of this program with students who test below the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile on normative measures (Diamond & Martin, 2004). However, this school required every sixth and seventh grade English teacher to use this program, which took up 40% of the instructional time. I was a teacher at that school when they implemented this program, and I kept asking myself: How could this happen?

*Morphographic spelling* was part of this district's efforts to improve school-wide standardized test scores in reading. It was developed under the leadership of a district level literacy coach who had previously taught special education for many years. It was endorsed by the middle school English department's chair who had bachelor's and Master's degrees in English. This district level literacy coach most likely brought her special education perspective on reading education with her to her job as a district-wide literacy coach. The English chair probably had little formal education in how to teach reading, since English degrees emphasis response to literature. My own observation was that she relied heavily upon the district level reading coach to plan reading instruction for her academically struggling students. I began to speculate about how they might have developed their perspectives, how that perspective might relate to her beliefs about how to teach reading, and how those beliefs might have influenced her development of reading curriculum and professional development at the secondary level.

## **Purposes and Objectives**

Through this experience, I came to realize that I wanted to explore the possible influence discipline perspective (i.e., English, social studies, elementary education, special education, ESL, etc.). Also, I would like to study any other types of issues from personal, work, or education that might have influence upon the development of a literacy coach's views about how to teach reading. Towards this goal I would need to explore how these perspectives might have developed, how work and personal experiences might have contributed to their development, and how these perspectives might have influenced staff development instructional choices made by a literacy coach at the secondary level. In the previous scenario, the literacy coach's "way of being" (i.e., her ontological development as a literacy coach), which also includes her view about how to teach reading at the secondary level, may have been shaped by her educational and work experience backgrounds, her personal experiences, and the views about knowledge that developed within an academic discipline.

The purpose of this study is to describe the phenomenon of how literacy coaches at the secondary levels might develop their personal perspectives about how to teach reading. My use of the word secondary refers to grades 7-12, both middle and high schools. This study deals with the beliefs about how to teach reading that are held by 6 district-level literacy coaches who were collectively involved in designing and implementing a seventh grade reading intervention program for struggling readers in their district. The specific research objectives addressed in this study were as follows.

1. To identify and describe the general philosophies (worldviews) about education

and literacy held by the literacy coaches.

2. To identify and describe their educational backgrounds, their personal experiences, their professional journeys as these relate to their beliefs about how to teach reading at the secondary level.

3. To identify and describe how these beliefs might be affecting the instructional and staff development choices made by the literacy coaches.

The aim of this study is to add to the professional literature concerning literacy coaches at the secondary level. By identifying and describing the personal literacy beliefs held by these six literacy coaches, I aim to shed light on a phenomenon dealing with how these beliefs develop, how they impact the professional development choices made by these coaches, and how these might be affecting instruction in curriculum development dealing with literacy at the secondary level.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The purpose of this study was to review and synthesize literature to address the phenomenon described in Chapter 1 relating to literacy coaches at the secondary level. In order to shed light on the many aspects of this complex phenomenon, this study was grounded in the following research frameworks: (a) ontological and epistemological worldviews (Schraw & Olafson, 2002, 2008); (b) teacher knowledge and beliefs (Calderhead, 1996; Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006; Kagan, 1992); (c) domain-specific beliefs about knowledge (Alexander, 1992; Hofer, 2001; Shulman & Quinlan, 1996; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988); and (d) dominant theoretical learning models that influence reading education (Alexander & Fox, 2004). In order to place this study in its historical context, the evolution and applications of the literacy coaching model will first be reviewed and the need for reading coaches at the middle and secondary level will be explained. After that, each research framework will be described and examined with the intent of addressing specific aspects of research related to the study questions.

#### **Evolution of the Literacy Coaching Model**

The International Reading Association (IRA) is a world-wide organization for professionals in reading that promotes quality reading instruction. Findings from the 14<sup>th</sup> annual survey of selected IRA members were listed in “What’s Hot for 2010?” in the *Reading Today* magazine. In that survey, both adolescent literacy and literacy coaches were considered to be very hot topics (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2009b). The research agenda

dealing with adolescent literacy and literacy coaches has come to intersect as the use of literacy coaches as a change agent for effective literacy reform has gained popularity over the years (Marsh et al., 2008). In today's educational environment of standards and accountability, effective literacy coaches at the secondary levels must be able to assume roles as collaborators, job-embedded coaches, evaluators of literacy needs, and instructional strategists across the content areas (IRA, 2006). This has not always been the case, since the various roles of literacy coaches have changed over the year, often as the result of pressures brought by various political imperatives or trends in reading instruction throughout the years (Pearson, 2004). To fully understand the current role of a literacy coach necessitates looking at how the role evolved from an earlier era.

### **An Earlier Reading Specialist Model**

Even though there were some school districts with reading supervisors prior to 1950, the "demand for reading specialists did not become great until the first half of the 1950 decade" (Smith, 2002, p. 383). According to Smith, this demand was fueled by the political realities of the Cold War. There was a deep concern over the future of the nation as a leader on the international stage. An educated populous was necessary to maintain our democracy and to solve current social problems. So, education was seen as the vehicle for social change, and reading was seen as basic to improving education.

According to Austin and Morrison (1963, as cited in Smith, 2002, p. 389), during the 1950s educational in-service activities in reading became more widespread across the country as they were seen as a way to improve current and future reading programs. Two separate studies by Dever (1956) and Robinson (1957) from that decade identified a

variety of titles for professionals in reading, but the most commonly used were reading specialists, remedial reading teacher, and reading teacher (as cited in Smith, 2002, pp. 384-385). Universities and colleges began to offer courses in preparation for reading specialization. Demand for reading specialists began to outstrip the supply by 1965. In-service activities continued to increase at this time to meet the need to improve teacher knowledge and competence in reading instruction (Smith, 2002).

The widespread use of reading specialists continued to be employed over the next 40 years to improve the literacy skills of struggling readers (Bean, 2004). Their use has been predominately funded by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and subsequent reauthorizations of this federal legislation (Bean, 2004). Those early reading specialists mostly served as remedial reading teachers (Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003; Dole, 2004) in self-contained reading classrooms or pull-out programs. Whether these programs involved one-on-one, small group, or whole class instruction, pull-out programs later came under significant criticism (Dole, 2004).

According to Dole (2004), further research has shown that gains made in these pull-out programs usually did not transfer when the student went back into the regular classroom. She commented that despite the billions of dollars spent on Title I programs since first implemented, “this model of intervention...[has] not delivered the anticipated significant improvement in academic learning of at-risk students” (p. 463). As the reading specialist role lost favor over the years, the new role of the literacy coach slowly began to emerge. Gradually, reading specialists in both primary and secondary settings have moved towards the inclusion of a coaching model.

### **From Reading Specialist to Literacy Coach: The Changing Roles**

Allington and Baker (1999) wrote about two roles that bridge the old and the new approach to literacy instructional reform and the improvement of the reading and writing skills of students. One role involved intensive and personalized instruction for certain at-risk or struggling students as a reading specialist. The second role addressed the improvement of classroom instructional reading practice by teachers as a literacy coach. This second role's use of coaching reflected the heart of this change.

According to the Center for Coaching and Mentoring (1999), coaching is “a discussion process between members of the organization aimed at exerting a positive influence in the motivation, performance and awareness of areas for improvement and development of another person to help them be as effective as possible” (p. 1). A literacy coach in the current educational setting is defined by the IRA (2004b) as someone who provides staff support and development for teachers in a school setting. Literacy coaches assume leadership roles to add to and enhance teachers' instructional knowledge about how to teach reading. The literacy coaches who mentor teachers at the individual, team, school, or district level are required to work directly with teachers to improve classroom practice by providing non-evaluative feedback of teachers' implementation of reading and writing strategies (Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008).

David (1999) was amazed at the change in roles she experienced when she switched from her role as a reading specialist to that of a literacy coach.

For the past 15 years, I have been teaching a pull-out program with 8-10 reluctant readers each period of the day.... Barnwell Middle School decided to change...to the Educational Resource Teacher Model.... My job description changed

drastically. [My] primary role was to provide assistance [to teachers] through regular classroom instruction.... Little did I realize the impact this would have on students. We soon found that rather than just 50 benefiting, approximately 1,000 students would reap benefits.... (pp. 93-99)

Morrow (2003) argued that the primary role of a literacy coach was professional development. She commented on the link between student achievement and teachers who participated in strong and ongoing preparation and professional development (p. 6).

Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, and Wallis (2002) surveyed a group of principals who indicated that the reading coach's role as a resource for the staff was very important. A literacy coach is often positioned as a collaborative consultant (Jaeger, 1996; Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001), who serves as a resource to teachers and parents, models in the classroom, and plans and implements professional development workshops. In a second study by Bean and colleagues (2003), two separate surveys of the teachers and principals were implemented in schools with exemplary reading programs that utilized reading coaches. The principals noticed that the most frequently performed tasks by coaches were "instruction, diagnosis and serving as a resource to teachers" (p. 447). All of these tasks come into play as a literacy coach is called upon to design and implement staff development.

A pivotal report by the National Research Council, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), addressed the need for school-based reading specialists with specialized training to address students' reading difficulties and to give assistance and guidance to classroom teachers (p. 333). These conclusions reflected the growing concern over the need to provide excellent reading instruction (IRA, 2000a). The IRA spent over a decade writing position statements and

standards related to the various roles and qualifications of the reading teachers, reading specialists and literacy coaches.

*Standards for Reading Professionals* (1998) provided a fairly complete and expansive list of the skills needed by a reading specialist (as cited in IRA, 2000a, p. 2). A resolution statement on adolescent literacy issued by IRA (1999) stated our adolescents deserve reading specialists who can assist them when they have reading difficulties. Excellent reading teachers would need to be able to strategically coach students in reading (IRA, 2000a).

In the publication, *Teaching All Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist* (IRA, 2000b), IRA acknowledged the changing role of the reading specialist from someone who works primarily with children who are struggling with reading to the new role of “the specialist and classroom teacher...[who] works collaboratively to implement a quality reading program...a well-coordinated, congruent, and quality program can occur whether the reading specialist functions in the classroom or in a pullout setting” (p. 2). The leadership role of a reading specialist was evolving at this time into that of a collaboration between the reading specialist and the teachers, while still placing the reading specialist as an instructor of students rather than as a literacy coach who only teaches teachers.

An IRA (2003) publication, *Standards for Reading Professionals*, combined the roles of a reading specialist and a literacy coach with educational certification standards. It defined three primary duties of a reading specialist: (a) a reading intervention teacher, who provides instruction to struggling readers either in or out of the classroom; (b) a

reading coach or a literacy coach, who provides professional development and essential leadership for the school's entire literacy program; and (c) a reading supervisor or reading coordinator who provides leadership while developing, leading, and evaluating a school reading program, from kindergarten through grade 12. These descriptions remained the same in the 2007 revision of this document (IRA, 2007).

In collaboration with the major national organizations in the content areas of math, science, social studies, and English, IRA (2006) next published *Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches*. This publication advocated the use of reading coaches as instructional leaders across the curriculum to address the reading and literacy challenges faced by all teachers, including content teachers, as they assisted students in achieving success at literacy tasks. This role at the secondary level was recognized in earlier publications (IRA, 2000b).

The newest IRA publication, *Standards for Reading Professionals*, was revised in 2010. Professional role categories numbered five in the 2003 standards, but were changed to seven in the 2010 standards. The two additional roles added were that of middle and high school classroom teacher (academic content area) and middle and high school reading classroom teacher. Standards 2010 provided a matrix format that listed each role individually (i.e., reading specialist/literacy coach) in a column corresponding to each standard. This emphasized the importance of aligning standards to coaches' role descriptions and responsibilities. The 2010 Standards specifically state, "[Reading Specialist/Literacy Coaches] responsibilities and titles often differ based on the context in which they work, and their teaching and educational experiences." This statement

reflected a growing awareness of the diversity inherent in how and what may influence the development of expertise and knowledge of a literacy coach and other reading professionals (IRA, 2010).

### **Support for the Literacy Coaching Model**

According to Driscoll (2005), the leadership and instructional role of the reading coach as staff developer, as performed through various forms of professional development activities, has been informed by the theory of situated cognition. She claimed that “[p]roponents of situated learning argue that knowledge remains inert and unused if taught in contexts that separate knowing from doing” (p. 156). Putnam and Borko (2000) have stated that it has become clear over the years that professional development opportunities that are “one-shot deals” in the form of workshops isolated from instructional context are of limited value. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Glickman (2004) have observed that professional development that provides feedback during genuine activities in actual settings, in this case a teacher’s classroom, are more successful.

This new model of the reading specialist as literacy coach, with its primary role of staff development, has been encouraged by what we know about the effects well-prepared teachers have upon student achievement. Darling-Hammond (2000) argued that the influence of a well-prepared teacher “can be stronger [upon student achievement] than the influences of student background factors such as poverty, language background, and minority status” (p. 38). Although research about the effectiveness of the literacy coach’s model as a staff developer is still in its infancy, there remains broad-based



support among professional reading and content area associations about what reading coaches should do and what kinds of experience and knowledge they should have (IRA, 2006).

### **Other Issues and Current Standards for Literacy Coaches**

The IRA (2006) publication on the roles and standards of secondary literacy coaches failed to take into account that literacy coaches may bring radically differing discipline perspectives and beliefs to their roles and responsibilities. However, they do ask the following questions: “What are the characteristics of highly effective coaches? What professional qualifications, prior experiences, and training are related to success in the coaching role?” (p. 47). I would suggest that you need to go even further and ask: Do these differing perspectives on the teaching of reading affect the type and scope of the school-wide literacy plans each literacy coach might assist in developing?

So what? Why are these questions important? The literacy coaching phenomenon is so new that state and district level hiring criteria has often not been established (Allington, 2006; Roller, 2006). Buly, Coskie, Robinson, and Egawa (2006) have expressed their concern that the frenzy to hire reading coaches could lead to misunderstandings about this movement that could lead to its failure. “As the notion of literacy coaches has increased in popularity, districts are hiring for a job that often hasn’t before existed in a school.... We fear that coaching will go the way of whole language...” (p. 24). I would suggest that this concern should lead to asking the following questions: How might coaches from a differing domain perspective teach reading? How

might literacy coaches differ on how to teach reading across differing grade levels (i.e., middle school; high school; regular classrooms)? When asked to move across grades and populations, how might a literacy coach be influenced by prior knowledge and expertise developed through years of education and teaching experience with one specific grade-level population (i.e., K-3, special education)?

In fact, this very issue nearly derailed the efforts by the state of Alabama to implement the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) in 1998 at the secondary level. The state developers of this initiative quickly came to realize that the literacy demands at the elementary setting were not the same as the adolescent literacy demands experienced by the remedial reading and content area teachers at the secondary level. They said, “At the onset, the developers of the original ARI plan reasoned that the elementary model would seamlessly transfer to a secondary application under the umbrella of ‘reading in the content areas’” (Bacevich & Salinger, 2006, p. iv). Local secondary teachers were finally able to make the guidelines in the ARI work, but all those involved learned an important lesson about the inherent differences between emergent/elementary literacy and adolescent/secondary literacy grade-level specific demands.

Therefore, those hiring reading coaches in our schools may need to recognize, as Alabama came to realize, that one size does not fit all in implementing reading instruction and interventions. This scenario may also suggest that various literacy coaches might carry with them differing perspectives based upon deeply entrenched beliefs about how to teach reading that could affect both their professional development and literacy instructional choices. If these perspectives become resistant to change, they may interfere

with a literacy coach's ability to consider other points of view about how to teach reading across differing grade levels and student populations. None of these issues may even be considered in the rush to hire literacy coaches, to reform existing school programs, or to implement the literacy coaching model at the secondary level where a crisis in literacy achievement by our students is said to be occurring (Allington, 2006; Bean, 2004; Dole, 2004; Tatum, 2004; Toll, 2004).

### **Current Historical and Political Contexts**

This section will address the historical and political contexts surrounding a discussion of literacy, while addressing such issues as the politics of reading,, adolescent literacy, the report of the NRP and the influence of the No Child Left Behind federal legislation.

#### **A Literacy Crisis at the Secondary Level**

The literacy demands placed upon today's workers in our increasingly technologically sophisticated workplaces are increasing. Today's fast moving economy places a premium on educational skills, especially literacy skills, so most jobs require more than just a high school education. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education speculated that 70% of the fastest growing jobs will need a certain amount of postsecondary education (Marsh et al., 2008). Yet, millions of secondary students are struggling students who may have trouble meeting those demands (Alliance for Excellent Education, n.d.). According to the Children Trends Data Bank website (<http://www.childtrendsdatbank.org/>), reading proficiency scores from the National

Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) for 2009 have basically flat-lined or gone down over the last 20 years. This organization further notes that from 1992 to 2002, the average reading scores for eighth graders increased from 260 to 264, and have not increased beyond that level as of 2009. The fourth-grade reading scores reached a high of 221 in both 2007 and 2009, compared to 217 in 1992. Reading scores for twelfth-grade students declined significantly from 292 in 1992 to 286 in 2005. Students at each grade level are performing on average at the basic level.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics website, there are three achievement levels for each grade assessed by NAEP (4, 8, and 12): (a) basic, (b) proficient, and (c) advanced. The following definitions apply to all subjects and all grades. Basic connotes partial mastery of required knowledge and skills that allow for adequate work. Proficient designates solid academic performance where each student demonstrates competency to apply and to analyze challenging subject matter. Advanced achievement indicates superior performance.

According to the NAEP scores for 2005, 73% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders read at the basic level or above, the last year this data was available. As defined by an NAEP summary (2005), the basic level “denotes partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade” (p. 2). That sounds reasonable, except that according to Biancarosa and Snow (2004), basic level reading ability has not been high enough to meet the reading demands at the high school level. In fact, the percentage of students performing at or above the basic level decreased from 80% in 1992 to 73% in 2005, and the percentage of students performing at or above the proficient level

decreased from 40% to 35%. These decreases suggested a wide-spread need to improve the literacy skills of students in our middle and high schools (Brozo, 2006; Kamil, 2003).

As one way to address this issue, there has been an increase in popularity across the nation to hire reading coaches at the secondary level to assist districts and schools to develop and implement school-wide literacy plans (Allington, 2006; Blackford, 2002; Clark, Otte, & Fair, 2006; Marsh et al., 2008). This movement has been fueled politically by the findings of the report of the report of the NRP (NICHD, 2000) and the pressures placed upon schools to meet annual yearly progress (AYP) benchmarks under the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, known also as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). This piece of federal legislation emphasized and stipulated the use of scientifically-based reading research such as those articulated in the NRP report. The following section will explain the influence this report has had upon instruction choices within the literacy mandates of NCLB.

### **Political Climate Generated by the Report of the National Reading Panel**

In an attempt to resolve controversial issues that some labeled “the reading wars” (Pearson, 2004), decision makers at the NICHD sought to apply scientifically based reading research that applied rigorous review procedures to a meta-analysis of current research with the intent to obtain valid, objective knowledge about reading development, reading instruction and reading difficulties (Camilli, Wolfe, & Smith, 2006).

In 1997, Congress asked the “Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in consultation with the Secretary of Education, to

convene a national panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read” (NRP, 2000, p. 1).

According to Shanahan (2006), “The [NRP] continues to be the cornerstone of the federal literacy policy” (p. 34). Davenport and Jones (2005) claimed that the NRP findings have promoted “scientifically verifiable research on reading [as] the dominant reform approach today” (p. 54). The findings of the NRP report have been compiled into both a book and a short summary format that are available without charge. Therefore, the report’s findings have become highly influential since it has been widely disseminated and pointedly used to inform policy decisions, to approve education funding, and to inform curriculum issues (Allington, 2002; Coles, 2001; Garan, 2001; Pressley, 2001; Yatzin, 2002). In addition, some critics believed it might have unintended consequences such as the denial of funding for reading research agendas that do not employ experimental and quasi-experimental research designs (Coles, 2003; Garan, 2001).

The influence of the NRP report in our schools, especially upon elementary and special education reading programs, has become pervasive (Almasi, Garas-York, & Shanahan, 2006; Camilli et al., 2006; McCardle & Chhabra, 2004; Vaughn & Roberts, 2007). In these settings, emphasis has been placed on what Allington (2005c) and others quickly began to call the five pillars of reading (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction, and reading comprehension), and upon the concept of scientific-based evidence or scientifically based reading research (SBRR). Some very vocal critics (Allington, 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Camilli et al., 2006; Coles, 2001; Krashen, 2001) have also felt that this approach to research might possibly generate an

“incomplete and flawed research base” (Yatvin, Weaver & Garan, 2003, p. 28).

Opposition to the NPR report began at its inception (Shanahan, 1999). Reading scholars questioned both its narrow focus on reading topics and its research methodology (Almasi et al., 2006). Allington questioned its ability to produce comprehensive or reliable findings (as cited in Shanahan, 1999). Shanahan (1999), a member of the NRP, became one of its most ardent defenders and said the following:

Colleagues...often wonder what kinds of pressure the panel has been under from the [National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)].... My sense is that there has been no pressure of this type—none on me individually, and none on the panel when we have met together.... This is not to say that this has been a relaxed process, just one without evident political or ideological effort to bias our findings. (p. 3)

A public record was kept of all of the panel’s deliberations. The panel implemented a strict research methodology plan outlined in its summary version of the NRP report. The authors of this summary admit that:

The evidence-based methodological standards adopted by the Panel are essentially those normally used in research studies of the efficacy of interventions in psychological and medical research....However, such standards have not been universally accepted or used in reading education research...only a small fraction of the total reading research literature met the panel’s standards for use in the topic analysis. (NICHD, 2000, p. 27)

Apparently, seeing no limitations in this approach, Shanahan (1999) commented, “If successfully accomplished, this plan will represent one of the most thorough, careful, and rigorous analyses of reading data ever conducted” (p. 4). Several years later, Shanahan (2003) did admit, “It was not that we did not see the value of qualitative research, but such research could not possibly provide a definitive answer to the questions that Congress raised” (p. 6). After having discarded 20 concept topics, the panel’s final report

made seven reading topics the subject of meta-analysis: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary instruction, (e) text comprehension, (f) teacher preparation, and (g) computer technology. The first five became universally recognized and adopted as the “pillars” of effective reading instruction as defined by the NRP report.

Allington (2005c) claimed that the five pillars covered in the report neglected five others of equal importance for which there existed a significant amount of experimental research: (a) classroom organization, (b) matching pupils and texts, (c) access to interesting texts, choice and collaboration, (d) writing and reading, and (e) expert tutoring. He stated emphatically “that we ignore these at our own peril” (p. 1). Pressley (2001) also suggested that the NRP failed to include other topics related to reading because they did not align with its perspective on the reading process. Some of these important topical issues included motivation, preschool literacy, home literacy’s influence on reading development, the effects of public television on reading readiness, whole language instruction, issues dealing with second language learners, and the effects of various school reforms on reading. While some scholars were concerned about what had been left out, other scholars were critical of the NRP’s conclusions.

Garan (2002a) was one of the first scholars to note that the findings of the full NRP report, which was over 600 pages, did not always agree with those condensed in the 34 page NRP Summary. Even Shanahan (2003) admitted the Summary was “misleadingly ambiguous” (p. 2). Garan (2002a) cited a case in point about the panel’s findings about who should receive phonics instruction. She pointed to the following example to make her claim:



The NRP states that its meta-analysis is based on “studies that examined the effectiveness of phonics programs with three types of problem readers: children in kindergarten or first grade who were at risk for developing reading problems: older...disabled readers; and low achieving readers.... The NRP concludes...there were insufficient data to draw any conclusions about the effects of phonics instruction with normally developing readers above first grade” (p. 100).... Compare the preceding quotation with this one [from the Summary version]:... “Findings...regarding the effectiveness of systematic phonics instruction were derived from studies conducted in many classrooms with typical...English-speaking students from a variety of backgrounds.... Thus the results of the analysis are indicative of what can be accomplished when systematic phonics programs are implemented in today’s classrooms.” (p. 101)

The summary version of the NRP also concluded, “The meta-analysis revealed that systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade” (p. 9), yet the original version of the NRP clearly states that there is insufficient data to determine its effectiveness beyond the first grade. Garan (2002a) went on to imply “that the NRP phonics results are not generalizable to typical classrooms” (p. 101).

Krashen (2001) observed the same credibility flaws about parts of the report’s conclusions in regards to fluency instruction. The panel found only 14 studies that fit the NRP’s research criteria in regards to the effects of encouraging children to read more (independent reading). He commented, “It is only by omitting a large number of relevant studies and misinterpreting the ones that were included that the NRP was able to reach the startling conclusion that there is no clear evidence that encouraging children to read more actually improves reading achievement (p. 113). Allington (2005a) also noted that in some schools “independent reading practice has been largely banned as being unscientific” (Allington, 2005a, p. 464).

Such abuses by the NRP findings were predicted by Yatvin (2002), a member of

the NRP, who wrote a critical minority report that was included in the full report. She charged that “[f]rom the choice of participants to serve on the National Reading Panel to the hasty release of an uncorrected, undeliberated, and unproven subcommittee report, the procedure used by the NRP was flawed....Now government agencies at all levels are using the science of the NRP report to support their calls for changes in school instruction and teacher education” (p. 1).

Various scholars have provided alternative interpretations of the data used in the NRP’s meta-analysis on phonics (Hammill & Swanson, 2006), alternative interpretations of the text comprehension findings of the 12 qualitative studies used by the NRP (Almasi et al., 2006), and an alternative belief that attention should be paid to the role of text type (e.g., rate of rare words) when addressing research on how much time should be allocated to fluency practice, which the NRP did not do (Hiebert & Fisher, 2005). Criticism has continued across the years, with some disagreements becoming somewhat intense in regards to the conclusions by the NRP in relationship to phonics instruction (Camilli, Kim, & Vargas, 2008; Camilli, Vargas, & Yurecko, 2003; Camilli et al., 2006; Hammill & Swanson, 2006; Stuebing, Barth, Cirino, Francis, & Fletcher, 2008).

Allington (2005a) believed that because few people have ever read the complete 600-page report, the “misleading information in the Summary has become conventional wisdom” (p. 464). But he did not view the errors in the Summary as harmlessly unintentional, but rather as a reflection of “a simple ideological bias in favor of a particular sort of reading instruction for beginning readers and for struggling readers—the sort of reading instruction that the full NRP report avoided recommending” (p. 464).

To Allington, the greatest problem with the misrepresentation of NRP findings was “that these guidelines [NRP Summary & *Put Reading First*] are typically used in decisions about which instructional materials a school might purchase with federal Reading First [NCLB] funds” (p. 464).

### **Public Educational Policy and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act**

The federalization of research has become apparent to many education scholars (Allington, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Garan, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Goodman, 1998; Krashen, 2001; Ohanian, 2000; Pearson, 2004; Pressley, 2002). Pearson claimed, “In the current research context, literacy scholars find themselves between a rock and a hard place. The official views of research promulgated by the federal government in its research programs administered within the Department of Education are weighted toward quantitative and experimental work” (p. 234).

Allington (2003) feared that NCLB would reject instructional materials or approaches used to improve reading instruction that are not based upon SBRR (p. 31). Allington (2004a) also commented that “federal officials are holding schools to impossible standards based on misinterpretations of the research” (p. 22). He stated emphatically, “[N]o research suggests that classroom teachers can help 90-95 percent of students acquire grade level reading proficiencies by learning more about phonology, using a scripted curriculum, teaching systematic phonics, or following a scripted program (Allington, 2004a, p. 25).

The policy to develop a science of reading instruction based on the findings of NRP and other reports has been implemented at the K-3 level through the Reading First component of NCLB. Such influence has come in the form of billions of dollars of federal aid grants to be distributed to the states along with a requirement that classroom instructional decisions must be informed by SBRR (Davenport & Jones, 2005). The NRP report, with its emphasis on analyzing only experimental studies, fits the SBRR criteria and was quickly promoted through NCLB (Pearson, 2004).

NCLB (2002) is a federal, standards-based, educational reform initiative. Under this plan, AYP criteria were set by the individual states and measured by a yearly standardized test in reading and math administered in grades 3-8. Each school would need to either make AYP goals or be labeled an underperforming school (Hess & Finn, 2004). Fear of the consequences of failure has over the years created intense pressures for school districts, principals, and teachers to make AYP. According to Marsh and colleagues (2008), such federal policies through programs such as NCLB, Reading First, and Striving Readers has led to the increased use of literacy coaches within our schools across the country (p. 4).

Marsh and colleagues (2008), researchers in a 2006-2007 study by the Rand Corporation, sought to address the need for more research dealing with the use of literacy coaching as an approach to improve student literacy achievement. They stated the urgency for more research in this area: “Given the increasing popularity of coaching and its significant cost—in terms of financial and human resources—there is a critical need for research in this area” (p. xv). This study was massive in its scope, because it attempted to

describe and evaluate the effectiveness of the Florida's Reading Coaching Program, which was implemented statewide. Two conclusions and recommendation by the researchers in the Rand study are of interest to my study. First, they claimed a small, but significant improvement in student achievement through average annual gains in reading, which they attributed to the addition of the coaches. Second, they made four recommendations dealing with attracting and maintaining quality coaches. The recommendation most relevant to my study suggests that states and districts should "provide guidance to school administrators in how to identify high-quality coach candidates" (p. 185). My study attempts to address the issue of literacy coaches' quality and their domain specific knowledge about how to teach reading.

Why is this important? Matching the qualifications, the grade-level experience, and the knowledge base of a literacy coach with the job demands of any given school and grade level has become an important consideration. An informed choice of a literacy coach may mean the difference between effective or ineffective reform efforts. Coaching as a centerpiece in reform efforts has become increasingly popular in Florida and across the country, because it addresses the issue of how to improve teachers' instructional practice in regards to literacy.

One of the goals under NCLB has been to produce and recruit highly qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The use of literacy coaches as agents of school-wide literacy reform through on-site professional development efforts has been promoted by IRA (2004a) as a "powerful intervention with great potential." It is seen as one way to address the literacy crisis at the secondary level through classroom embedded

professional development (IRA, 2006; Marsh et al., 2008). One of the findings in a survey by IRA suggests there are possible negative effects upon the morale of teachers due to the NCLB requirements. Part of the reform goals driving the use of literacy coaches is to raise teacher efficacy and knowledge about how to teach reading and to address literacy issues in all classes. Unfortunately, qualified literacy coaches with significant training in reading and literacy are in short supply (Roller, 2006).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the IRA, as a world-wide organization for professionals in reading that promotes quality reading instruction, has addressed various issues dealing with the literacy coaching model throughout the last decade. A survey was sent out dealing with the impact of NCLB on IRA members (Roller, n.d.), an association with 75,000 members. A randomly selected list of 3,960 members received the survey. There was an eventual return rate of 39% after two mailings and 1,545 usable returned surveys from members within the United States were analyzed. Participating IRA members indicated their agreement with statements about NCLB on a 6-point Likert scale. Sections 1 through 7 focused upon respondent's opinions about the following: (a) the impact of NCLB on various groups (i.e., students, racial subgroups, educational professionals, community, etc.); (b) funding and legal issues, and curriculum and materials; (c) staffing and professional development; (d) required annual tests and achievement outcomes; (e) the perceptions of various stakeholders issues; (f) issues related to meeting AYP; and (g) a definition of a highly qualified teacher since NCLB required that by 2006 all teachers must be highly qualified.

The findings in the survey indicated that “[w]ith respect to the statement that teacher morale has improved, the response was definitely...overwhelmingly negative

(78.2%)” (Roller, n.d., p. 5). Since 62.4% of members reported that reading specialists were not being hired and 53.3% reported that reading coaches were not being hired, the findings in this survey did not support the premise that enough reading coaches/specialists were being hired. NCLB has encouraged the hiring and use of reading coaches/specialists, yet when asked whether NCLB provided sufficient funding in their school or district to achieve reading proficiency goals, “most participants (74.3%) disagreed with the statement” (Roller, n.d., p. 4).

This survey does not negate the idea that districts or schools are striving to hire literacy coaches and reading specialists, because the survey also suggested they may simply not have the funding sources. According to Marsh and colleagues (2008), the pressure to implement NCLB has created a climate where literacy coaches are being hired in record numbers to assist schools and teachers whose morale is being impacted while implementing reading intervention plans to meet AYP. Hiring the right coach has become critical as districts and schools move forward in their reform efforts. As addressed in the current study, the knowledge and beliefs about how to teach reading held by these coaches have become issues of importance. The following section will address the theoretical frameworks and research dealing with various relevant aspects of knowledge and beliefs.

### **Theoretical Frameworks for Study**

This study was grounded in the following research frameworks: (a) ontological and epistemological worldviews (Schraw & Olafson, 2002, 2008); (b) teacher knowledge and beliefs (Calderhead, 1996; Hoy et al., 2006; Kagan, 1992); (c) domain-specific

beliefs about knowledge (Alexander, 1992; Hofer, 2001; Shulman & Quinlan, 1996; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988); and (d) dominant theoretical learning models that influence reading research (Alexander & Fox, 2004). No one theoretical framework allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon addressed in this study. Each framework will be defined and described in turn, allowing for overlap and integration among the frameworks as needed for clarity as they relate to each other and to the phenomenon addressed in the study.

### **Ontological and Epistemological Worldviews: What are they?**

Defined broadly, epistemology is a branch of philosophy dealing with the theory or study of the nature, sources, or limits of knowledge. It often deals with knowledge justification, addressing the question of how one can determine if information or evidence is true or accurate. Without justification, information assumed to be true remains a belief rather than knowledge (Honderich, 2005). Within the context of this study, the literacy coaches self-reported their beliefs about education and literacy. In this study, these will be treated as their epistemological beliefs, their belief systems about teaching and learning (Kinchin, Hatzipanagos & Turner, 2009), and as an acknowledgment of their personal beliefs about their own reality.

Other areas of epistemology relevant to this study deal with sources of knowledge upon which individuals draw. Knowledge and beliefs often function in tandem. Beliefs are a mental state where propositions (something is either true or false) serve as reasons for action (Honderich, 2005). Motivational factors and reason also influence the direction



and control of such voluntary behavior. Reason is considered to be one of the four sources of knowledge (Dancy, 2005). For instance, do reading coaches draw on expert sources for information (i.e., expert researchers, Report of the NRP, etc.), or do they rely on popular publications designed for the easy consumption by teachers, or do they conduct their own embedded action research? Varied epistemological frames within educational research help to clarify such questions when dealing with beliefs. According to Honderich, those would include: (a) foundationalism, (b) coherentism, (c) reliabilism, and (d) social epistemologies.

Foundationalists and coherentists both rely on indubitable, internal beliefs as the basis for truthfulness. If additional sources of data support stated beliefs, then they are judged as true. A classical foundationalist would further claim that this belief does not have to be based upon a fact, but can be inferred from a belief about “how things seem to me just now” (Dancy, 2005, p. 263). Two questions would then need to be asked: Is that belief justified? Is the inference based upon that belief justified? If justification seems a comfortable stance, then that “belief about how things seem to me just now” could allow someone to reason that if things seem to me that way, they probably are that way. This stance may not require a look at internal consistency to make a reasoned justification about a belief, but it can be justified based upon the reliability (in their view) of the source of knowledge that leads to the belief. As stated earlier, reason is one of the four sources of knowledge or justified belief. Reason allows for inference, which allows an individual to move from old to new knowledge, and for the direct discovery of new truths (Dancy, 2005).

Coherentists go a step further and require that internal consistency exist among beliefs. In other words, this “belief is justified because my world is more coherent with it than it would be without it” (Dancy, 2005, p. 263). Within this frame, a new belief would be judged based upon how well it meshes with already established beliefs. The reliabilist frame supports external sources of information about beliefs to strengthen a judgment of truth, such as test scores that provide empirical evidence. Finally, social epistemologists also seek external justification; however, they seek it in the form of testimonies by established authorities or beliefs already established by a given community of practice, such as one espoused within an academic domain (Dancy, 2005).

Ontological issues complement these efforts to establish truth within an epistemological exercise to address knowledge formation. Within the domain of philosophy, ontology is a study of conceptions of reality and the nature of being, such as the study of the categories of things that exist or may exist in some domain. In essence, it is the study of what is, whether the named entity does, in fact, exist or not. In addition, we would seek to determine what attributes or categories make up that entity. Through the use of reason and logic these can be identified (Honderich, 2005). Questions dealing with ontological issues are: What is existence? How can you establish that some entity actually exists? What are the essential attributes, characteristics, or properties of a given entity? What are the relations or interrelations between an entity and its attributes, characteristics, or properties?

In my study dealing with the epistemological beliefs of literacy coaches, the entity that may exist is an abstract phenomenon that encompasses teacher’s beliefs about how

best to teach reading to students in a seventh grade reading intervention program. When belief becomes congruent with action, then it can directly influence the instructional choices about how to teach reading. The six district-level literacy coaches in this study designed and directed reform efforts as part of a common cohort. They each had differing beliefs about how to teach reading based upon knowledge formation that has occurred after years of personal, educational, and work experiences. Each coach has differing composite experiences that have led to expertise in teaching reading, which may also be quite different in form. In addition, each may have developed a different world viewpoint, an epistemological belief about learning and teaching, that influences how they teach reading; and each coach may have subsequently developed an individualized approach dealing with how to teach reading, an ontological entity that reflects their existing practice (i.e., actions) about how to teach reading. This reflects the intersection that is possible between a teacher's beliefs and behaviors (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002).

### **Research on Epistemological and Ontological Worldviews: How Do They Develop?**

Research on epistemological beliefs has built upon the research dealing with teacher beliefs and is currently beginning to address ontological issues (Alexander, 2007; Schraw & Olafson, 2008). As teachers acquire knowledge, they develop epistemological beliefs about knowledge and learning. This set of beliefs becomes an epistemological worldview, a knowledge formation that can solidify into an ontological worldview (Schraw & Olafson, 2008), a state of being that reflects who that teacher has become. In other words, to analogize with Descartes' "I think, therefore I am." It might be said, "I

believe, therefore I am.”

Shulman and Quinlan (1996), in their review of research dealing with the psychology of school subjects, stated that prior to the early 1970s research on teacher practice dealt primarily with identifying behavioral skills that could then be tied back to the learning outcomes of children. Backlash against this narrow behaviorist focus coupled with the advent of the cognitive revolution led to a focus on teachers’ cognition. Cognitive psychologists became interested in the intersection of knowledge, thought, and behavior (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). According to Hoy and colleagues (2006), there was a shift to studying teachers’ mental lives, which included “attitudes, perceptions, implicit theories, cognitions, reasoning, images, metaphors, and epistemological beliefs” (p. 715).

Packer and Goicoechea (2000), while examining the debate of whether sociocultural or constructivist perspectives about learning best described what was actually occurring during knowledge construction, came to the conclusion that these perspectives are complementary. They claimed:

We believe that the debate...can be furthered by extending the discussion beyond *epistemological* matters to include *ontological* concerns. Epistemology is the systematic consideration, in philosophy and elsewhere, of knowing: when knowledge is valid, what counts as truth, and so on. In this debate, learning is considered chiefly in terms of changes in knowing; we shall explore the notion that learning entails broader changes in being. (p. 227, italics in original)

Within this philosophical endeavor, they considered the ontological assumptions hidden in each of the sociocultural or constructivist perspectives, and they examined the outlook of earlier philosophers of modern sociocultural theory. They derived six key themes dealing with ontological transformation of self that emerged as they traced back to the

roots of these earlier theoretical discussions. These six themes were: (a) the person is constructed, (b) in a social context, (c) formed through practical activity, (d) and formed in relationships of desire and recognition, (e) that can split the person, and (f) that motivates a search for identity. They noted that these themes emerged “simultaneously with empirical investigation (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, p. 228).

Packer and Goicoechea (2000) also expanded on each theme. The first theme, *the person is constructed*, claims that a human person is made, not just born, and is a social and theoretical product of participation in a society. The second theme, *in a social context*, continues to define the first theme. This formation and transformation can only occur in a “social context that is constitutive of being” (p. 231). They noted that “not just our knowledge but we ourselves, and the objects we know, are constructed. What counts as real varies culturally and changes historically” (p. 232). Within the third theme, *formed through practical activity*, the authors conclude that “the activity of labor in which objects are transformed is also a process in which the individual is transformed” (p. 233). According to Piaget, the action of a child involves displacing objects in a preexisting, independent reality or context, which leads to the construction of knowledge of the world, but not the world itself. Theme four, *formed in relationships of desire and recognition*, identifies the transformative nature of the interaction that occurs in human relationships, which exist within social contexts. This transformation is the creation of self and is formed in a struggle to attain recognition through the machinations of desire, conflict and opposition. This self-consciousness emerges through the individual’s relationship with another, where “the powerful struggle with a more powerful other offers

one form of recognition” (p. 233). Theme five, *that can split the person*, recognizes how membership in a community leads to estrangement from self and leaves one divided. This struggle to find self in the context of social discourse and social practice leads to theme six, *that motivates the search for identity*.

According to Packer and Goicoechea (2000), the search for identity (a consciousness of self) becomes an effort to overcome internal divisions, which are created by membership in a community (p. 234). The paradox here is that identity is not just a matter of membership in a community of practice, but is achieved in practical activity, in desire, and in struggle as the individual is becoming—”striving to be what it is not (yet)” (p. 234). Therefore, gaining knowledge or understanding—epistemological belief—is an integral part of the ontological changes that stem from participation in a community. This ontological change transforms human nature into culture that can then be reflected in possible ways of being human and in the development of a dominant worldview. With this transformation is a solidifying of belief, the creation of principled practice (action), and the formation of an inner realm of mental deliberation based upon this internalization process. Therefore, belief and practice are acquired during the struggle to find an identity as the result of a membership in a community. These six themes provide an interpretive framework to study how a teacher develops belief and practice about how to teach reading.

### **Studies that Address Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions and Teacher Beliefs**

Schraw and Olafson (2008) have stated that beliefs involving both ontological and

epistemological assumptions have been measured across research studies over the last 30 years through quantifiable, self-report scales, interview techniques, open-ended questionnaires, and the discourse analysis of verbal explanations. Other researchers would add simulation methods (i.e., vignettes), ethnographies, case studies, and narratives by teachers (Calderhead, 1996). Studies on teachers' epistemological beliefs have used primarily interviews and vignettes to try to glean the worldviews of their participants. Few studies have examined the ontological beliefs of teachers.

Schraw and Olafson (2008) have claimed to be the only researchers to have examined simultaneously the epistemological and ontological worldviews held by a set of teachers. In a pilot study, they focused on the collective nature of worldviews rather than the individual nature of beliefs. They recruited 24 graduate student volunteers from a curriculum and instruction course they were teaching. The purpose of the study was to develop a measuring scale that would provide a "separate conceptual definition of epistemological and ontological beliefs" (p. 26) with the intent to articulate their differences in age, education level, gender, moral reasoning skills, and academic achievement. The researchers articulated four concerns about this measurement instrument.

First, there was a concern that "existing self-report instruments have not agreed on what should and can be measured by such instruments" (Schraw & Olafson, 2008, p. 29). Some researchers would argue that epistemological beliefs about knowledge are not related to each other, while others have argued that separate beliefs (Schommer-Aikins, 2002; Schommer, 1990, as cited in Schraw & Olafson, 2008) come under the venue of

broad knowledge constructions (Schraw & Olafson, 2002, as cited in Schraw & Olafson, 2008). Another issue is whether epistemological beliefs are domain-specific (Hofer, 2001) or domain general (Olafson & Schraw, 2006).

A second concern dealt with the low predictive validity between certain epistemological factors current used in ongoing research and various outcome variables such as academic achievement. Similar concerns have been expressed for reading (Schommer, 1993; Schraw & Olafson, 2008) The researchers speculated that this could be occurring due to the restrictive range in the epistemological measurements or perhaps sophisticated personal beliefs have little effect on day-to-day outcomes if beliefs have not solidified into consistent actions. They noted that all of these factors could possibly reduce the generalizability of the outcomes.

A third concern expressed doubts about the use of self-report instruments to try to measure narrowly defined epistemological beliefs. Conversely, holistic epistemological worldviews are thought to represent a more integrated set of beliefs about knowledge. Some studies that have assessed holistic epistemological worldviews were also based upon self-report measures, upon interviews where individuals analyzed complex problems (White, 2000, as cited in Schraw & Olafson, 2008), or respond to written vignettes to rate differing epistemological worldviews (Schraw & Olafson, 2002). According to Schraw and Olafson (2008), these studies have demonstrated a connection between holistic epistemological worldviews and argumentative reasoning and pre-service teachers' curriculum and instructional choices. They note that one potential advantage of self-reported beliefs is that "researchers or participants can identify a



multifaceted set of beliefs that describes the epistemological milieu that guides the individual's thought and professional choices" (p. 30). Schraw and Olafson (2002) found that using more narrowly defined measurements versus holistic measurements of epistemological beliefs can allow for cross-validation and are "not mutually exclusive" (Schraw & Olafson, 2008, p. 30).

A fourth concern addressed the exclusivity of dealing only with epistemological beliefs. Schraw and Olafson (2008) believed that ontological beliefs are also an issue to be considered. They defined ontological beliefs as "beliefs about the nature of reality" and they also claim that the "distinction between epistemological and ontological beliefs and/or worldviews is an extremely important one for both conceptual and methodological reasons" (p. 30). According to Schraw and Olafson, from a theoretical standpoint, philosophers of science have usually distinguished between the two. In addition, they believed that philosophers such as Kuhn (1962, as cited in Schraw & Olafson, 2008) and Popper (1959, as cited in Schraw & Olafson, 2008) had also recognized that each had influenced how researchers view theory. They go on to clarify that "from a methodological perspective, it is unclear how epistemological and ontological beliefs are related to one another, to student achievement, or to teachers' instructional practices" (p. 30). Having said that, Schraw and Olafson (2008) believed that striving to include both epistemological and ontological beliefs on the same measurement scale is crucial to understanding how they philosophically occur in tandem.

Schraw and Olafson's (2008) scale used in their study had a four-part grid where each quadrant represented a relationship between the worldviews listed as follows: (a)

ontological relativist and epistemological relativist (Quadrant 1); (b) epistemological relativist and ontological realist (Quadrant 2); (c) ontological realist and epistemological realist (Quadrant 3); and (d) epistemological realist and ontological relativist (Quadrant 4; see Appendix A for complete definitions).

As defined by Schraw and Olafson (2002, 2008), a realist believes in a fixed, core body of knowledge (i.e., universal truth) based on theory, partial empirical evidence or faith that is transmitted by an authority (i.e., teacher). Teachers from a realist position would most likely emphasize the role of deliberate practice to develop skills and a curriculum based upon a preestablished knowledge base. The relativist believes that we can never be totally sure that a phenomenon really exists, and if we can, then it is subject to change. Teachers from a relativist position would most likely endorse students' need to construct their own knowledge independently from what is known by the teacher.

Schraw and Olafson's (2008) preliminary findings suggested that different worldviews held by teachers may correspond to differences in other classroom factors (i.e., assessment and discipline practices, etc., p. 36). In addition, they observed a statistically significant positive relationship between the epistemological and ontological dimensions of the scale. This suggests that "realist beliefs [or relativist beliefs] on one dimension are positively associated with realist beliefs [or relativist beliefs] on the second dimension" (p. 36). Schraw and Olafson go on to admit that since the participants were experienced teachers selected from the same graduate course, the outcome may not be generalizable to other populations. However, this study hints at the possible relationship between the beliefs we espouse and the type of educators we will become. My study will

also look at the beliefs of secondary literacy coaches, the type of coaches they have become, and how they view the teaching of reading. Therefore, research that looks at how teachers develop their belief systems is important.

### **Development of Teachers' Knowledge and Belief**

Two detailed reviews covering the research on teachers' knowledge and beliefs over the past three decades were published in the *Handbook of Educational Psychology*. Calderhead's (1996) review placed this field of inquiry into historical context, reviewed research methodology common to this topic, and then focused on research from 1985-1995. He contends that across the past two decades, research in this field of inquiry has progressed through "three distinct stages" (p. 710). They are: (a) teachers' decision making; (b) teachers' perceptions, attributions, thinking, judgments, reflections, evaluations, and routines; and (c) teachers' knowledge and beliefs.

A second review by Hoy and colleagues (2006) was organized "in keeping with an ecological model [i.e., Bronfenbrenner] that suggests individuals are embedded in and significantly affected by several nested ecosystems" (p. 717), which included the contexts of classrooms and students, state and national policies, and cultural values and norms. Both reviews pointed to the complexity of teachers' knowledge and belief structures, the role of context and outside experiences in shaping those structures, and the need for research on the diverse processes of knowledge growth involved in learning to teach.

In a third review of research by Kagan (1992) on teacher beliefs from an earlier source, a group of researchers looked at teachers' content-specific beliefs. The studies

Kagan highlighted suggested the following: (a) that the professional literature read by teachers influenced their goals and instructional choices, (b) that their classroom instruction matched a teacher's beliefs, (c) that classroom instruction changed when teacher's changed their orientation towards teaching, (d) that teachers will change new curriculum to match their beliefs, and (e) that teacher beliefs are related to student achievement. One study dealt with teachers' understanding of reading instruction. The findings in the study suggested that the more complex a teacher's understanding of reading instruction, the greater the use of responsive elaborations during instruction.

Overall, Kagan (1992) contended that these findings were consistent with two broad generalizations. First, teacher beliefs are fairly stable and resistant to change. Second, teacher beliefs are often associated with a congruent style of teaching that is noticeable across differing domains and grade levels. Since teacher beliefs are perhaps resistant to change and consistent across domains, the same may be true about literacy coaches. If that is true, then once reading coaches have developed their personal educational philosophy with a perspective on how to teach reading, then such beliefs might be resistant to change even if the literacy coaches move across domains and between grades as they execute their jobs.

In the literature on learning to teach, three forms of experience influence the development of beliefs and knowledge about teaching: (a) personal experience, (b) experience with schooling and instruction, and (c) experience with formal education (Richardson, 1996). Experience with formal education includes domain-specific knowledge (Shulman & Quinlan, 1996).

### **Domain-Specific Beliefs About Knowledge**

Alexander (1992) has claimed that domain knowledge is “a realm of knowledge that individuals have about a particular field of study” (p. 34). It includes procedural (how), declarative (what), and conditional (when and where) knowledge. Alexander called domain knowledge “a specialized instance of an individual’s prior knowledge” (p. 35) developed during a specific course of study. Domains vary since some are academically oriented, problem or task (defined or ill defined) oriented, and more or less structured with formal or informal rules. This domain knowledge creates a disciplinary perspective or “way of knowing” that becomes the lens through which that individual may view the world, which may influence both the education courses taken in a teacher preparation college and the teachers they eventually become.

Epistemological beliefs about knowledge and the ontological assumptions that develop as a way of knowing differ across various content disciplines or domains (Hofer, 2001; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988). According to Alexander and Dochy (1995), “It is likely that particular communities of adults...share certain views of knowing and believing, views that arise from similar cultural or social backgrounds or educational experiences” (p. 224). As part of the educational experience, college students become immersed in the ways of knowing within an academic discipline or domain such as mathematics, science, English or the various domains in social science as they pursue their undergraduate degree.

In the context of a large research project, Wilson and Wineburg (1988) noticed the role disciplinary perspectives were having upon four novice social studies teachers’

conceptions on how to teach history. These teachers came from a variety of discipline majors within the social sciences (i.e., political science, history, anthropology, and American studies). The researchers claimed, “While we watched these people learn to teach, it became apparent to us early on that their disciplinary backgrounds wielded a strong—and often decisive—influence on their instructional decisions” (p. 526). They speculated that one of the reasons the influence was so strong was the teachers’ lack of knowledge about history (e.g., not knowing that history is as much interpretation as fact).

Results from this study suggested that the way of knowing learned in a dominant discipline went on to influence the students’ future roles as teachers and, therefore, literacy coaches. The findings further suggested that personal epistemologies and/or ways of knowing in a discipline can be developed in communities of practice where that group of individuals may provide an opportunity for “a cognitive apprenticeship in which students are socialized to the values and beliefs of [that] academic enterprise” (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997, p. 124). However, what happens when one of these domain-specific “ways of knowing” combines with reading theory through a common theoretical lens? Is it possible it creates differing approaches and perspectives on how to teach reading that are linked to a theoretical perspective internalized from an earlier academic enterprise? Epistemology is a way of knowing, but as we ontologically change, a dominant worldview is created that underpins all that we are and how we view current and new knowledge.

Cunningham and Fitzgerald (1996) articulated in the form of questions seven main issues embedded in three overriding concerns dealing with epistemology. They then

used these tools to engage in epistemological inquiry as they examined two theories of knowledge in differing views of the reading process. They claimed that “epistemological terms such as constructivism, critical theory, [etc.]...now abound in the reading field” (p. 36). They contend it is important to understand our own and others’ theoretical perspectives or epistemological worldviews in order to “be better at what we do” and to understand “how they influence what people believe and how they act” (p. 36). They have asserted that reading education itself is a “way of knowing” that can be influenced by differing worldviews. Based upon that premise, they also noted:

Reading debates that are restricted to discussions of content or methods are apt to mask the real disagreements.... For example, differences between advocates of whole language and systematic phonics instruction may reflect distinct epistemologies that prevent the camps from even agreeing on what the differences are. (p. 39)

This illustrates the importance of reading coaches’ ability to understand their own beliefs about reading and to also be aware of the possibility of encountering differing beliefs held by others.

Such an inability to see and understand the views of others has been called incommensurability across paradigms. First introduced to the general public by Kuhn in his 1962 publication, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, words such as paradigm and incommensurability have become more commonly known and used (Fuller, 2004). *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* (Agnes & Guralnik, 2002) defined paradigm as “an overall concept accepted by most people in an intellectual community...because of its effectiveness in explaining complex process [and] ideas...” (p. 1043). This same dictionary defines incommensurability as “without a common standard of comparison”

(p. 723). According to Fuller (2004), when used together paradigmatic incommensurability denotes what Kuhn called “intellectual bilingualism” (p. 23). Fuller noted that “for Kuhn, the ability to understand the world through two paradigm with radically different—or ‘incommensurable’—assumptions [was] a skill [Kuhn] compared to bilingualism...” (p. 23). Kuhn did not view scientists as being mentally flexible and able to shift between paradigms, because it was not part of their normal training. Fuller made the point that “for Kuhn, a paradigm succeeds by monopolizing the means of intellectual reproduction” and that “when paradigms change the world changes” which means that “the world appears differently under the conceptual framework associated with a new paradigm” (p. 23).

Hruby (2009) made the same observation about paradigmatic tensions when discussing how the field of neuroscience has influenced our knowledge base as it relates to the reading process. He acknowledged a need to review and explore the “topical, paradigmatic, and philosophical differences between mainstream scholarship in reading and literacy education and the scholarship of the neurosciences...” (p. 189). In an effort to dispel false assumptions, Hruby claimed that potentially misleading metaphors that provide assumptions about the functionality of the brain (e.g., brain as computer; neurons as wires) could provide incommensurable background knowledge that would interfere with understanding his argument. Such assumptions would interfere with a literacy educator’s ability to fully grasp the neuroscience involved. He clarified his point with the following observation:

Scholars within various fields and disciplines often hold to favorable metaphors to consolidate sets of assumptions about their targeted phenomena. Just as some



cognitive reading researchers might refer to human beings as if they were information processing machines...or as some sociolinguistic literacy scholars might posit signification as situated, semiotic arbitraries bounding a cultural landscape...so, too, naturalistically-informed reading theorists would need have their preferred analogies. (p.190)

Hruby (2009) made the point that neuroscience is also not a monolithic domain, but pursues its scientific agenda within such diverse fields as molecular, behavioral, developmental, and cognitive neurosciences to name just a few. Therefore, he claimed, “There are many lenses, foci, fields, and sub-disciplines by which to parse the reading brain” (p. 192). Linking his observations back to my study, Hruby had realized that epistemological and ontological assumptions underlie such theories of mental structure. He acknowledged that such assumptions create tensions within the field of neuroscience, within the field of social science (e.g., literacy education) and across both of these fields. Such paradigmatic tensions also exist between teachers or literacy coaches as they work together to make instructional and curricular decisions.

### **The Link Between Teachers’ Beliefs and Their Influence upon Practice**

Though epistemological and ontological issues are separate philosophical endeavors, they can blend almost imperceptibly when researchers are trying to ascertain a teacher’s beliefs (Schraw & Olafson, 2008). Buehl and Alexander (2006) have noted that “over the last quarter century, researchers have come to appreciate that knowledge is not a unitary construct but is multidimensional and multilayered” (p. 29). They have also noted that it is a “messy” but essential endeavor since beliefs impact both content and pedagogical knowledge that “may influence professional development and classroom

practice” (p. 39). They argue that it is for this reason that the beliefs of teachers, and by extension literacy coaches, should be examined more closely. In this study, I will define beliefs in line with Richardson (1996) as “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (p. 103).

Teacher belief is a form of personal knowledge that is “generally defined as pre- or inservice teachers’ implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter they teach” (Kagan, 1992, p. 66). Calderhead (1996) contends that with the advent of the cognitive revolution, research on teacher’s cognition began. A component of that research effort to study the mental life of teachers’ was to try to accurately ascertain their knowledge and beliefs. Hoy and colleagues (2006) stated in their review, “The study of belief and knowledge about teaching not only is interdisciplinary, but is one field characterized by paradigmatic tensions” (p. 73). Hruby (2009) alluded to this when he made reference to incommensurable background knowledge, and Kuhn when he referred to the intellectual bilingualism needed to reconcile opposing paradigms (Fuller, 2004). These paradigmatic tensions also suggest that both the domain-specific knowledge and beliefs and the theoretical learning models that teachers espouse, whether consciously or unconsciously, may very well have an influence upon how they teach.

Personal epistemological beliefs deal with questions of how individuals come to know something, the theories and beliefs they hold about that knowing, and how such knowing influences their cognitive thinking and reasoning (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Buehl and Alexander (2001) suggested that such beliefs are contextualized within specific domains of knowledge. A domain is an area of knowledge, an academic

discipline, such as history, English, reading, psychology, and so forth (Alexander, 1998b). Pearson's (2004) review on the reading wars has continued to remind us that reading as a domain has been made up of differing perspectives. What we do not know is how these multiple perspectives are being played out in the classroom and in teachers' lives. What we do know is that these perspectives on how to teach reading are often based on general theories of learning and on domain specific theories about reading education that are closely linked to an educator's behaviors and practices (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

However, Wilcox-Herzog (2002) might have disagreed and claimed that ascertaining the link between teacher's beliefs and their actions may be more complex than that. She asserted, "Although, it is commonly thought that teachers' beliefs may be related to their interactions with children...the evidence is inconclusive" (p. 82). She went on to claim that researchers often fail to take into account variables or factors that might influence and make difficult to ascertain correctly that link between beliefs and actions by teachers. Three factors noted by Wilcox-Herzog, and of interest to my study, were: (a) situation factors, (b) dichotomous comparisons, and (c) strength of training.

Situation factors refer to "how free teachers feel to act upon their beliefs" (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002, p. 84). Teachers often have little control over how reading is taught if a scripted, commercial program has been adopted by the school or district. In addition, teachers are often required to restrict their instruction to a focus on basic skills mastery. Constraints upon teachers' practice may come from administrators, colleagues or parents, thereby limiting teachers' ability to enact their personal beliefs about

education in general or more specifically about how best to teach reading.

Dichotomous comparisons refer to the extremity of beliefs and how that impacts the strength of the belief-action relationship. To support this claim, Wilcoz-Herzog (2002) cited a study by Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, and Hernandez that examined the belief-action relationship for early childhood educators. The two major objectives of their study were to develop a questionnaire for developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education and to use this questionnaire for obtaining information regarding kindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices. *The Teacher Questionnaire* contained two subscales (*Teachers' Beliefs Scale* and *Instructional Activities Scale*) and was constructed and administered to 113 kindergarten teachers. Positive correlations were found between developmentally appropriate beliefs and activities as well as between developmentally inappropriate beliefs and activities. The teachers with higher ratings on developmentally appropriate beliefs felt more in control of planning and implementation of instruction than did the teachers with lower ratings. The researchers hypothesized that "extremity of belief can also impact the strength of the belief-action relationship" (Wilson-Herzog, 2002, p. 84). In other words, teachers with extreme (intense, uncompromising) beliefs about teaching such as extremely child-centered or extremely teacher-centered are more likely to express their beliefs and actions with congruity. "[W]hen teachers are educated within a strong theoretical framework there might be more congruency between their beliefs and behaviors" (Wilson-Herzog, 2002, p. 84). They concluded that as a researcher, if you take a cross-section of teachers, some may not have been trained within a particular framework that others were, so then you may find inconsistency between

teacher's beliefs and actions across the group.

Finally, strength of training is another factor that can affect the consistency between teacher's beliefs and actions. When beliefs about teaching are blended with other beliefs dealing with childhood development, domain knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge which were taught in a program that embraces a strong theoretical framework, there will be a strong consistency between beliefs and actions. One would expect to observe a greater mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and their actions if they had little theoretical training that informed their teaching or if their training programs did not adhere to a strong theoretical framework (e.g., behaviorism, information/cognitive processing, constructivism; and social/cultural learning theories; Wilson-Herzog, 2002).

#### **Four Dominant Theoretical Models of Learning**

Theoretical models of learning are worldviews that have influenced how we view learning and instruction (Driscoll, 2005) and subsequently the teaching of reading (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). There are many frames that exist within each of these broad learning models (Driscoll, 2005; Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, & Barr, 2000; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). These models should be used conservatively as a possible lens during analysis of data in this current study on literacy coaches in order to avoid going beyond the limitations of this study and what it can reasonably be expected to describe. Therefore, the working definition for each dominant theoretical learning model that follows will be kept somewhat narrow and simplified to reduce its complexity. This is necessary because each definition of a learning model will be used as a lens to

analyze certain aspects of the phenomenon being described and observed as part of this study.

According to Driscoll (2005), four dominant theoretical models of learning are: (a) behaviorism, (b) cognitive/information processing, (c) constructivism, and (d) sociocultural learning. Educators have been influenced by these learning models whether they realize it or not. In addition, according to Kagan's (1992) pivotal review of research on teacher's beliefs, "most of a teacher's professional knowledge can be regarded more accurately as belief" primarily because teaching is "characterized by an almost total absence of truths, unimpeachably 'correct' answers to the most important issues" (p. 73).

### **Definitions of Dominant Theoretical Worldviews Influencing Reading Instruction**

Alexander and Fox (2004) compiled an historical analysis of the past 50 years of reading research. They surveyed eras in reading research and practice in order to describe "the views and principles of learning that are characteristic" of each era (p. 33). They claim that "[t]he history of reading research reveals a shifting emphasis on the physical, psychological, and sociological...dimensions, [and] each era weighs each dimension differently...while reading invariably entails human physiology, psychological processing, and social engagement; it is these factors' relative importance that becomes a defining feature for each era" (p. 57).

Each era was dominated by one or a blending of more than one broad theoretical learning model that have been placed in italics in the following list of eras by Alexander and Fox (2004): (a) The Era of Conditional Learning (1950-1965) *behaviorism*; (b) The

Era of Natural Learning (1966-1975) *psycholinguistics: reading as natural process/constructivism*; (c) The Era of Information Processing (1976-1985) *cognitive/information processing/constructivism*; (d) The Era of Sociocultural Learning (1986-1995) *sociocultural*; and (e) The Era of Engaged Learning (1996-Present) *cognitive/sociocultural/developmental*. They contended that throughout these 50 years, each era has developed a broad theoretical perspective that has dominated the field of reading research. They were careful to clarify that “the boundaries and distinctions we draw between these eras are approximations of permeable and overlapping periods of research and practice” (p. 33). Each era’s guiding view and resulting principles will be reviewed.

**The era of conditional learning (1950-1965).** The prevailing research orientation of this era was Skinnerian behaviorism. This Cold War era was dominated by the space race and a growing awareness that children were experiencing difficulty learning to read (Ruddel, 2002). Behaviorist approaches to both research and practice addressed the processes and skills of learning to read. The emphasis was placed on defining the processes and skills needed to learn to read and their constituent parts.

Behaviorism is a learning theory that recognizes learning as an observable (i.e., measurable) change in behavior by a student. From this perspective, learning would result from “the repeated and controlled stimulation of the environment” (Alexander & Fox, 2004, p. 35). From this era came research dealing with the sub-skills required for reading. This led to instruction that would be broken down into small, successive steps (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Phonics instruction was emphasized because it lent itself to deliberate

and planned repetition. Lesson designs often centered upon direct instruction (DI), a behaviorist instructional design model often includes: (a) scripted lesson plans (everything is precisely written out for the instructor to follow); (b) signal-based teaching (a visual or auditory prompt such as a hand drop); (c) skills mastery focus (content and skills that represent chained behaviors such as small instructional pieces and signaled choral responding); and (d) frequent testing with corrective feedback (a quiz, assignment or test with each item related to one or more of the objectives; Huitt, Monetti, & Hummell, 2009).

Reading education from this perspective would be viewed as a complex task with component parts. Emphasis would be placed on the mastery of discrete skills, usually in a designated order, through practice and review. In the district program used in the opening vignette in Chapter 1 of my study, *Morphographic Spelling* and *Six-Minute Solution* (fluency program) focused on discrete skill development that was independent of the contextual nature of authentic texts. Each of these commercial programs employed the use of repetitive practicing of discrete skills and the learning of process rules. The target population most often associated with needing direct instruction are struggling readers who test at the bottom third of a class, located in both regular and special education settings.

**The era of natural learning (1966-1975).** Dissatisfaction with behaviorism and a sparked interest in the learner and learning processes through advances in neurology and artificial intelligence research (Ericsson & Smith, 1991, cited by Alexander & Fox, 2004) dominated this era. This turned the focus from the environment to the human mind.



Linguists and psycholinguistics, influenced by the work of Chomsky (1957, 1975, 1998, 2002), began to view oral language as hard-wired in the brain from birth. This assumption was then applied by some to reading, leading to a view of reading as a natural process. Alexander and Fox claimed, “It was assumed that human beings were biologically programmed to acquire language under favorable conditions” (p. 38). This view of language as inherently built into our biological systems was then applied to oral language and then to language in print (Goodman & Goodman, 1980).

Research investigated the mental processes and structures of readers, casting the learner in the role of an active participant who constructed his/her own meaning from text or other sources of information. According to Alexander and Fox (2004), “Learning to read was not so much a matter of being taught, but a matter of arriving at facility as a result of predisposition to seek understanding within a language-rich environment” (p. 39). In reading, this would involve internal processes that are often unobservable, the use of hypothesis testing by the learner, and the application of inference to fill in meaning that is not explicitly stated in text (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). One of the most influential movements in reading instruction that came out of the constructivist perspective was whole language.

**The era of information processing (1976-1985).** The cognitive revolution that began in the 1950s was also a counter-revolution to behaviorism that involved psychology, anthropology, linguistics, computer science, and neuroscience (Miller, 2003). The information processing perspective is also cognitive in nature and is a theoretical orientation that espouses the idea that learning uses mental tools to make

sense of the world (Alexander & Fox, 2004; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Within this perspective, learning is an internal mental activity involving thinking, memory, and problem solving that cannot be directly observed.

The cognitive/information processing theoretical perspective dominated this era of reading research (Alexander & Fox, 2004) and focused upon knowledge construction, especially the construct of prior knowledge. As noted by Alexander and Fox, “Text-based learning was about knowledge, which was organized and stored within the individual mind, and resulted from the input, interpretation, organization, retention, and out-pur of information the individual’s environment” (p. 42). Research and writings on text-based factors such as story grammar, text cohesion, text structure and text genres grew in influence. Expert and novice readers were studied to investigate how knowledge was organized in the mind. Cognition-related constructs such as schema theory came from this period, following this era’s emphasis upon the individual mind, which challenged the notion “that only one interpretation would result from reading text” (Alexander & Fox, 2004, p. 43). This body of research allowed for the reasonable conclusion that students’ knowledge could be changed through explicit instruction, direct intervention, and training through general text-processing strategies such as summarization, self-questioning, mapping, and predicting (Alexander & Fox, 2004, p. 43).

Most cognitive/information processing theories are also constructivist theories. The idea has been acknowledged by some, however, that constructivism has encompassed “no single constructivist theory of instruction” (Driscoll, 2005, p. 386). Learning from a constructivist perspective would occur “when learners integrate new

knowledge with existing knowledge” (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 47) during active engagement in the learning process. In reading, this would involve internal processes that are often unobservable, the use of hypothesis testing by the learner, and the application of inference to fill in meaning that is not explicitly stated in text (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). One of the most influential movements in reading instruction that came out of the constructivist perspective was whole language. According to Pearson (2004), this was a “Deweyian-inspired, child-centered pedagogy” that included an integrated language-arts instruction approach with literature-based reading and process writing (p. 217).

Constructivism, in general, has privileged teachers in their role as curriculum decision makers (Pearson, 2004). Instructional strategies in a whole language classroom would involve high quality literature, thematic instruction, meaningful literacy activities, social learning experiences, and authentic assessments (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Models from the constructivist perspective have suggested both how the reading process works and how that process can be broken down. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies have been developed, often blending cognitive, information processing, and constructivist theoretical models. When taught explicitly, these strategies are believed to assist most students in becoming strategic readers and improving their reading comprehension (Sweet & Snow, 2003). Alexander and Fox (2004) stated, “Within cognitive psychology, the earlier information-processing approach was replaced by a constructivist theory that acknowledged learning as individualistic...” (p. 45).

**The era of sociocultural learning (1986-1995).** Sociocultural learning theory, with its emphasis upon group knowledge, learning communities and the collaborative

experience, was the dominant perspective in this era. Alexander and Fox (2004) claimed, “Literacy research now sought to capture the shared understanding of the *many*, rather than the private knowledge of the *one*...the goal became the description of the ‘*ways of knowing*’ unique to particular social, cultural, and educational groups” (p. 46; italics included). Knowledge was no longer seen as a singular construct, but “a reconciliation of schooled and unschooled knowledge (Gardner, 1991)” (Alexander & Fox, 2004, p. 47). Unschooled was seen as informal and school was seen as formal sources of knowledge (Alexander, 1992; Vygotsky, 1934/1978). Sociocultural learning theory dealt with issues surrounding knowledge’s multiple forms, what force that knowledge might have upon learning, development and conceptual change, and the impact of social and contextuality contributions to knowledge. Schooling was viewed as a social and cultural phenomenon, and through this perspective as a social institution “centered around the interactions of students and teachers” (Alexander & Fox, 2004, p. 48).

Therefore, social learning perspectives emphasize the social aspects of learning that involves language, culture, interaction, context and power. This has had significant influence on views about teaching, learning, and instruction. Sweet and Snow (2003) viewed the process involved in reading comprehension as an interaction among the *reader*, the *text*, and the *activity* involved in comprehending a piece of text. They claim that “[t]hese three dimensions [or variables] define a phenomenon that occurs within a larger socialcultural context...that both shapes and is shaped by the reader” (p. 2). These instructional procedures encourage optimal social exchanges in the classroom. For example, partner reading is supposed to allow a more competent student or adult to

scaffold or provide assistance during learning episodes (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Therefore, reading as a cognitive process can also have a social component when it is situated in a group activity where “peers act as a supportive tool for learners as they construct knowledge” (Driscoll, 2005, p. 257). Teachers act as facilitators who provide instructional scaffolding where students over time could develop self-directed learning (Alexander & Fox, 2004).

Sociocultural learning theory also led to research on the domain-specificity of knowledge (Alexander, 1998a). Knowledge across domains differs significantly and affect the inscription, perception, communication, and learning within each domain (Alexander, 1998a). Domains have differing epistemological characteristics, often called structures. Differing beliefs about these structures are held by teachers and students and becomes domain specific knowledge (Alexander & Dochy, 1995), including the certainty about each domain’s central concepts or fundamental principles (Schommer, 1990, 1993).

**The era of engaged learning (1996-Present).** The principles from this era articulated by Alexander and Fox (2004) that guide current reading research focus on the complexity and multidimensional nature of reading, the transformation of reading by technology, and the need for a developmental theory of reading. The information age had begun to influence reading research, so what dominated this era were changing perceptions about the text, the reader, and the reading process (Alexander & Fox, 2004). With the advent of hypermedia and hypertext (i.e., internet browsing on the World Wide Web), research began to focus on the effects these alternative, non-traditional and non-

linear texts might have upon students' learning. Discourse within the classroom began to incorporate both traditional and these alternative forms of text (Alexander & Jetton, 2003).

Shifting views about readers occurred as motivation research began to expand into topics dealing with learners' interest, goals, self-efficacy, beliefs, student's self-regulation and active participation, and text-based learning. Alexander and Fox (2004) also noted, "One of the characteristics of this motivational research was its social cognitive perspective on student learning" (p. 51). Finally, the literacy research community's view of reading shifted to a developmental model that went beyond the reading acquisition process to the changing nature of reading as it gains in complexity as individuals continue their academic development (Alexander, 2007; Alexander & Fox, 2004). This shifted the focus from the younger children learning to read to readers of all ages.

This era pertains directly to student engagement, which involves meaningful and goal-directed participation with text-based learning where the learner is conceptualized as a motivated knowledge seeker. This is predicated upon the belief that students' comprehension involves the integration of cognitive and motivational forces to effectively learn from text as they actively and willfully construct knowledge (Alexander & Fox, 2004, p. 52).

The earlier eras maintained a research focus often influenced by dominant learning theories such as behaviorism, cognitive/informational processing, constructivism, and sociocultural learning. During the era of engaged learning, while it is

still understood that the learner functions within a sociocultural context, the emphasis has shifted attention once again to the individual's efforts to construct a meaningful body of knowledge in both their personal and social venues (Alexander & Fox, 2004, p. 52).

Strategic processing by the individual learner, with its emphasis upon reflection, choice, and deliberate strategy use has grown with the new view of the engaged learner (Pressley, 2002). An integration of the forces affecting reading as articulated in earlier eras (i.e., behaviorist, constructivist, cognitive, informational processing and sociocultural learning theories) have now melded during the current era into a view or perspective that these forces are all actively and interactively involved in reading development (Alexander & Jetton, 2003). Alexander and Fox (2004) concluded, "Finally, the view of learners as actively engaged allows for a developmental perspective on reading...[students] continue to grow as readers as their linguistic knowledge, subject-matter knowledge, strategic capabilities and their motivations expand and mature (Alexander, 1997)" (p. 53).

The dominant learning models that emerged in the historical analysis by Alexander and Fox (2004) have influenced how we view the teaching of reading. These perspectives include: (a) behaviorism, (b) cognitive/information processing, (c) constructivism, and (d) sociocultural learning. All four of these philosophical and theoretical orientations are in operation today influencing reading research, educational policy decisions, and literacy instruction.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

Literacy coaches are being hired at the secondary level across the nation (Clark et

al., 2006; Marsh et al., 2008). A literacy crisis at the secondary level has generated a need for reading reforms that result in improved literacy skill development for all students (Bean, 2004). The research literature dealing with literacy coaches has dealt primarily with describing their roles and responsibilities (Allington, 2006; Bean, 2004; Dole, 2004; Tatum, 2004; Toll, 2004). The IRA (2006) has acknowledged a need for current research that looks at the educational and work experience backgrounds of reading coaches. Such research should also study how literacy coaches develop their personal perspective on how to teach reading.

Gradually, literacy specialists at all levels of reading instruction have been moving towards a literacy coaching model (Henwood, 1999). Though research on literacy coaches is limited, their role in the professional development of teachers is widely advocated in the professional literature (Dole, 2004; Henwood, 1999). There is growing consensus that reading coaches play an important role in the creation of school-wide reading programs that meet the needs of all students (Bean et al., 2003). At this level of professional development activity, an effective reading coach's potential for being influential in a school or district grows. Therefore, the knowledge, beliefs, and perspectives on reading education that reading coaches may bring to that task becomes increasingly important.

My study, dealing with the epistemological beliefs of literacy coaches, was a comparative analysis across multiple case studies. Issues and themes have emerged that show common patterns. The six participants were district-level literacy coaches who designed and directed a seventh grade reading intervention reform effort. The premise of



my research has been that each literacy coach holds differing beliefs about how to teach reading based upon knowledge formation that had occurred after years of personal, educational, and work-related experiences. They had differing composite experiences that ultimately had led to expertise in teaching reading that may have seemed similar, but in reality were quite different in form. In addition, each coach may have developed a different worldview, an epistemological belief, about learning and teaching that has influenced how they came to view the teaching of reading. Finally, each literacy coach may have subsequently developed an individualized approach dealing with how to teach reading, an ontological entity that reflects their existing practice (i.e., actions) about how to teach reading. When belief becomes congruent with action, then it can directly influence the instructional choices about how to teach reading. This reflects the intersection that is possible between teachers' beliefs and knowledge construction and their behaviors or instructional practice (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002).

The entity being studied has emerged from the individualized development of personal beliefs and knowledge construction. In this case, the entity deals with how best to teach reading to students in a seventh grade reading intervention program. In addition to general beliefs about teaching and knowledge, literacy coaches may have developed domain-specific beliefs that stem from educational and work experience backgrounds that may have included any combination of the following influences: (a) secondary/content area discipline, (b) special education, (c) elementary education, (d) English education, (e) administrative experience, (f) reading specialist certification, and (g) ESL certification. In addition, the literacy coaches may have been influenced by personal experiences outside

of teaching. Finally, each coach will have experienced differing professional and formal education experiences. This suggests a wide range of potential perspectives that could be held by literacy coaches as they work at the middle and secondary school levels. My study will attempt to describe and analyze the knowledge and beliefs about how to teach reading that these six literacy coaches brought to their jobs and how these developed.

My research has revolved around an attempt to ascertain literacy coaches' ontological and epistemological worldviews, their perspective on reading education, and how this had influenced their instructional choices. In other words, how might literacy coaches' knowledge and beliefs influence their instructional and staff development choices? In an effort to address this question, I focused on the following questions: (a) How did each participant become a literacy coach?; (b) What are each literacy coach's ontological and epistemological worldviews (i.e., perspectives) about knowledge, teaching and learning?; (c) How might these perspectives relate to dominant learning models in education?; (d) What staff development and instructional choices are being made by each coach?; and (e) How might perspective have influenced these choices?

The ultimate goal of my research study has been to look at any connections between the perspectives literacy coaches bring to their jobs and how this might inform their instructional and staff development choices about how to teach reading at the secondary level. The district level literacy coach in the opening scenario was originally a special education teacher. Based upon the instructional choices she made as a district-level reading coach, she may have brought her special education perspective about teaching reading to her job where her primary responsibility was then to act as a literacy

consultant to administrators and teachers, including those teaching in regular education classroom.

Personally, I knew nothing else of her background except that she once taught special education. I can only comment that as a teacher at that school, I had to use instructional approaches for building fluency and teaching spelling skills that I felt were not appropriate to a regular classroom setting of heterogeneous students. That experience led me to ask myself the question, “How did this reading coach develop her view about how to teach reading at the secondary level?” To address the various issues of how she might have developed that view, I had to review research literature on ontology, epistemology, teacher beliefs, and the general learning models that have influenced reading education. In addition, I have read about the reading coaching model and the recent phenomenon of employing that model at the secondary (middle and high school) level to support school-wide reading intervention reform endeavors.

As part of an earlier study, Schraw and Olafson (2002) have also articulated a more simplified set of three epistemological worldviews held by teachers: (a) realist, (b) contextualist, and (c) relativist. They define an epistemological worldview as “a set of beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition that influences the way teachers think and make instructional choices” (p. 99). They interviewed 24 teachers, nonrandomly selected, during a graduate course in curriculum theory. Twenty-two of the teachers were female and two were male. Three of the participants were substitute teachers (K-8), 18 taught elementary, and three taught middle school. They used a variety of self-report measures (quantitative) and interviews (qualitative) to collect data. Their

findings suggested that teachers, and by extension literacy coaches, may be unaware of their true beliefs and how these affect their instructional choices. Each of these of three epistemological worldviews held by teachers are grounded in four dominant theoretical learning models: (a) behaviorism, (b) cognitive/information processing, (c) constructivism, and (d) sociocultural learning (Driscoll, 2005). These learning models have influenced education broadly across all areas of education including frameworks that deal with the learning and teaching of reading.

First, teachers in this study (Schraw & Olafson, 2002) were able to articulate their epistemological beliefs, but were much less aware of their worldviews. In other words, they were unaware of how their worldviews might affect their practice. Second, according to the researchers, the three categories used were enough to understand the teachers' beliefs, since worldviews more narrowly fall into only a few categories. Third, there were important differences between what the teachers said and what they stated they did. They often stated a belief in the student-centered, contextualist view, but more often stated the use of teacher-centered, transmission practices more common to the realist view. The researchers suggested that this could be due to a lack of understanding by the teachers' of what their views looked like in practice; or, it could be due to time limits, mandated curriculum and/or the constraints imposed by standardized tests. They noticed that teachers were aware of their individual beliefs, but they usually were not aware how those collective beliefs fit into one or more general worldviews. Educators often incorporate some aspect of these learning models into their personal educational philosophy whether they can identify them or not (Schraw & Olafson, 2002, 2008).

As an academic domain (Alexander, 1992), there is pedagogical content knowledge (Borko & Putnam, 1996) that is unique to the teaching of reading. The IRA recommends that reading specialists and literacy coaches have advanced certification in reading or a master's degree in literacy (IRA, 2006), though most do not (Roller, 2006). Even if they have this training, their worldviews about learning may not have changed substantially, since conceptual change can be difficult once a worldview has become established (Schraw & Olafson, 2002). Such a perspective will then become a lens through which future educational experiences can be interpreted. If the perspective has become conceptually rigid, then accommodation to new information can become impaired.

This suggests that when reading theory is taught at a later date (e.g., to pre-service or in-service teachers or future reading coaches), the knowledge beliefs (including theoretical orientations) brought to the classroom by those teachers may influence how they conceptualize the teaching of reading (Wilson & Wineburg, 1988). This could lead to a wide variety of perspectives about the most effective way to teach reading to be held by literacy coaches.

The research literature on expert-novice differences indicates that experts excel in their particular domains (Alexander, 1992) and areas of concentrated expertise. If literacy coaches come from differing domains, develop different knowledge beliefs, and honor differing theoretical models about the teaching of reading, then while a coach may be an expert in emergent or elementary literacy, he/she may not be an expert in adolescent literacy. In addition, expertise in a domain could result in what Schraw (2006) called

“conceptual rigidity” (p. 259), which makes it difficult to consider others’ points of view. These issues become increasingly significant since the primary role of a literacy coach is becoming that of professional development.

Ontological worldviews, the nature of reality or being, in reading education would deal primarily with reality of how teachers, and by extension literacy coaches, become who they are. To study this issue would involve addressing questions such as: (a) What is each coach’s educational background?, (b) What was their work experience?, (c) How did they develop their general educational philosophy?, (d) What is their perspective on how to teach reading?, (e) How did it develop?, (f) What type of reading coach have they become?, (g) What are their ontological assumptions (i.e., worldviews) about how to teach reading (i.e., classroom practice)?, (h) How have reading the literacy coaches’ beliefs and worldviews seemed to have influenced their practice? In addition, embedded in this ontological transformation are the epistemological worldviews (beliefs about the nature of knowing) developed by each literacy coach (Buehl & Alexander, 2006).

In order to study, describe and compare these issue and themes across the six literacy coach participants in this case, the process would involve addressing questions such as: (a) What are their general educational philosophies?, (b) What are their literacy philosophies?, (c) How did these develop?, (d) What are their epistemological beliefs (worldviews) about how to teach reading?, (e) Do these relate back to their earlier personal, work experience, formal education, or domain knowledge?, and (f) Has this pattern of knowledge acquisition and application maintained itself in the case study across each individual literacy coach?

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

Throughout my study, I have worked from the premise that reading coaches from varying educational and work experience backgrounds will bring differing perspectives on literacy to their jobs as reading coaches. How might reading coaches' domain-specific knowledge beliefs influence their beliefs about how to teach reading? How might reading coaches' personal, work and educational experiences influence their beliefs about how to teach reading? How might these beliefs influence their instructional and staff development choices? I will strive in this study to answer these overarching issues by addressing the following questions.

1. How did each participant become a literacy coach?
2. What are each literacy coach's general philosophies about education and literacy?
3. What are each literacy coach's perspectives (i.e., beliefs, worldviews, and philosophies) about knowledge, learning, and how to teach reading?
4. How might these views be related to the knowledge gleaned from both personal education and work experiences?
5. How might the perspective of each literacy coach relate to the dominant learning models in reading education?
6. What instructional choices are being made by each coach?
7. How might perspective have influenced these choices?

This chapter will describe the context or setting of the study, introduce the participants,

describe the studies methodological approach, explain the role of research as observer participant, and detail the process of data collection and analysis used in the case study comparison across participants (Merriam, 1998). Concerns dealing with validity will be addressed and issues of authenticity and trustworthiness will be discussed.

### **Setting**

My research study was situated in a large, urban school district in the Intermountain West. The county where the district is situated is 808 square miles and spreads over multiple municipalities with a population density of 1264 residents per square mile. The school district's boundaries encompass 257 square miles. Based on the 2000 census, it has a growth rate of 2.38%, a per capita income of \$26,340 with 23.8% of the population made up of college graduates, and a high school graduation rate of 85.3%.

The district's website for the 2010-11 school year listed 68,310 students being served. It is the largest of four school districts in a county populated by over 1 million residents. This district administered 61 elementary schools, 16 junior high schools, eight high schools and four special schools. It employed 3,623 teachers, with a student/teacher ratio of 18.5:1 across the district and 20.4:1 across the middle schools, grades 7 through 9. Across the student population of the district, 29% are considered to be disadvantaged minorities, 48% qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 21% are English language learners (ELL). Ethnic demographics across the district consists of 57.2% White, 29.7% Hispanic, 2.7% black, 4% Asian, 3.9% pacific islander, and 1.7% Native American. The average expenditure per student is \$6,427, and the average teacher salary is \$48,896. The spring



2009 Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) average score for reading across the district was 577, which compared favorably with the national average score of 500.

About five years ago, district personnel began the process of designing and implementing a secondary reading intervention program for junior high students in the seventh grade. The first year was spent in planning and adding participants to the literacy coach's leadership cohort. During the second year, these literacy coaches designed and conducted professional development workshops. This was the first year of my involvement. I acted as a participant observer for almost three years before I began my data collection. The six district-level reading coaches in the cohort targeted seventh grade teachers who were teaching struggling readers in reading, ESL, and special education classrooms. Two of the literacy coaches also assisted during the third year to assist teachers within their classrooms as they implemented the instructional approaches taught at the professional development meetings.

From what I could glean as a participant-observer at their meetings, the district-level literacy coaches appeared to have a very collegial relationship with each other and with the teachers. They worked to create a community of learners and site-based professional learning communities where trust and cooperation were developed and honored. They used grant money to pay for the teachers' time, to supply teachers with books and supplies, and to design workshops that were engaging, informational and morale building.

## Participants

The participants for the study all came from a team of six district-level literacy coaches in the leadership cohort who planned and implemented professional development workshops in this large, urban school district. They were all female educators with 10 or more years of experience in the field of education. They also had Master's degrees, though one participant was working on hers during the study. They had differing, job-related expertise across multiple areas of influence in reading education. These areas included, but were not limited to: (a) language arts, (b) assessment, (c) differentiated instruction, (d) emergent/elementary reading, (e) administration, (f) ESL, and (g) special education. By being assigned to this cohort as part of their job related duties, they had assumed the staff development role of a literacy coach (Bean, 2004; Walpole & Mckenna, 2004). They were chosen to participate in this study for three basic reasons: (a) an almost total lack of school-based literacy coaches at the secondary level in this area, (b) their involvement in a secondary reading intervention program where they designed and implemented professional staff development events, and (c) their close proximity to each other and shared planning participation in a common cohort. Due to the nature of the research questions, detailed descriptions of the participants will be embedded in the data findings. But the following brief biographical sketches explain their general duties in the project's cohort and their educational backgrounds. All names are pseudonyms to protect the participant's identities.

**Nora**

Nora was the director of this project. She initially earned a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in history teaching. She taught middle school reading and English for one year and then took 20 years off from teaching to raise her family. During that time she also worked in the business field. She then spent 17 years teaching high school English before she was hired at the district level as the secondary language arts chair. She then earned a Master's degree in secondary education with an emphasis in reading. Some of her responsibilities at the district level have been: (a) to help write the English core for the state, (b) to chair the novel adoption committee, (c) to research and write the content area reading framework, d) to design and deliver professional development on several areas of literacy, (d) to write a grant for student licenses for My Access (a computerized commercial writing program), and (e) to direct the current middle school intervention project featured in this study. During the last year of the study, Nora also began working on a project dealing with writing instruction at the secondary level.

**Jeanette**

Jeanette was the co-director of the project. She had a bachelor's degree in English with a reading minor. Prior to going into teaching, she spent 10 years as an assistant school librarian. She spent eight years teaching English, ESL and reading in a middle school. She wrote a grant every year to expand her technology resources for use in small-group work in her classroom. She then was hired at the district level as the secondary differentiation specialist. She became part of this project because of her skills at teaching and her talent with technology. She was working on a Master's degree in instructional

technology at the time of this study. She became the Secondary Language Arts Chair for the district during the last year of the study.

### **Pat**

Pat brought her expertise in special education to the project. She initially had a bachelor's degree in home economics. Prior to going into teaching, she worked in business as a merchandising representative. She then began to work in the schools in their home study department. There she was exposed to students with learning problems. A growing interest in learning disabilities led to her getting a master's degree in special education. She began teaching at the middle school level. At that time students who struggled with reading were placed in her resource class, because there were not separated reading classes. To meet this challenge, she got a basic reading endorsement and has continued studying on her own various topics dealing with secondary reading and theory.

### **Stacy**

Stacy was hired at the district level to serve as a literacy coach during the third year of the project. She had a Bachelor's degree in both anthropology and political science. Prior to getting into teaching, she did a lot of traveling and living in South America. She became proficient in Spanish during this time. Back in the United States, she worked for a wilderness treatment center for adjudicated youth and the YMCA. She took inner city youth on wilderness expeditions to help build their self-esteem. She eventually went back to school for her Master's degree in education. She studied second

language acquisition and reading. She taught ESL, reading and remedial reading classes for seven years at the middle school level. During that time, she also got her English endorsement.

### **Claire**

Claire brought her expertise in assessment, upper elementary and gifted education to the project. She had a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She then taught for 15 years in primarily third and fourth grade gifted classes before she was hired at the district level. During that time she got a master's degree in reading. She has been hired to teach adjunct university reading courses on assessment and diagnosis. Claire has the personality and the training of a mediator and has the skills of a bridge builder between divergent personalities.

### **Peggy**

Peggy brought her expertise as a K-3 elementary school teacher to the project. She initially had a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She taught for 10 years in the first, third, and fourth grades. As she watched her students struggle to read, she went back to study for a reading endorsement and eventually got a master's degree with an emphasis in reading and got an advanced reading endorsement. She was hired as an interventionist for the first grade with Reading First. Then Peggy went on to work with older children. She spent a lot of time doing diagnostic assessing of children's reading skills. Then, she designed plans for their improvement. Peggy was hired at the district level and worked in reading reform effort, serving the cohort in many capacities

including that of a literacy coach.

### **Data Collection**

This study is qualitative in design. I have attempted to describe and compare issues and themes in this case study that emerged during an activity involving multiple participants. These issues and themes dealt with beliefs about how to teach reading and how these beliefs developed. These issues, themes, and beliefs will be described and compared across this case study. The study involved six literacy coaches in a common setting where they served in close proximity to each other as they implemented a secondary reading intervention program. This “bounded system,” was restricted by time and place (Creswell, 1998, p. 37), consisted of participation in a literacy coach’s leadership team or cohort, thereby providing the study with a common context and setting across the context of the study. This also situated the individual data collection in the authentic activity of a professional development task. Multiple data collection sources were involved to provide a triangulation of the data.

My goals in this study were to describe, compare and contrast possible results from the experiences and responses across multiple participants for “predictable reasons” (Duke & Mallette, 2004, p. 22). In other words, each of the six reading coaches were intentionally hired into the cohort to represent different perspectives on teaching reading. These perspectives were often based upon the needs of differing populations or for administrative purposes. Therefore, the premise or assumption behind this study is that each coach will bring a very different perspective (based on experience and domain-

specific knowledge) about the teaching of reading to their jobs as a district level literacy coach. The participants have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

The case study aspects addressed in this study are based upon Lincoln and Guba's (1985, as cited in Creswell, 1998) case study structure. This included: (a) the problem, (b) the context, (c) the issues and themes, and (d) the lessons learned. In addition to addressing each part of the case study structure, the case in this study will be identified and described; a determination will be made as to whether the case existed in a bounded system restricted by time and place. The use of multiple sources of information in the data collection process should provide both a detailed, in-depth description of the case, which included several participants, within the context of a common setting. These multiple data collection sources should also provide triangulation of the data to increase validity of the findings.

According to Merriam (1998), a case study can be a deeply descriptive analysis of a single phenomenon. She cited Miles and Huberman's contention that a case should be thought of as a phenomenon that occurs in a "bounded context" (p. 27). Within this study, the phenomenon consists of the beliefs about how to teach reading held by six literacy coaches and how those beliefs developed. The case consists of the phenomenon as it developed and exists for each literacy coach. Then, this same phenomenon is compared across the six coaches, requiring a comparative case analysis. Themes and issues that emerge across the study would then be described and analyzed.

From Creswell's (1998) and Merriam's (1998) works, I have studied descriptions

on phenomenology in qualitative research. From that, I have adapted these descriptions to create the following process and reflective focus to guide my case study approach. When conducting a case study with multiple participants, the process for conducting such a study should include the following: (a) the researcher must have an intuitive grasp of the issues and themes, (b) the researcher will follow up by studying these across several participants, (c) the researcher must then perceive or make note of relationships that occurred for each participant, (d) the researcher will systematically explore those possible relationships that appear, develop or can be identified across multiple participants, (e) the researcher will need to determine the significance of these issues and themes across multiple participants, (f) the researcher will determine and bracket lessons learned, and (g) researcher will interpret the meaning of the lessons learned.

### **Data Collection Design**

Data collection for this study was designed with the intent of comparing and contrasting common themes and issues and describing the knowledge and beliefs held by six literacy coaches at the secondary level. The need to understand and study this knowledge and belief construction was identified during my teaching experience, which included experience watching two teaching professionals designing a reading program based upon what I could only assume at the time were their own personal perspectives, domain-specific knowledge, and beliefs about how to teach reading. This experience was described in the opening vignette, *A Case in Point*, in Chapter 1 of this document.

In that scenario, two reading professionals required the implementation of instruction in the regular classroom of commercial programs designed for the basic skill



mastery of fluency and spelling rules by the most struggling readers. As a result, I ended up using what I felt was inappropriate material to teach fluency and spelling. Through this experience, I became curious about how these reading professionals developed their beliefs about how to teach reading. One of the reading professionals was a district level reading coach and the other was the chair of the middle school English department. Intuition led me to suspect that the roots of their beliefs about how to teach reading had been formed in a way that could be studied. This belief required two years of reading across the research in the fields of epistemological and ontological beliefs, domain-specific knowledge, teacher beliefs, and theoretical learning models. Through this effort, I came to realize that knowledge construction and beliefs can be studied and identified with greater trustworthiness when done in a case study with multiple participants.

Merriam's (1998) definition of a case study was predicated upon setting limits around the case. She viewed the case as "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can 'fence in' what I am going to study" (p. 27). A bounded case study would place the edge of the case where what will and will not be studied is specifically identified and articulated. In my study, the case does indeed exist within a bounded system, bounded by time (six weeks of data collection), bounded by place (a common cohort experience and setting), bounded by content (the data collection sources utilized) and bounded by a specific number of participants. I have extended that belief to include one case study with multiple participants. Merriam also pointed out that a study that looks at a process, such as developing knowledge beliefs, is a very suitable design for use with multiple comparisons. She also noted that process as a focus for a case study

can look at causal or associated relationships. She stated that each case (or participant in a case) used in a study to identify process should be selected for its unique ability to make relationships across issues and themes consistent across multiple cases (or multiple participants as in my study). The participants in my study meet this criterion, because each came from varying backgrounds in relationship to both their formal education and the student populations that they most often served.

For my study, comparing participant's data across the case study has involved description, explanations, and judgments of issues, themes and assertions that evolved out of the study of the each participant. For my study, the word case should be substituted by participant in the following clarification by Merriam (1998). "The more cases included in a study and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (p. 40). This approach should more readily allow the phenomenon to be identified; it should allow the associated relationships across cases to be identified with greater validity, even those tacit in nature. Being able to make judgments from rich description and information allows for greater clarity in the evaluation process (Merriam, 1998).

Throughout the data collection process in this study, "think-alouds" were used to catch the participants thought processes and stated beliefs about why they answered as they did (Wilson & Wineburg, 1988; Wineburg, 2001). This should allow for a deeper exposure and clarification of the rationale behind their stated beliefs and knowledge and the emergence of identifiable, but often unconscious, discrepancies to those stated beliefs. This might then allow for the converse verification of stated beliefs to emerge. In other

words, if the stated beliefs were consistent across the data collection process, then converse beliefs would then be verified if stated beliefs match across data collection protocols. On the other hand, if stated beliefs do not match the other data collection efforts, then verification that stated beliefs do not match will expose a discrepancy that can also be analyzed. Triangulation of the data should allow this to occur across more than one data source or protocol.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection for this study involved four general approaches: (a) interviews, (b) responses to several data collection instruments, and (c) a survey. Each of these approaches also involved the use of a think-aloud protocol to catch additional thoughts and opinions by each participant. Interviews were conducted to gather data on each literacy coach's: (a) educational background, personal and work experiences, and literacy training; (b) self-stated personal, educational and literacy philosophies; (c) self-stated beliefs about how to teach reading; and (d) the self-stated instructional choices made in classroom and staff development settings. Transcribed responses of the data collection protocols also included think-aloud responses. The survey of each coach's professional library usually followed an interview format to gather open-ended responses as the coaches talked about their book collections. I utilized a tape recorder during interviews and data collection protocols as deemed necessary and took field observation notes. These tapes were transcribed first by an assistant; then, I reviewed every transcript to make necessary corrections as I listened to each tape recording. Data collection stretched over a 6-week period.

## **Instrumentation**

The data collection process involved five instrumentation protocols: (a) interview questions; (b) survey of each coach's professional library collection; (c) Schraw and Olafson's Four Quadrant Scale of Epistemological and Ontological Worldviews; (d) Schraw and Olafson's brief summary vignettes of realist, contextualist, and relativist world views; (e) Sandy's Scenario question; and (f) researcher as instrument. Each instrumentation protocol from (a) through (e) was administered orally, allowing for an oral response in the form of a think-aloud or as part of an interview format discussion. Instrument (f), researcher as instrument, refers to the interpretive lens of the researcher. Each instrument will be explained in more detail in this section.

### **Interview Questions**

A list of questions was designed to elicit responses dealing with the participants' educational background, personal and work experiences, and beliefs about education in general and literacy more specifically. The same list of questions was used across all participants in the case to lend continuity to the data collection process. However, these questions were just a starting point and not intended to limit the interview discussions. An addition question dealing with the report of the NRP (2000), but not part of the original list (see Table 3.1), was added after the first interview. That question was, "What do you think of the NRP report? Do you think its findings are relevant at the secondary level?" Due to the vast amount of data being generated and the time constraints of the process, it was not possible to probe emerging themes in subsequent interviews.

Table 3.1

*Interview Questions Used with All Literacy Coaches*

Question #	Interview question
1	Tell me more about your educational background. a. Where did you go to school? b. What did you get your degrees in?
2	What other educational opportunities did you have? (e.g., staff development, conferences, seminars, symposiums, etc.)
3	How did you get into teaching?
4	What is your general educational philosophy? How did your background influence that philosophy?
5	What is your literacy philosophy? How did your background influence that philosophy?
6	What personal experiences have influenced the development of your philosophies?
7	What are your views about literacy instruction in general?
8	What is a reading coach to you? What are their primary roles and responsibilities?
9	What programs/strategies do you use most often? What do they look like when you are addressing needs in the five pillars of reading?
10	What is your job description and requirements?
11	Tell me about your part in developing this secondary reading intervention program?
12	Walk me through a typical day in your life as a reading coach?
13	What do you believe is the most important thing to teach students?
14	How does a student become a struggling reader?
15	Survey of Professional Library Question: Do you have any favorite researchers? Do you read any works that help you learn more about your field? What books or professional magazines comprise your professional library? What sources do you use to decide on instructional strategies and interventions in relationship to how to teach reading?

### **Survey of Each Literacy Coach's Professional Library**

Each participant was asked question 15 (see Table 3.1) at the conclusion of the interview. They all responded through the interview process, thinking aloud as they explained the significance of each book in their professional library. They did not respond to the book selections in any particular order. It was assumed that all selections

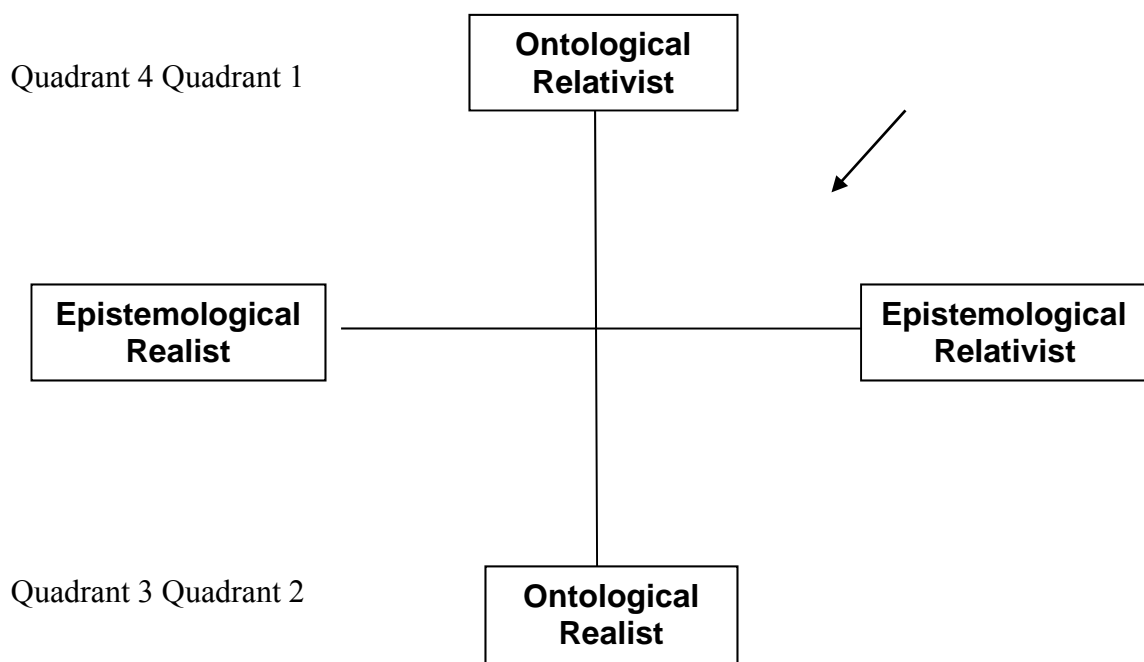
were equally important to answering the question. The significance of each books influence came out as they talked about each choice. The findings from the professional library survey were integrated into each coach's biographical sketch.

### **Schraw and Olafson's (2008) Four Quadrant Scale**

This instrument has been used by Schraw and Olafson as part of their research for assessing teachers' epistemological and ontological worldviews. When tested in a pilot study, they found that follow-up interviews with the teachers supported their answers on the scale. During my study, this instrument was administered during an interview, so that the participants could comment on their answers (Schraw & Olafson, 2008) through a think-aloud protocol. The purpose of this instrument was to add a data source to the process of trying to ascertain beliefs that dealt specifically with epistemological and ontological worldviews as they relate to teaching reading. It took about 20 minutes to administer (see Table 3.2). Following the reading of the instructions, the literacy coaches marked the quadrant (see Figure 3.1) that most accurately reflected the self-stated intersection between their epistemological and ontological worldviews or perspectives.

### **Schraw and Olafson's Summary of Realist, Contextualist, and Relativist Worldviews**

Each participant was asked to read the vignette summary for each worldview (see Table 3.2 and Appendix B) and rate each worldview on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This instrument was introduced to the participants in an interview format so they could comment on their answers (Schraw & Olafson, 2002)



*Figure 3.1.* The four-quadrant scale.

through a think-aloud protocol. The purpose of this instrument and protocol was to provide participants a concrete format to talk about their own beliefs. The summary definition of each worldview appeared in the form of a vignette and gave the participants specific language to assist in a self-stated articulation of certain beliefs about knowledge and how that related to actual instructional practice. It took about 20 minutes to administer (see Table 3.2).

### **Sandy's Scenario Question**

This question (see Table 3.3) was in the form of a vignette and was actually the last question of the interview. Since the responses were so interesting and constituted a use of original voice and terminology selection, I chose to remove it from the interview

Table 3.2

*Schraw and Olafson's (2008) Epistemological Worldviews: Realist, Contextualist, and Relativist Vignettes*

Worldview	Vignette
Realist	There is a core body of knowledge in my classroom that each student must learn. Some of it is factual, but some of it is based on broad concepts and principles that everyone agrees on. This knowledge doesn't change much over time and represents the accumulation of important truths and understanding in my discipline. It's important for students to acquire this knowledge exactly as it is. The best way to acquire this knowledge is through an expert like me because I have a much better sense than they do of what is important to learn. It's unlikely that students could really create this knowledge on their own, so learning it from me is quicker and more efficient. For this reason, it is important to me to assume a take-charge attitude so students can learn as much as possible. It's important to me that everyone comes away from my class with the big picture. It is my job to present the big picture clearly.
Contextualist	Students are encouraged to develop their own understanding in my classroom so knowledge is personally useful to them. However, the fact that students are expected to construct their own understanding doesn't mean that all understandings are equally valid. While I believe that knowledge is subject to interpretation, I also believe that some conclusions are better than others. Students need to understand how to gather and evaluate evidence so they can distinguish good from poor arguments. I can teach them some of these skills, but some they will have to learn by working with other students, or on their own. I believe that each student will bring a unique and valuable perspective with them. I try to structure my class so that students will pool their resources and come to the best understanding possible.
Relativist	Students in my class need to understand that there are a variety of different ways to understand things. Knowledge comes and goes, and what the so-called experts consider the truth today will be viewed with suspicion tomorrow. Even people who spend years studying a topic disagree about what things mean, and in the long run, one opinion is as good as another. This means that students have to learn to think for themselves, question the knowledge and authority of others, and evaluate how what they know affects their life. Knowledge has to be used wisely so no one is left out or exploited by society. For these reasons, I don't believe that I can really teach my students what is important, since they all need to know different things. They have to figure it out on their own, taking into account the events that shape their lives, even if the uncertainty of living in a world with conflicting views of truth bothers them. What I know and believe shouldn't really influence my students. My job is to create an environment where students can learn to think independently and take nothing for granted.



Table 3.3

*Sandy's Scenario Interview Question*

Interview question	Vignette
What instructional interventions would you use to help this student?	<p>Sandy has always done well in school because she is a hard worker. She has just entered the tenth grade where they are expected to read the various textbooks assigned. She has always gotten by in the past by taking notes as the teacher's re-taught the material in her texts and by studying with friends. You have discovered through some assessments that she reads very slowly. She comments to you, "I read the material you assign, but I don't understand anything I have read." What to do? (Pause and allow response.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What if she was in seventh grade? Would you do anything differently? (Pause)</li> <li>• What if she was in fourth grade? Would you do anything differently? (Pause)</li> <li>• What if she was in first grade? Would you do anything differently? (Pause)</li> </ul>

list and have it become its own data instrument. This instrument was designed to elicit a response to an instructional dilemma across grade levels. The scenario was read to the participants, up to the point where it is asked, "What do you do?" After the participant had responded to that part of the scenario, she was asked what she would do differently in grades 7, 4, and 1, respectively. This required each participant to think creatively about student populations they have had less experience with in regards to teaching reading. The question (see Table 3.3) was read to each participant and they responded in an interview format.

### **Researcher as Instrument**

My role as a researcher, as an instrument of data collection, needs to be addressed. Glesne (2006) defined the role in two ways, as researcher and as learner. As

researcher, one should be attuned to his or her own behavior and its potential impact upon the study. As learner, one should assume the role of a curious student, ready to listen and learn from fellow participants, avoiding the role of expert.

In this section, I will review my activities and associations with this cohort of literacy coaches. Second, I will review my own background and teaching experience. Finally, I will address any assumptions and beliefs I might hold relating to topics or issues being dealt with in the study. To allow the analysis of the researcher as instrument to be authentic and valid, I allowed myself to be interviewed with the same questions and surveys to determine how I would answer the questions given to the participants my study. Those findings are summarized in first person in the following sections.

**Pam as researcher and participant-observer.** From fall of 2005 through spring of 2008, I was a participant/observer at the professional development meetings held by the reading intervention cohort featured in this study. I was there in an informal capacity at the invitation of the cohort, and participated by being a member of a group table consisting of teachers and leaders. We talked, exchanged ideas, and completed activities together. Ever cognizant of my possible future role as researcher, I talked very little and kept my comments very generic for fear of tainting the data through too great an influence. Through this participation, I have developed various levels of a relationship with each of the six literacy coaches involved in the leadership cohort. At the very least, I developed a certain level of familiarity with each of them, and a higher level of trust with some of them (i.e., Nora, Jeannette, Claire). During the time before I started the formal study, I did not participate or attend any planning meetings. When I began data collection

in May 2008, I transitioned into an observer as participant role (Glesne, 2006), continuing to have some limited interaction with the group members, but acting primarily as an observer.

During the 6 weeks of formal data collection, I also had myself interviewed using the same instruments, protocols and criteria already listed previously. The results of that process have been written out in detail in the following section. The assumptions and beliefs I held about reading have developed during my time as a mother, a teacher, and a college student.

**Pam's educational background.** I have a bachelor's degree in history with additional coursework in English. When I first entered teaching, I held a multiple subject credential for teaching K-8, a secondary credential in social science for teaching grades 6-12, and an English endorsement. I taught 6 years total at the middle school level in grades 6-8 focusing primarily on language arts and reading. I also taught some sections of seventh grade math and eighth grade social studies. I began to realize that almost half of my students read several years below grade level. "I just didn't know what to do with them. I was trying to teach reading classes after school and I didn't know what to do. I was very isolated up in the mountains and did not have access at that time to a university library website or the Internet to find any information about reading."

So, I decided to study for a master's degree in secondary education with an emphasis in reading with the intent of earning an advanced reading specialist certificate. Part way through the master's work, I entered the doctoral program and pursued both degrees concurrently. At the doctoral level I studied curriculum and instruction with an

emphasis in reading and writing. Looking back at my earlier teaching while pondering what I now knew about teaching, I commented during the interview, “I would still go back to what I was doing, I would just do it a different way. I think I would make it more rigorous. I would teach words explicitly and work to meet the needs of both my higher students and my lower students.”

**Pam’s personal experiences.** As a child, I struggled during the early grades, because I had some sort of processing issue. I realized that “I see it in my children. But I remediated out of it, because my IQ is high. I didn’t have a lot of self-confidence, and I was really shy.” I commented about when that changed. “I got into teaching, because my favorite teacher was my sixth grade teacher. I loved her. And I bloomed in her class. I felt smart. I felt talented, and I had never felt that way before. I was a very good teacher, and I worked really hard for her. I went way beyond the assignments. I decided then that I wanted to be a teacher just like her.”

I became an avid reader during fourth grade when I discovered *Old Yeller* and read it three times. This accelerated after sixth grade when I read *The Good Earth* and discovered the work of Pearl S. Buck. Having discovered the historical novel, reading became a beloved hobby. I remembered, “I became very eclectic in my reading. I read for information; I read for enjoyment. My vocabulary, fluency and comprehension grew leaps and bounds. I realized just how *strong* reading was.”

As a young mother, my children ranged in capacity from a son with a moderately severe learning disability who struggled with reading to a son who qualified as gifted and talented, but hated to read fiction. To help my struggling eldest child I spent many hours

every week tutoring him and helping him with school work. Having loved reading so much as a child, I grew to believe that there was a genre for everybody. I helped introduce and connect all of my children to various genres. For all of my children I tried to keep my expectations high, to stay heavily involved in their schooling, and to encourage their academics and reading.

As a new teacher, I taught in a poor, rural community where academics were often devalued by a significant portion of the population. The community consisted primarily of blue collar workers and welfare recipients, many of whom had experienced generational poverty. Our school as a unit of community interest and focus was at the center of this small town, but not because of academics. The sports program and extracurricular activities were closely followed and valued. The students knew each other very well, since they had all grown up together. There were about 85 to 90 seventh and eighth graders at any given time. In this community, personal reading was not often modeled at home, so most of her students struggled with reading and writing at some level. I admitted that when taught well, the majority of my students would rise to the occasion. But, I felt I simply didn't know enough about how to teach many of those students who struggled with reading. That dilemma sent me back to college to learn more about adolescent literacy.

In graduate school I discovered "The Reading Wars" (Pearson, 2004) during my literacy studies. The multiple, philosophically-based perspectives held by teachers, teacher educators and reading researchers alike about how to teach reading seemed complex and even daunting. I kept asking myself throughout the years of study, "What do

*I believe about how to teach reading?”*

**Pam’s educational and literacy philosophies.** I remarked, “I would say that I believe in a balanced approach to teaching reading.” During my graduate work, I learned that education can be viewed through a many different perspectives. As a middle school teacher, I privileged process over content. In other words, I emphasized skill development so that students had the processes to learn the content provided. That was my basic philosophy about education. During my interview, I commented:

You do have to look at students and realize they’re coming from different backgrounds. Some of them have a lot of background knowledge on something and others don’t. Some have certain skills and others do not. When in the first grade, the highest student and the lowest aren’t that far apart. But when you get into high school, they are really far apart. And there’s a complexity to developing curriculum when you have kids that far apart, so you have to realize that one size does not fit all and that you’ve got to meet the needs of each of your students.

I believed there is a very different structure between elementary and secondary schools that influenced how teaching is done. I felt strongly that the curriculum would have to be rigorous, relevant to the students, and help prepare them to function well in our society. I commented, “For me, there is a democratic element here [and the concept of] social justice is very simple. Everybody needs to be able to read well. You can’t maximize or access the American dream if you can’t read or write. It becomes very difficult to get ahead in our society or any other society.”

I’s philosophy of about literacy also included a facilitated element. I said I would embed her curriculum in the gradual release of responsibility model. I would model and teach more explicitly. I considered myself to be a cognitive constructivist, and I would pull from multiple perspectives and philosophies about how to learn. As a language arts

teacher, I knew that what I had done worked, but I didn't know why. I went back to graduate school to learn the *why*. I wanted to be able to answer the question "Are they really learning what I want them to learn?" In addition, I would use assessments more strategically and formatively to guide my instruction.

My literacy philosophy has been strongly influenced by the fact that the research community lacked consensus about how to teach reading (Pearson, 2004). That very diversity informed my own beliefs. I personally believed there was an element of truth in every perspective on reading theory. But I had learned to proceed with caution. I said, "It's also much more politicized than I realized...which is fascinating. But, it makes me realize that some people out there are getting very rich writing books and promoting products based on some pretty flimsy research."

Fundamentally, core to my literacy philosophy is that everything is a reading task and every test is a reading test. I persisted in the belief that reading is more than just the ability to decode. A recall a discussion I once had with my college-aged son. My youngest son has always been very smart and very academic, but was also proudly illiterate (could read but lacked interest in doing so) and often lacked age-appropriate literacy skills. What I said to him during our conversation strongly reflected my literacy philosophy:

You've got to read. You've got to buy some of these college books. You get them in the library and you read for content. You need to buy some of these books. The reason is because some of these books you're not reading strategically or effectively. When you're reading for analysis and comprehension, you need to underline; you need to comment to yourself; you need to actually have a dialogue with the book. And if you're not doing that, you're not reading strategically or effectively. It will make all the difference in your writing. This is the number one, biggest mistake college students make. Kids that do what I'm talking about and

really read deeply and studied deeply in their field will have *twice* the knowledge when they graduate.

This dialogue reflected my deep commitment to adolescent literacy, strategic reading, motivation, and wide reading to improve fluency.

**Pam's response to Schraw and Olafson's four quadrant scale.** I chose Quadrant 4 (see Figure 3.1) on this scale, which intersects between epistemological realist and ontological relativist. I commented right away as I read the instructions (see Appendix A) that what counted as knowledge was often that which was privileged as common knowledge at that time. I agreed that there are certain things that students needed to know, but admitted that there was more academic content "than you could ever teach in 20 lifetimes." I agreed that there are certain knowledge and skills that need to be mastered, but the general content knowledge often ebbs and wanes. "Content knowledge and why it's taught is more open to interpretation as opposed to whether or not certain skills need to be developed." So, I agreed with that part of the epistemological realist stance. I did not believe that students should design their own problems to solve. "I'm less open to that, because it depends on the grade...depends on what they already know. If a lot of background knowledge is built during the first three quarters of the year that may be in the fourth semester at work to have them design some problem based on what they have been learning for most of the year." I agreed with the ontological relativist position that people have different realities and that teachers are seen as collaborators, as participants, as facilitators. I commented, "I think my major role as a teacher has always been to facilitate. I always tried to blend the learning and mastering of certain skills through the use of discussions, projects, and presentations.



I stated that I would probably fit best in quadrant four, because I saw the teacher's role as designing instruction and curriculum that will honor her students' different realities by having multiple ways of going about skill development. I ended with the comment, "As a teacher, I have always had multiple ways of looking and the information acquisition of knowledge. I often have students working with their strengths, but also working to develop other skills. In other words, I believe the teacher should decide what content needed to be learned and what skills need to be developed. It is the teacher's responsibility to then design curriculum that meets those needs. However, the students are then responsible for their own work and subsequent learning.

**Pam's response to Schraw and Olafson's three vignettes of realist, contextualist, and relativist worldviews.** I agree that there is a core body of knowledge that students need to learn. I clarified during my interview, "That is very true in the beginning. It becomes less true as they get higher and higher in their learning maybe into high school. I see it as the difference between processed and content driven curriculum. In the middle school, I think you're still very processed driven." I did not agree that the teachers should take charge, but at times they do need to be the expert when helping students develop certain skills. I spent a lot of time reasoning about the concepts behind the gradual release of responsibility model. The teacher's role here is to provide scaffolding through the modeling, guided practice, and individual practice components. It is the teacher's responsibility to get them to the point where they could work on their own, where they develop strategies and abilities to function higher and higher learning levels on their own. All too often teachers stop at the guided practice section and never

move meaningfully to the individual practice section. So, I voted neutral for the realist worldview.

I admitted right away, “I am a strict constructivist. I do believe that there are some things that are subject to interpretation. That’s very much my history background. We have to interpret history based on what evidence we’re looking at and come to certain conclusions, so most of history is open to interpretation.” I agreed with the need to structure her class so that students can pool their resources and come to the best understanding possible. It’s also important that what you are teaching is relevant to students. I see good teaching as the blending of group work and individual work and creativity and structured skill development.

I marked neutral for the realist worldview. I comments that I agrees with this view to a certain extent, but it is often taken way beyond what I thinks is reasonable. For example, I stated that students need to learn and think for themselves, but I believed that I still needs to be an influence and decide what is important to teach her students. I said, “There’s good knowledge and bad knowledge, so I guess I’m a positivist in the sense that there are truths out there that we need to help our students discover. However, you do need to get them thinking for themselves and there are a variety of different ways to understand things.”

Finally, I came to realize that her basic literacy philosophy was somewhat in conflict with the NRP report. I believed the report was more relevant to the K-3 setting and less relevant to middle school and high school. I had read many of the critiques levied at the NRP report and believed that many of its findings were being privileged way

beyond where they could reasonably be applied. “It’s being privileged, and it’s making its way up into the middle and high school settings. So, that’s a bias by the way.” I’s literacy philosophy also encompassed the belief that if you want to improve reading in our schools you have got to improve the instructional practices of teachers. Therefore, research such as the NRP report needed to be critically evaluated, because all research inevitably informed teachers’ knowledge about how to effectively teach reading.

**Pam’s response to Sandy’s scenario question.** I identified Sandy’s reading problem as one of fluency and comprehension. I stated more specifically, “At the tenth-grade level, everything is accelerated. The expectations about how well you must function in the classroom are much higher. They throw the work at you much faster, and it’s much deeper. I think her lack of skill in fluency made it so I could not compensate the way I did before. I was using people to compensate before and now I needed to actually use the textbook. I didn’t know how.”

I recognized that when Sandy read too slowly her comprehension suffered. I believed that Sandy would develop motivation. As the teacher, I felt I would need to help Sandy identify how I felt about her self-efficacy as a student and a reader. I would help her with those issues in addition to teaching her how to read strategically. Some of this instruction could be done in class, but I would probably need one-on-one help after school. I would also scaffold her instruction in class by providing ways to organize the information from a particular reading. This would provide supports for comprehension as I read.

I would also try to get her to read a lot of materials at her independent reading

level at school, but especially at home. By reading a variety of genres at home, I could start building her fluency and vocabulary. I would also “cross the aisle” and conference with some of her content area teachers to discuss other ways to support her literacy and learning.

At the seventh-grade level, I would work a little bit more on discrete skills development. The work at that level should be a little bit easier, so Sandy could be asked to do everything mentioned earlier, but at a less intense level. I would work more directly to help her build her fluency by providing a fluency reading program with repeated readings. I would do a lot more strategy instruction to support her reading comprehension.

At the fourth-grade level, I would work more holistically with all five components of reading (i.e., word study for phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction, reading comprehension and writing). I believe they work in tandem, because they really do support each other. I would break those components down and work all of them at the same time with more direct, explicit instruction at that grade level, especially with the increasingly more complex expository text being used. Since all the students are still learning skills at that level, Sandy would just be one of many struggling with such literacy issues. I will be part of a small group at that point, so I would not be by myself.

At the first-grade level, I saw the scenario as a very different issue, because all the kids are starting at the bottom. You will still have a spread across abilities, such as kids who have never opened a book to kids that are kind of reading a little bit. However, they are still much closer, so literacy will be part of their daily instruction. I would also make

sure that more expository was being used at the first-grade level and would concentrate more heavily on fluency development.

**Pam's survey of her professional library.** The survey of my professional library included an eclectic array of books from my master's and doctoral coursework (see Appendix I). I included 36 books in my survey choices: (a) eight adolescent literacy; (b) 18 general literacy; (c) zero special education; and (d) 10 other. The collection leans towards and supports my dominate theoretical position as a cognitive/constructivist.

**Pam's response to the NRP report question.** My views about the NRP report coincide with those of my general literacy philosophy. That philosophy is grounded in the need for a balanced approach to reading instruction. To me that means you must look at the needs of the student within the context of their age and grade. Instruction needs to be integrated across the reading, writing, listening, and speaking communicative arts. These are all forms of literacy that work in tandem, so you can't just make discrete categories out of them. I do not like the deficit model of literacy instruction where intervention is often read deuced to skill development within discrete categories.

The NRP reports delineation of reading into five major components (i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction, and reading comprehension) leaves reading instruction susceptible to being broken down into the five components as discrete categories. Because of this tendency, the findings of the NRP report are more relevant to K-3 instruction in reading, because targeted skills development in these components is a natural part of emergent literacy instruction. Therefore I believe that the NRP's findings are a lot more relevant to teaching reading at

the elementary level then it is to literacy issues at the middle school and high school levels. Therefore, I am critical of the applicability of the findings of the NRP report to the secondary level, because to privilege this perspective on how to teach reading is to consequentially marginalize the adolescent literacy research about how to teach reading at the secondary level.

### **Trustworthiness Issues**

Trustworthiness (i.e., validity) in qualitative research studies rests heavily upon the confidence that the researcher conducts the study in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1998). In addition, the study will include verification procedures (e.g., triangulation of data, member checking, etc.) to lend credence to the research findings (Glesne, 2006). I allowed the participants to member check the raw data and findings for possible errors or misrepresentations, but only three of the five participants (i.e., Nora, Jeanette, and Pat) actually responded with additional comments and clarifications. Triangulation of the data was set up through multiple measures of the same elements (i.e., interview questions and surveys about beliefs and knowledge). I had already spent two years attending the professional development sessions of this district, so I had learned a great deal about the culture of this group through prolonged engagement and persistent observation. It has also given me an opportunity to establish a trusting and collegial relationship with the participants to varying degrees. These previous interactions should add depth to what I hope will be rich and thick descriptions.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

One of the strengths of the study was that each of the seven reading coaches already originated from a different discipline perspective, yet came from a common setting. This should have made the study findings more trustworthy by lending greater credence to the categories generated. Also, having the reading coaches in the same setting should reduce the influence of outside variables that might exist from differing school districts. Another important strength was that this has not been addressed by many researchers in the literature, so it will contribute to the literature in the areas of reading education, reading coaches, teacher beliefs, and ontological and epistemological worldviews. The knowledge and beliefs held by literacy coaches are an important issue to address when in the process of hiring and matching the skills of a reading coach with a particular set of tasks or the needs of a certain population.

One limitation involves the difficulty in accurately ascertaining teacher beliefs. To help mitigate this difficulty, I incorporated multiple data collection methods addressing this issue of accurately identifying teacher beliefs and perspectives about teaching reading. There was only one researcher in this study, so possibility of researcher bias is greater even as consistency in gather and interpreting data will be stronger. In addition, I could be bringing biases developed during my years as a teacher of reading to the study that might unconsciously taint the data collection, analysis and interpretation process. I have identified five general educational categories from which the majority of reading coaches in this country most likely are drawn: (a) English, (b) English as a second language (ESL), (c) special education, (d) elementary education, and (e)

secondary content area other than English (i.e., history, science, mathematics, etc.) These categories are tentative and meant to act as a starting point for looking at and interpreting the data. I understand the importance of maintaining objectivity and allowing the data to generate the findings, which should be used to generate categories and develop propositions in this comparative data analysis of reading coaches (Merriam, 1998).

### **Conclusion**

One of the objectives of this dissertation has been to identify strong theoretical frameworks to use for purposes of interpretation of the data and to understand what I am seeing. Reviewing the research on teachers' beliefs and domain-specific knowledge has opened up my understanding of how they interrelate and how knowledge and beliefs are so difficult to accurately identify. My past anecdotal experiences should add richness to my interpretations, especially since I have been continually striving throughout my literature review to open my mind to multiple perspectives and ideas. My central objective has been to allow the data to tell the self-reported story of six literacy coach's development of their personal beliefs about how to teach reading. As I gathered data, they were immersed in the authentic task of designing and implementing a secondary reading intervention program. My objective was to identify and describe any issues and themes that emerge and point to possible associations between their knowledge, their beliefs, and their practice.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA AND FINDINGS: PART I: THE LITERACY COACHES'**

#### **SELF-STATED BIOGRAPHIES AND BELIEFS**

The participant biographical information are findings in this study that focus upon how the personal, work and educational experiences of each reading coach led to the development of a general educational philosophy and a literacy philosophy. Those philosophies manifest beliefs about teaching and learning, and more specifically about how to teach reading. Each participant's biographical summary was derived from information gleaned through interviewing that involved the use of the same interview questions (see Table 3.1) and reflected their self-stated beliefs. In other words, I allowed each participant to tell their own story. Then, additional information derived through these interviews and the think aloud protocols used while they talked about their professional library were used to establish those beliefs and perspectives, about how to teach in general and literacy more specifically, had influenced their instructional approaches about how to teach reading.

This approach to data collection and analysis was predicated upon the premise that there are multiple perspectives or world views on how to view and teach the reading process. These perspectives are linked to certain worldviews developed through viewpoints about literacy gleaned from educational and professional work experiences dealing with teaching in general and teaching reading more specifically. In addition, personal experiences also influenced their development of beliefs and the formation of their worldviews. In conclusion, this section of the findings will strive to review self-

stated beliefs about the participants' personal and educational background, their educational philosophies about learning and literacy, and their instructional approaches as collected through the use of formal interview questions and a review of their professional library and the think aloud discussion that accompanied that survey.

### **Nora's Biographical Sketch and Self-Stated Beliefs**

Nora's leadership style was a joy to behold. Looking back, I completely understand why district-level personnel approached her with the task of creating the Secondary Reading Intervention Program (SRIP) to address the needs of their seventh grade struggling readers. She had that rare ability to see both the big picture components and the discrete details of a complex issue or problem. Coupled with that was her ability to understand and work with people, to build a community of practice, and to inspire others to strive beyond their comfort zone. She was a self-stated team builder and very adept at leading the district-level professional development for SRIP. Nora's beliefs about how to teach reading were grounded in personal, work, and educational experiences that span her lifetime. Nora's beliefs about how to teach reading were influenced by several pivotal experiences. They influenced the development of her educational philosophy. These experiences stretched over her lifetime, but each had a lasting effect. Each taught a life-changing lesson that Nora never forgot, but instead applied to her educational philosophy and professional expertise as an educator.

### **Nora's Personal Experiences**

Nora's grandmother taught her to read at an early age, so she "started school

running.” She realized that “the reading, the consuming of books, the comprehending, the questioning started with my grandmother’s influence. I was raised on Biblical stories and reading scriptures and she spent a lot of time with me individually...a very nurturing environment...not much television...[and a] world of books and thinking.” This focus on reading continued into her high school and college years. Her love for English as a discipline began in high school where special teachers took her aside and gave her access to their personal libraries and individual nurturing. All of these experiences instilled a love for good books and reading quite early on which led to a love of literature and learning. Nora took that love of literature and learning with her to the college setting.

### **Nora’s Educational Experiences**

Nora’s decision to pursue a career in education might never have happened if she had not graduated from high school in the early 1960s. She began her career in teaching when she received a full, four year scholarship from Future Teachers of America upon the conclusion of high school. Nominated by a counselor, she now reflects, “I think I was quite honored that I was singled out.... It was nothing that I applied for.” Nora was the first in her family to go to college. “I saw it as an open door...a tremendous financial opportunity...to go to college and be able to finance myself.” Realizing that it is as if teaching chose her, she mused, “Back in that generation, it was a time of either teaching or nursing [for a women]...it was almost as if your course was charted and you didn’t consider all of the other numerous options...the die was cast.” It was not a difficult decision for Nora, because she loved working with children and enjoyed being creatively in charge. She pursued a bachelor’s degree in English with a teaching minor in history,

receiving a teacher certification in secondary education.

Two female professors influenced Nora's educational philosophy: one negatively and the other positively. Both women influenced her beliefs in fundamental ways about her future responsibilities as a teacher. She described the first professor as someone who was "a very intimidating, knowledge-driven, brilliant woman." This teacher taught her to question, forced her to come very well-prepared for class where the culture was often stifling, uncomfortable, and intense. Nora felt it was expected that students know everything about any work of poetry studied and you had to have the right answer. Though Nora was grateful for her training in questioning and respected this teacher's knowledge, she decided early on that she never wanted to copy her style of teaching.

I quickly came to realize that it was the second professor in Nora's college experience who helped her bloom. This professor was her student teaching university advisor and mentor. She helped Nora navigate a bad student teaching experience. Nora claimed she was "phenomenal in her ability to see me as a person and honor a bad situation...and she taught me the importance of being intuitive, compassionate, and supportive. She had unfailing faith in my abilities." Nora's educational philosophy began its development at the university setting, but her literacy philosophy began its development during her first year of teaching.

### **Nora's Work Experiences**

Nora was a born high school teacher, yet she ended up teaching Jr. High that first year out of student teaching. She quickly came to realize how much she didn't know about how to teach reading when she ended up teaching both remedial seventh-grade

reading and honor's English. She recalls, "It was a major wake-up call.... I had never been taught in any of my education classes how to assist a struggling reader coming into seventh grade that could not read." At this point in her career, Nora took 20 years off to raise her family. As her kids grew, she became involved in PTA, but it was her daughter's involvement in debate coupled with the burgeoning financial needs of her family that would lead her back into the classroom. But, it was her son who helped her land her next teaching job. It's a great story.

I applied...and the principal was put off by me, because I found out there was an opening there, and I was calling and insisting on an interview. It was really before it was posted and he didn't want to deal with me. He just wanted to transfer people from within the district again and he didn't know me. I must have come across as very forward. He finally just said, "Come in and let's get this over with." He was just placating me. Well, the interview was...*not* sizzling. It was just okay. Then the vice-principal walked in late into the interview. He had just been assigned to be principal at my son's junior high school.... My son was the student body officer...and had been the one to greet [him] and had been instrumental in introducing him to the school and showing him around. So, he asked me if I was any relation...and I said, yes, that he was my son. And he just went off on how there couldn't be a kid like that without some great parenting and he turned the whole interview around and I got my position based on my son's great impression.

She taught at that high school level for 17 years. Nora was then invited to apply for a district position in language arts. She became her district's secondary language arts curriculum specialist. Through those years, Nora continued to add to and develop both her general educational philosophy and her literacy philosophy through her work experience opportunities and her formal education.

### **Nora's Educational and Literacy Philosophies**

Nora's general educational philosophy was grounded in her beliefs about

children's capacity to learn and her role as their teacher. She believed that children came to her classroom ready to learn, to grow, to be successful, and to feel good about themselves. The first professor during her college experience had fostered in Nora the desire to dig deeply, to question, to probe, and to never be satisfied with understanding things at a surface level. Nora called it a "thirst...to always question and probe." The second professor nurtured Nora through a series of profoundly personal, emotional and intellectually stressful situations. She also modeled the importance of teaching the whole child. Nora came to believe that each student deserves a teacher who is sensitive and nurturing enough to identify and address any needs become apparent during the journey we call school. Foundational to her educational and literacy philosophies are beliefs dealing with the constructivist instructional philosophy, the Reading Apprenticeship Model, the honoring and building upon a child strengths, and pedagogy gleaned from adolescent literacy research and paradigm beliefs.

**Constructivism.** The development of Nora's literacy philosophy began as a student teacher, but continued while her own children were in elementary school. She had come to realize that her own children have differing ability levels when it came to literacy issues. Within that context, she was invited to participate as a parent leader in a *Junior Great Books* training. Mortimer Adler had helped found the series based on the great books of the Western world. At that time, it was a pull-out program in elementary schools for gifted students. She raved, "The day was so stimulating to me that I felt as if I had just hit Nirvana...it opened [up] for me what I could provide for my own children and the world of learning." During the professional library survey portion of our interview,

Nora brought forward first Harold Bloom's (2000) *How to Read and Why*. She explained that his book and the *Junior Great Books* go hand-in-hand since they both address shared-inquiry. "So, this is all about constructivist thinking; students doing the work, but they have to back it up with text. So, this is really about thinking, but supporting their thinking through whatever text it is you're looking at." She then stated quietly and emphatically, "*This is absolutely the foundation of my teaching.*"

The philosophy of *Junior Great Books* provided for Nora the cornerstone of her views about literacy. Based on the socratic method, the program taught how to pose probing questions based on information from a text. Students had to come up with questions and answers that they discussed among themselves and according to Nora, "the teacher stays out of the way." Nora said intensely, "I saw the power in mentoring children to think.... I saw the power in deep reading with different purposes. *I saw the potential...you talk about rigor and high expectations.... I saw the depth of discussion that second graders could have on the short story "To Build a Fire" and it changed my life.... It took me to rethinking what matters most.*" Her beliefs about teaching were impacted in profound ways as she saw the potential of careful planning and then "getting out of the way." While raising her own children, who were "all over the place," Nora also came to understand that all children have differing levels of expertise and learning. One of her children was very gifted, while another struggled at reading. She eventually decided to go back and study for her master's degree in literacy.

Nora's formal education in literacy began with a brief dip into a cohort made up of what she called "very elitist" teachers who had been identified as "movers and shakers

royal.” It didn’t last long for her, because there were only two secondary teachers among a plethora of elementary teachers. She noted, “It was the elementary world, so I bailed it. I did not see the relevance of teaching high school seniors phonemic awareness. I couldn’t see that the time I was spending could be transferred.” She worked towards a master’s degree in secondary education with an emphasis in reading. Nora’s educational and literacy philosophies included a strong emphasis from the *Reading Apprenticeship Model* and the collective work works of adolescent literacy researchers.

**Reading apprenticeship model.** In 2000, Nora moved up to the district level as the secondary language arts chair. She was asked to write their content area literacy framework. “We carefully read all the current research in the realm of content literacy. It was still cutting edge...still pretty new.” They settled on Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, and Hurwitz’s (1999) Reading Apprenticeship Model. Nora expounded during our interview upon the model’s four-square domain framework: a) personal domain; b) social domain; c) cognitive domain; and d) knowledge domain.

Everything is centered on the personal domain...ethnicity, struggles, birth order...anything. The social domain allows for social interaction, for cooperative learning, for discussion and for interaction with text...for those social conversations you have in the classroom and its social climate. The cognitive domain allows for all the strategies and best practices that would further the work within the content area. Finally, the knowledge domain...[addresses] content specific needs. The Reading Apprenticeship model acknowledges that you have all of the sections in place.... You can’t leave out any of the four. Surrounding all of this is metacognition, so you are always making your thinking visible. It also looks at the engagement piece. And it’s driven by inquiry.

When I asked her how this model has influenced her current work, she replied, “I think it is my rubric...my foundation piece...the cornerstone for all the work I do. No matter whether it’s a struggling student or an AP student...doesn’t matter; you have to be



considerate of all four of those domains to support the whole student approach.”

Nora goes on and emphatically adds her own personal beliefs to the *Reading Apprenticeship Model* (Schoenbach et al., 1999) to make it her own...to embellish it.

I always honor strength. I always look for the strong, driving passions and personalities of the people and capitalize on and fuel those. Team building is crucial to me. It is the foundation of everything that I do...we are no stronger than our weakest link. And it is very important to me whether it is in the classroom treating the whole child or the whole person in the [SRIP] project...very critical to me. And so if someone has strengths, you build on those.... So, I feel like we need to support all dimensions of the person in order to move forward.

Nora noted that communication and relationships matter. For her, it tied into Daggett and McNulty’s (2010) work on relationships, rigor, and relevancy. This model blended nicely with the adolescent literacy research that had also influenced Nora’s philosophies.

**Adolescent literacy.** Nora’s professional library included many classics on adolescent literacy. She had favorite books that dealt with engagement (Guthrie, 1997; Wilhelm, 2007; Wilhelm & Smith, 1996), content area reading (Irvin, Buehl, & Radcliffe, 2007; Vacca & Vacca, 2002), comprehension and strategy instruction (Block & Pressley, 2002; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007; Robb, 2000, 2005), vocabulary instruction (Allen, 1999), language arts for adolescents (Rief, 1992) and also the work of Kaylene Beers (2003) and Nanci Atwell (1998), both teacher researchers of adolescent literacy instruction.

In addition, Nora had a few books to support other more general topics dealing with literacy instruction. She had a few books dealing with early reading instruction and research. She had *Reading Research Base* (Pearson, 2007), which compiled seminal articles from reading research, dealing mostly with emergent literacy. She also used the

full version of the NRP report as a reference piece. Nora had become a trainer for project CRISS (Santa, 2004). Among her work collection was a number of books on writing (Fletcher, 1993; Fulwiler, 1987; Lane, 1993a, 1993b; Rico, 1983). Other highly influential books in Nora's professional library were *A Handbook for Classroom Instruction That Works* (Marzano, Norford, Paynter & Pickering, 2004) and *Understanding By Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Nora commented that the publications from IRA, NCTE, and ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) were very different, but she was more drawn to ASCD, because it was broader in its focus and used fewer of the same people's articles. Nora felt that "IRA has not moved to the secondary realm fast enough for me... IRA has been slow. They've not been cutting-edge.... Let's have the theory of understanding of the research, blitz to the transference into the classroom area." She also felt that ASC has more of an international perspective. She believes that they are looking for what works best in the world, and what we can learn from each other whether it's from China or India or whatever. She regards that as a positive move of "bringing diversity together." In her view, ASCD was more encompassing. She felt they were asking questions and pushing the boundaries. She noted at their last conference that it had a comprehensive focus on vocabulary. Nora said, "I find that fascinating that they [say], 'Let's look at it from all of these numerous perspectives.'" Nora eventually quit taking the journal from NCTE, which she feared felt was too specific about certain texts and geared more for the classroom teacher who were dealing with literature. Across her professional library, adolescent literacy dominated.

Towards the end of our interview, I asked Nora about the new literacies of adolescent literacy researcher Donna Alvermann and colleagues (2006). She's then said something quite insightful. "Well, I believe that's where we need to go. But, that's me personally.... She's not just about reading and narrative text and fiction text. But, she's looking at what is the role of nonfiction and texting and technical writing...multiple literacies." While talking to her, I could feel her commitment to incorporating diversity of all kinds in both her instruction and her professional development efforts. This is reflected one of Nora's core beliefs about teaching the whole child.

During her time as a high school English teacher, Nora conducted what she called a "miniscule action research project." I would like to tell this story at this time, because it reflected nicely how her core beliefs influenced her literacy instruction. When Nora was teaching high school, she attended a workshop led by a beautiful, tall African-American instructor. She learned important concepts based upon the black students' needs for collective learning. Nora told me that she was also taught by this instructor that her black student's "were not individualistic, so they would not raise their hand and have their own opinions. But in a group setting, they'll come up with some really rich things if they could work cooperatively."

Nora came away from this experience realizing that literacy instruction for her black students needed to be socialized. In other words, they needed to be placed all together in a cooperative learning group where they could come up with a group consensus. After observing that her African American students had not done well with the last book, Nora changed her approach and had the whole class do a lot of work in

cooperative groups. She said, “I could not believe the difference [it made with my African American students].... I was not culturally sensitive enough, and it hadn’t been relevant in my world, because we had a 1% ethnicity in the school where I had taught.”

Later on, as director of the intervention program, Nora applied this lesson in diversity to SRIP. She knew she wanted to include coaches who were ESL endorsed, because 40% of the students in their district were ESL and most were struggling academically. From that need to address the diversity issues in the district, Nora hired Jeanette and Stacy, both of whom had experience teaching middle school aged ESL students who struggled with reading, to be part of the coaching cohort team of SRIP.

### **Conclusion and Analysis**

Nora had a variety of personal, work, and educational experiences. From the most influential of these experiences, Nora developed her dominant beliefs about learning and how to teach reading. Constructivism was the foundation of Nora’s instructional philosophy. She believed in having students’ thinking about and engaging with text. This reflected the domain-specific and dominant influence of reader response theory’s (Rosenblatt, 1938/1978) approach to literature interpretation and instruction found in English education.

The four dimensions (i.e., personal, social, cognitive and knowledge) in the *Reading Apprenticeship Model* (Schoenbach et al., 1999) were foundational to Nora’s beliefs about teaching the whole person. These dimensions also reflect her strongly stated beliefs that deal with looking for, honoring, and building upon the strengths of her students, whether child or adult. This belief also reflected her commitment to addressing

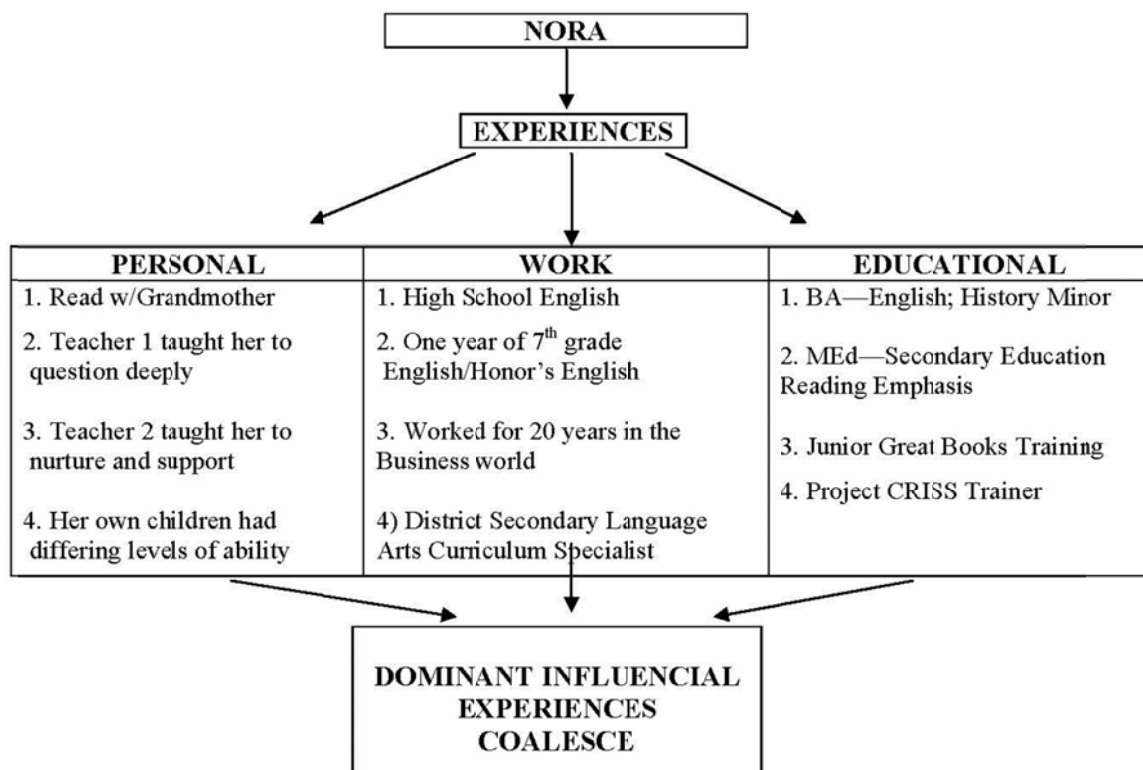
diversity of all kinds when making her instructional decisions.

Nora also believed that the future of literacy instruction for the adolescent learner lies with the work of such researchers as Donna Alvermann, who have addressed the multiple literacies (e.g., nonfiction text, texting, and technical writing, etc.), which dominate the daily lives of our students. This stems from years of dealing with adolescent learners at the secondary level and from extensive educational exposure to adolescent literacy research and instructional approaches.

I believe that Nora's dominant beliefs about how to teach reading included all of these components just mentioned. They did not coalesce to form one dominant principle, but instead reflect the complexity of Nora's thinking about how to teach in general and how to teach reading more specifically. She blended them seamlessly due to her openness and general comfort with complexity. This attribute has also made her knowledge construction more flexible and adaptable to adding new beliefs to her philosophies. For a pictorial analysis of Nora's belief development about how to teach each reading, see Figure 4.1.

### **Jeanette's Biographical Sketch and Self-Stated Beliefs**

Jeanette acted in the capacity of an assistant to Nora, the director of the seventh-grade Secondary Reading Intervention program. Her official title in the district, she told me laughingly, was the secondary differentiation specialist. She admitted ruefully that the district "had never had one before. There was no job description, so it was kind of create



Constructivism was the foundation of Nora's instructional philosophy. She believed in having students' thinking about and engaging with texts.	<b>BELIEFS ABOUT HOW TO TEACH READING EMERGE:</b> Nora's beliefs about how to teach reading include all four components in this square. They did not coalesce to form one dominant principle, but instead reflect the complexity of Nora's thinking about how to teach in general and reading more specifically. She blends them seamlessly. This openness to complexity also makes her flexible to adding new beliefs to her philosophy.	The four dimensions (personal, social, cognitive, & knowledge) in the Reading Apprenticeship Model are foundational to Nora's beliefs about teaching the whole person.
Nora believed in looking for, honoring, and building upon the strengths of her students, whether child or adult. This also reflected her commitment and belief about addressing diversity in her instructional decisions.		Nora believed that the future of literacy instruction for the adolescent learner lies with addressing multiple literacies such as nonfiction text, texting, and technical writing that dominated their lives.

Figure 4.1. Development template of Nora's belief about how to teach reading.

your own job.” Jeanette was the perfect choice for this position in the coaching cohort, because she often took a marginal though creative role. But that was deceptive, and I came to realize during the study that she really had her hand in everything. Jeanette’s enthusiasm, talent and drive were apparent from our first meeting. She is in her early fifties, a stylish woman who was once a professional singer.

Jeanette demonstrated that talent one morning during an early morning breakfast provided to the teachers by the cohort’s directors at the beginning of an all-day professional development workshop. Jeanette skillfully sang Christmas carols with the aid of a karaoke machine. Her serenade climaxed with a song she had written herself. I became impressed during observations by the apparent ease with which she performed all of her duties. The word that I came to associate with Jeanette was “eclectic.” This versatility became even more apparent as I delved into her educational background and came to understand her personal educational philosophy.

Jeanette was influenced by three pivotal experiences in the development of her educational philosophy. All of these experiences spanned a year or more, and they had a lasting effect. Each taught a life-changing lesson that Jeanette never forgot, but instead applied to her professional expertise as an educator.

### **Jeanette’s Personal Experiences**

Jeanette’s desire to go back to school climaxed during a family crisis she experienced over the educational needs of her oldest son. Her son had always struggled in school, but it became worse in middle school. She had volunteered as a parent in her children’s classrooms and noted, “Even though I was not a professional educator, I had

seen a lot of good teaching and a lot of poor teaching.” But it took the crisis of her son to make her realize how many teachers didn’t care about her son’s needs. She told me fervently:

We started working with his teachers and I was surprised [at] how many inflexible teachers I found.... He was a gifted student, very, very bright whose needs were not being met in school and he became less and less motivated. He eventually did drop out his junior year, and it broke my heart. I knew how important education was, and I knew what a phenomenal person he was. How could a system destroy a child like that? Why aren’t the teachers doing what they need to do to meet the needs of all the kids in their classroom?

Jeanette eventually became the middle school’s assistant librarian at the school her children attended. In this role, she had already started teaching lessons in the library setting for the English teachers. She finally had an epiphany, “I went back to school and got my degree in English with reading as my minor, so I could teach struggling readers, because I saw such a *need* for that as I worked in the library.” Remembering her son, Jeanette knew she wanted to become the kind of teacher who would meet the needs of *every* student.

### **Jeanette’s Educational Experiences**

At the university, Jeanette studied to become an English teacher. Her English methods professor had the most powerful influence upon the shaping of her general teaching philosophy. This professor modeled in her own teaching practices what Jeanette called “the constructivist method.” She recalled:

We did all the work. We worked in groups a lot and she would give us not grades, but feedback, authentic feedback on everything we would do. Points would become unimportant; it was feedback we longed for and that helped us move forward as unique learners and thinkers.



But, she admitted that she did not learn how to teach reading in her study of English. That discipline involved mostly writing and literature studies. Therefore, she minored in secondary reading to obtain her literacy training.

During her undergraduate studies, Jeanette was exposed to four books that influenced how she taught reading and language arts (Allen & Gonzalez, 1998; Atwell, 1998; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997). She views these books as foundational pieces in reading instruction and she “believes in them a lot.” However, Jeanette also noted a bit cynically:

They were saying that by secondary all the kids really need is comprehension instruction, because that’s where they’re lacking. If we can teach all these comprehension strategies (she snapped her fingers here) it will just move them forward and they’ll just *get* it! I totally bought into that and just believed it.

Yet when she actually started to teach a middle school reading intervention class of struggling readers, she came to realize that comprehension strategies were simply not enough. She admitted bluntly, “The kids were absolutely clueless, because they could not decode the text. If they could not decode the text, they could not do comprehension strategies. *How* do you make a prediction when you have *no idea* what the text says?”

In addition, Jeanette recalled, “Then I got my English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement and also taught ESL. Absolutely *love* working with the ESL students.” She came to realize that her ESL students faced literacy problems beyond just learning a new language; that they often had low literacy skills in listening, writing and reading. During her seven years at the middle school level, she taught seventh-grade English, reading, and ESL, but it was her first year of teaching that really left a huge impression of a different kind.

### **Jeanette's Work Experience**

Jeanette did her student teaching at the middle school level, but taught her first year in the district where she had spent 10 years as a librarian. She admits it was just horrible. As she spoke of her experience, tears came to her eyes. "My mentor was the teacher who I used to do lay-reading for and was a very good, personal friend. *Never* once did she come and observe me in my classroom." Other teachers she worked with refused to share their curriculum materials. They were very possessive of "their stuff." She stated:

Hum, it was really disheartening and if it hadn't been for a history teacher who worked next door to me who was loving and kind and gave me advice on classroom management and the things that first year teachers need, I don't think I would have survived that first year.

When Jeanette was offered a job at the middle school where she had successfully performed her student teaching, she jumped at the chance. "I had found a group of teachers who were highly collaborative, who cared about kids." She believed she had found her niche. It would allow her to grow in a nurturing environment of mutual collaboration among peers.

Jeanette's experiences, starting with her own son's negative, school-based struggles, progressing through her university studies in English, reading, and later ESL, and culminating in her first year of teaching, all crystallized into her personal educational philosophy. They each had a role in making her the teacher she is today. Using technology in the classroom to both teach and to assist in learning would become a strand that will run throughout her instructional choices. All of these experiences contributed to her development as a classroom teacher and as a district-level reading coach.

### **Jeanette's Educational Philosophy**

Jeanette's personal educational philosophy was founded upon three basic conceptual ideas. First, she believed that literacy is foundational for the academic success of any student. Second, all children can learn if instruction is designed to meet their personal needs. Third, it is the teacher's responsibility to plan instruction to maximize learning for each individual student. When she decided to enter teaching, she was on a personal crusade to make that happen in her classroom. She knew it would take a mind open to new ideas, a heart willing to care enough, and a back willing to do the work. From what I saw of Jeanette, she had all three of these characteristics.

**The importance of literacy.** The development of Jeanette's educational philosophy began during her years as a librarian. "I really believe that literacy is the greatest gift that we give to students and that it's the crux of education and of a well-educated person." Her love of teaching grew out of the 10 years spent as a librarian. She prides herself on being able to match any kid to the right book. "That was my passion. Being a librarian, I knew good books. I can make awesome, awesome, book choices for my kids!" Just as she believes all children can learn, she believes all children can learn to read.

[However], kids need explicit direct instruction in *all* areas that they need explicit direct instruction in. And a literacy teacher needs to know how to identify kids where they're at, *push them* to continue to grow in the areas they're good in, but fill in the holes for the things that they're missing so they can continue to grow.

She identified problems of aliteracy—kids who can read but choose not to. She claimed, "That's a huge problem. And we have to find other ways to hook them. Now we have the whole technological literacy piece, too. We've got to make sure that they know how to

access literacy in those realms as well.” As a self-proclaimed “technology geek,” Jeanette is currently completing a master’s degree in instructional technology to take on that challenge.

Jeanette came to realize that her ESL students faced even greater challenges. For them, she admits, literacy is not just about reading. It includes speaking, listening, writing, and other content areas such as math. But, fundamentally, all her students faced the same outcomes if she failed to teach them to be literate. “If we can’t help students become competent and literate, we will lose our kids, and they will not be successful in life.” In this admission, I hear an echo of the pain she experienced during the years her son struggled in school.

**All children can learn.** After what happen to her son, Jeanette admitted, “I knew I needed to meet the needs of all my kids, and I truly do believe that all kids can learn.” She knew her ideas would take a lot of resources, so she tapped into outside sources.

I wrote grants every single year I was in the classroom, because I knew that I needed more supplies and more of everything to be successful. I got a mini-lab with 15 laptops that I used in my classroom. The last year, I got a smart board for my classroom and an LCD projector. I was able to get funding with the grant to get me a full time aid in my reading classes that last year.

Jeanette’s search for alternative resources became a personal crusade to meet the needs of all the students she taught. She taught an elective reading class that mostly acted as an intervention for struggling readers, but also contained a few gifted kids who were just avid readers. She said, “I tried to focus the class completely on [intervention], and I would have the [gifted readers] doing something totally different.” These early efforts to meet the instructional needs of all of her “kids” led to the use of small group instruction.

She had learned about small-group instruction in her English methods course where she was exposed to Nanci Atwell's (1998) work.

I just love Atwell's philosophy of reading/writing workshops. When her new book came out on *Lessons that Change Writers* (Atwell, 2002) with all of the overheads and handouts and everything to teach these lessons for a year, I thought it was a phenomenal resource.

In addition, other books (Beers, 2003; Tovani, 2000) were added to her library after she started teaching, which she said "gave me other pieces in the puzzle of how to help kids, [such as] comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, word recognition, spelling, and responding and interests." She came to realize that she had to go beyond comprehension strategy instruction (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). During interviews and observations, I came to quickly understand that Jeanette saw the teacher as being primarily responsible for the learning success of her students. This was an essential component to her belief that all children can learn.

**Teachers are responsible for student learning.** I was amazed at the dedication Jeanette demonstrated during her quest to meet the needs of every reader in her classroom. She told me it began with that first intervention class, when she started researching every single thing she could possibly find about struggling readers. She contacted companies, did research on the Internet, bought books, borrowed ideas from numerous places, and began to put together her own small group instruction. Her search on the internet led her to Washington State University where she discovered a reading program on the internet called *Read Right!* before it even came out in book form (Tadlock, 2005).

Jeanette was drawn to this program because it was based on brain research, a

topic she followed with fascination. She explained, “[*Read Right!*’s] theory is that we have to produce perfect readers. We can’t practice imperfectly and think that we are going to produce perfect readers.” Her implementation of the program was comprehensive and whole-hearted, a reflection of her belief that the teachers are responsible for their students’ learning. As she spoke, she laughed gently at the memory of all she went through as she designed and implemented that program:

It’s that whole idea of practicing perfectly. I got a set of leveled expository text from Jamestown Press. These books were labeled from book 1 to book 20. It went from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading to 12<sup>th</sup> grade reading.... I took *every* book home and recorded all the passages on a tape player at night. I was recording for *hours* and *hours* and *hours*. I got a grant again and bought tape recorders and headsets for a small group. They would listen to the passage several times. They had to listen for phrasing, pronunciation of words, and rate. When they felt like they had heard it enough with the tape that they could produce perfect reading, then they would read it to a coach, who would be my parent volunteer. I would train my parent volunteers...[to] coach them and help them to be metacognitive about what they were doing right and what they were doing wrong and how they could improve that.

Throughout the process, Jeanette was gathering data for an action research project. Her voice expressed both her excitement and her love of teaching as she noted quietly, “It was phenomenal the [fluency] gains I saw in the kids that year and we only did it for the last quarter of the year.” As I listened to her speak, there was no doubt in my mind that she knew that instructional choices made by her could change the lives of her students. When she does her curriculum planning, she makes *sure* that “kids come first.”

### **Jeanette’s Beliefs about How to Teach Reading**

As I relate Jeanette’s instructional choices, I will refer mostly to the last seven years where she taught in the middle school setting. All of those curriculum practices

have been brought to her job as Secondary Differentiation Specialist at the district level. In this new setting, she has continued to grow in her depth of understanding about the practical applications of such educational issues as differentiation, reading theory, and constructivism.

Jeanette has a passion for brain research. As she put it, “It was just the whole idea of how the brain works and all of that stuff...all of Howard Gardner’s stuff.”

Differentiated instruction is based upon the work of Howard Gardner (1983, 1991), a cognitive psychologist at Harvard School of Education who developed the theory of multiple intelligences. She attended many conferences and workshops dealing with instruction based upon brain research. “So, I really, really believe in this stuff and I used it a lot in my classrooms, before I knew it tied into differentiation.” Jeanette defined differentiation as “whatever it takes to get students to learn.” But, she went on to add:

So, [I] feel really strongly that the foundation of differentiation is assessment and good lesson design, because you’ve got to really understand where kids are at in order to differentiate... You have to have a plan. You have to know what your standards and objectives are. You need to know what mastery is, and [you] need to know what to do to get kids there. And, if you know those things, then it’s really easy to say, ‘Oh, well this kid’s here, they need to do these steps, and this kid’s already here, I need to give them more.’

Many concepts influenced Jeanette’s understanding about how to create a differentiated classroom. They included: (a) cooperative learning, the ability grouping of students within a heterogeneous classroom (Kagan, 1997), (b) grouping based upon multiple intelligence theory (Kagan & Kagan, 1998), (c) using ‘backward design’ to begin with the end in mind (McTighe & Wiggins, 2004, 2005), and (d) integrating differentiation with backward design (Nunley, 2001a, 2001b; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Jeanette had a differentiation matrix that she picked up at a conference that shows how you can differentiate content, process or product with readiness, interest, or learning style to get growth, motivation, or efficiency. I watched her create a matrix to use in a professional development lesson for the district. Prior to using the differentiation matrix, a teacher would need to do formative assessment of the students involved in the learning task. Jeanette quoted from a presenter at that conference to make her point about differentiation, “[This] is responsive teaching rather than ‘one-size fits all’ teaching.” She applied this concept as she planned instruction that would meet the literacy needs of all her students.

Jeanette’s action research project and her CORI unit both demonstrate how her educational philosophy is reflected in her instructional practices. She skillfully blended differentiated instruction (Kagan & Kagan, 1998) with small group instruction (Allen & Gonzalez, 1998) while implementing research-based best practices (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001) and the explicit teaching of comprehension strategy instruction (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

Early on in her career, Jeanette became the teacher of a special English class comprised of eighth- and ninth-grade students who had been identified as struggling readers through low scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT). These were students not currently being served by any other program. She chose to conduct an action research project to document the effectiveness of her instructional choices. Jeanette described in a college paper the instructional framework she devised during the second semester that finally made a difference for this class:



The classroom was divided into three rotations each day. Students were placed in four reading groups of five students per group. The stations were: (a) silent reading for pleasure (using books on tape), (b) timed readings (to increase reading speed), (c) coached reading (reading graded selections on tape, then rereading them aloud to a reading coach to practice reading perfectly), and (d) individual reading instruction with me (to focus on a variety of reading skills, i.e., chunking, test taking strategies, vocabulary building, comprehension building, scanning, etc.)

Jeanette held the reading workshop 3 days per week and the writing workshop 2 days per week. In addition, students read silently for almost 20 minutes every day. The improvement in group means on the SDRT was impressive after only 8 weeks of this small group instruction. However, her students could only succeed if they actively participated in the work. She had two students who refused to take responsibility for their own learning. She explained their avoidance behavior:

They refused to use the head phones because they were ‘afraid of getting lice.’ So we began disinfecting the headphones after every use. Then they said that they felt like they were too smart already and didn’t need to use head phones. One even went so far as to say that she kept hearing the voice over and over in her head after class and that it was keeping her awake at night and giving her nightmares! Interestingly, these two girls showed the least progress on the year end testing.

As a constructivist, Jeanette understood that her students had final responsibility for their own learning *after* she had done all that she could to create a successful reading program that would potentially meet each of her student’s learning needs. She succeeded in that endeavor with her CORI unit on the brain.

In her CORI unit, she was able to use differentiated instruction to increase student motivation by tapping into each student’s personal interests and style of learning. Her description of this unit left me speechless, and I finally managed to say, “Unreal.” I was deeply impressed with the planned complexity of this unit. Jeanette attended a class

offered by her district and taught by Emily Swan, author of *Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI): Engaging Classrooms and Lifelong Learners* (2003). The seven CORI principles that make up this instructional framework include the use of the following: (a) a conceptual theme, (b) real world interactions, (c) student-directed learning, (d) collaboration between participants in a variety of social structures (i.e., small group, whole class, etc.), (e) strategies by students to learn and express conceptual knowledge, (f) self-expression, and (g) teacher created coherence across the unit through the linking of activities materials and contexts (Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, & Rinegart, 1999). I could tell that this workshop had supplied Jeanette with another piece to the puzzle of how to create a constructivist classroom along with differentiated instruction. She got very intense as she talked about the CORI unit that had resulted from this workshop:

[The workshop] was fantastic. I just loved the way [Emily] pulled everything together. It is very constructivist and I really bought into that. The CORI unit I did the most [in my classes] was on the brain and I tied it in with reading *Flowers for Algernon*. When I had [the students] do their assessments and reflections at the end of the year, they [always] say, 'Always teach about the brain. Always teach *Flowers for Algernon*. It's the best thing we ever did.' Because, they learn so much and they are learning all these reading and writing skills in authentic ways.

*Flowers for Algernon* is the story of a mentally retarded janitor who volunteers to take part in an experimental, intelligence-enhancing treatment. By choosing this novel to follow the brain unit, Jeanette was deliberately planning to maximize her students' involvement.

Jeanette began the unit by placing responsibility right back on the students. "They had to write a contract of what they were going to do, explain it to their parents, and get

their parents' signature." She would tell them the lecture and computer lab schedule and have them plan their activities. They had 5 weeks of research on the brain before they ever read *Flowers for Algernon*. During that time they activated background knowledge, generated questions about the brain, conducted research, made observations, and participated in activities that gave them authentic experiences with the topic. Throughout the process, the teacher explicitly taught literacy strategies to complement the unit's activities so that the students' learning would be enhanced as they thought, listened, talked, read, and wrote to reflect, make connections and organize the information they gathered. When they finally read *Flowers for Algernon*, they were totally engaged with the story and could make authentic connections with the text now that they were *experts* on the workings of the brain.

The scaffolding of the unit's activities by Jeanette required the students to go through broad stages of learning that involve identifiable mental activities in both the day to day activities and lessons and by the assignments that were self-chosen by the students to match what Roseanne called "their preferred learning styles." She required the student's to take responsibility for their own learning throughout the process. They *more* than meet her requirements:

I would do a mini lesson at the start of each day, and then I'd say, 'Okay, does everyone know what they are supposed to be doing today? Do you have any questions? Do you know where your materials are? Okay, go.' Then they would work like *dogs* all period long. It was the most incredible thing to watch.

But, the excitement didn't end there. Some students took *engagement* to a whole different level. Jeanette related a very touching story:

Kids would say, 'Can I do every single choice? Would it be okay if I took it home

and did it for homework?’ When do kids beg for *that? Never...* and I’d go “Oh, man, I don’t know if can let you do it for homework. You really think you’d have time to do it?” “Oh, yah, yah, please, please, I’ll promise I’ll get it done. I’ll bring it back!” “Okay, if you *really* think...”

I started laughing so hard at this point as I listened to Jeanette mimic the earnest desires by her students for permission to do extra homework that she had to stop talking to join in. Soon she concluded, “It was really cool.... So, anyway, this gives you an idea of how I taught my class. It can give [you] a feel of who I am.” It does indeed.

### **Conclusion and Analysis**

Earlier in the paper, I referred to Jeanette as “eclectic.” By definition, this is a person who selects from various systems, doctrines, or sources. This is the approach she took while developing her educational philosophy and personal approach to teaching. Even the constructivist framework through which she views the world of education is itself eclectic in its makeup, “shape-shifting” in its definition depending on whose aspect of constructivism you aspire to (Oxford, 1997). Vicariously, she extended her eclectic viewpoint of the world to her students as she differentiated the content, process and context of the instruction in her classroom to meet the individual learning needs of each student.

Jeanette claimed that she came out of her English methods class a constructivist. In fact, her CORI unit can be used to illustrate adherence to Oxford’s three tenets of that theory. CORI is “an instructional framework for enhancing reading engagement” (Guthrie et al., 1999). This organizational framework is contingent upon the learner becoming an active participant in the implementation of the unit and the construction of

knowledge. Jeanette noticed that many students complained that it was too hard and boring. She realized, “They were having to read and perform as readers every day for the first time in their lives. Once they realized we were serious, they settled down and really worked hard.” Jeanette believed that this group of students needed teacher-led explicit instruction, so Jeanette’s use of small group instruction allowed her to differentiate the content and process based upon each student’s readiness level. Though Jeanette picked the topic of the brain, the students worked together to formulate questions, to conduct research to answer those questions, and finally to draw conclusions. This demonstrated the various aspects of the Deweyian-style constructivist approach to inquiry-based learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

When Jeanette took university classes, her choices were also eclectic; she did not just stick with one discipline in her course of study. She took English, reading, ESL *and* instructional technology. Through these educational experiences, she developed multiple “ways of knowing” that blended to create the uniqueness of her educational philosophy, to allow her to see the reading process through multiple perspectives, and to incorporate divergent instructional choices into her repertoire of classroom practices.

When she ran her classroom, her approach was eclectic; she searched for anything that would help her to meet her students’ needs. Her instructional repertoire included differentiation, layered curriculum and understanding by design, research-based best practices, inquiry-based instruction, cooperative learning, explicitly taught strategy instruction, fluency activities that included both silent and oral components, layered book sets, books on tape, whole group instruction, reading workshops, and writing workshops.

Though her dominant theoretical orientation is constructivism, she also incorporated into her instructional approach other theoretical perspectives such as behaviorism (e.g., fluency practice and decoding drills), theories of literacy development (e.g., literacy rich classroom environment), social learning perspectives (e.g., modeling), and information/processing cognitive perspectives (e.g., comprehension instruction; Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

Jeanette was not an educator who you can easily label as belonging to one clear “way of knowing” of how to teach reading. However, it was possible to identify what her multiple perspectives were, how she developed them, and ultimately how she applied them instructionally in the classroom. Jeanette took English, reading, ESL and instructional technology and developed multiple “ways of knowing” that blended to create her educational philosophy and practice. It allowed her to see the reading process through multiple perspectives and to incorporate divergent instructional applications into her repertoire of classroom practices to address the differing needs of her students. This also made her open-minded in her beliefs. This attribute has also made her knowledge construction more flexible and adaptable to adding new beliefs to her philosophies. For her pictorial analysis of Jeanette’s belief development about how to teach each reading, see Figure 4.2.

### **Pat’s Biographical Sketch and Self-Stated Beliefs**

The personality trait that came to mind every time I had to work with Pat was “practical.” Webster’s New World College Dictionary defines practical as “concerned

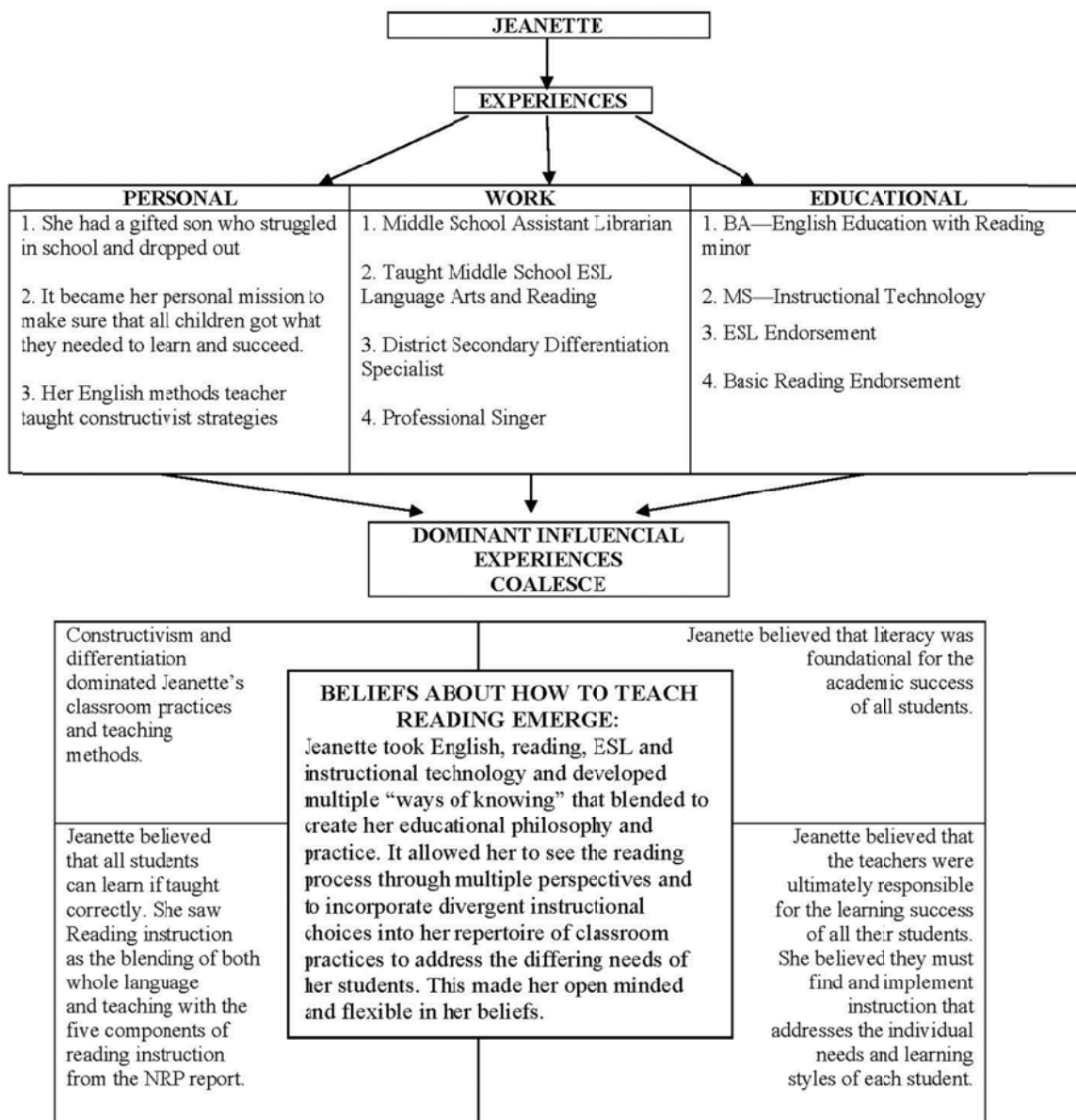


Figure 4.2. Development template of Jeanette's beliefs about how to teach reading.

with the application of knowledge to useful ends, rather than with theory, speculation, etc.” At the district level, Pat was a special education secondary curriculum specialist. Ideally suited for inclusion on the Secondary Reading Intervention Program (SRIP) coaching team, Pat acted as the resident expert on special education instruction. Since

SRIP was a seventh-grade intervention focused on Tier 2 and Tier 3 student populations, her expertise was highly relevant. The majority of Pat's work experience and formal education has been focused in the middle school setting. In other words, she thinks through the multiple lens, that of a secondary educator, a special education teacher, and a regular classroom teacher. She began her journey towards providing literacy access to all students through the influence of her parents.

### **Pat's Personal Experiences**

Pat grew up in a home that valued books. Her mother was a teacher who was a big library user. Her father was a social worker who worked for vocational rehabilitation. From an early age, her parents helped shape her philosophy that everyone deserves equal access (to just about everything), but not everybody gets it. So from an early age, she was aware of how disabilities can create barriers.

Pat recalled that throughout high school and college, she just wasn't interested in academics. However, because of parental support, she was able to correct that, go back to school and really focus on what mattered. She seemed genuinely grateful for that second chance and deeply aware "that not everybody is as fortunate." She realized that all the other activities, her friends, the social aspects of school, and strong familial support were what kept her in school. "When I see these...little kids who don't have that support, I think that's a big deal for me...We need to really tune into what their interests are and fill in the gaps where they have gaps." Practical as ever, Pat went to college and took home economics, a discipline rooted in the fundamentals of daily life skills.



### **Pat's Educational Experiences**

Pat graduated from college in the 1970s. Not quite sure about what she wanted to study, she took a variety of courses in clothing and nutrition and other things like that. Wanting to finish her degree, she sensibly approached planning her schedule by asking “Okay, where do I have the most credits, and how can I get out the fastest?” She graduated with a home economics composite degree. Entering the workplace, she worked in a variety of businesses, primarily as a merchandising representative.

Interestingly, Pat's focus on reading as a critical life skill developed while she was getting her bachelor's degree in home economics. Though she saw the value in learning to manage budgets and other critical life skills, she did not feel that home economics got to the core of those essential skills people really needed to function effectively in society. She saw something like reading as being one of those core skills, and that later on added to a growing interest in special education, with an emphasis on teaching the basic skills of reading and writing. She remembers, “I had to get down to the essential core to make it feel like my work is meaningful.” Reading as a basic core skill was the foundation of her literacy philosophy.

When her children started in school, Pat took a part-time job at the local high school where she was assigned to their Home Study Department. She worked with students who needed to make up credits or who had dropped out of school, but were willing to work independently. She had some interactions with students who had learning problems. “I couldn't figure out why they couldn't write...why they couldn't write sentences...why they couldn't read.” Pat then took a class in learning disabilities at the

university which sparked her interest and lead to even more classes. Eventually she got a master's degree in special education and started teaching. This was in the late 1980s.

While at the university, she had extensive training on behavior management, collaboration and strategy instruction, etc., but very little content area instruction, which made it difficult later when she had to teach students with disabilities in a special education self-contained classroom.

### **Pat's Work Experiences**

Hired at a middle school, Pat was a special education teacher who taught resource classes in math, English, reading, and study skills. She taught an English class, where reading was also supposed to be taught, but where the students could not read. Not knowing how to combine the two, reading and language arts, she separated the content areas, allowing her to focus on just reading. Some of her students qualified only for English or only for reading, while others qualified for both.

In addition, she did some coteaching with regular classroom teachers who served a variety of students. Pat recognized that she was not a content specialist and struggled with knowing how to teach the various content areas. She elaborated, "It was almost like I had to go on my own little personal quest to learn how to teach reading." She focused on getting a secondary basic reading endorsement which is mainly children's literature, reading in the content areas, and theories of reading development. The program focused a lot on theory, with little practical applications. Since it was all focused on secondary reading instruction, Pat did not have courses on early childhood reading. She did not receive any instruction on phonics or fluency, while the concept of phonemic awareness

was not even mentioned. Though she fulfilled all the requirements for a reading endorsement, the coursework never got down to the decoding level, but focused primarily on content area reading and other things aspects specific to secondary instruction and adolescent literacy.

Pat noted, “I knew how to teach strategies, comprehension strategies, but not really decoding. So, I really had to try to figure that out on my own.” She began tutoring at the local university reading center in their *Next Steps* program and pursued a *Wilson Reading* certification, which was an intervention program. She attended training by Lindamood-Bell that dealt with phonemic awareness and auditory processing. “All these programs were very systematic, and they focused on multisensory approaches designed to meet specific student needs,” she clarified. The programs she received training for could be used with struggling readers in regular or special education or classrooms. The courses and workshops she attended over the years were a mixture. She clarified:

You had a mix of people...and some of them were from a special [education] perspective, and some of them were just a regular reading perspective.... You know, it’s the same skills that you teach... I’ve come to realize that it doesn’t even matter, because you follow the same sequence in reading, whether you have learning disabilities or not. What differs is the explicitness of the delivery and the careful sequencing of the skills.

This statement reflected Pat’s strong beliefs that every student can learn, and that “one size does not fit all,” and that education needs to be fluid to meet the needs of the students based upon where they are.

Progressing to the district level, Pat was hired to fill a brand new position: secondary special education curriculum specialist. During her first year, she spent a lot of time gathering and pairing materials for the teachers in the self-contained units so that

they could teach their classes. They were teaching history, science, health and math on the same units, so Pat's similar difficulties of that area had helped prepare her to meet their needs as content area teachers. In addition she worked on getting reading instruction into the special education classrooms at the middle school level. Reading instruction at that level was very haphazard and focused mainly on strategy instruction. The need for reading classrooms increase as Response to Intervention (Allington & Walmsley, 2007) became another avenue for students to be referred to special education.

One of Pat's major goals was to create a link between special education and regular education. She explained the problem, "Special ed is not a remedial program. It's for individuals with disabilities." In other words, entrance into special education was dependent on a discrepancy model. She continued, "So, there was this huge group of kids who did not qualify for special ed and who really were struggling with reading.... I remember my counselor saying that they're just failing everything. They can't read, and I would have to say, 'But, they don't qualify for special [education].'"

Pat, as a practical person, was grounded in multiple perspectives about learning. She was flexible in her thinking, often viewing educational issues through a dichotomy, influenced by her role as a general teacher and her role as a special education teacher. Pat held strong beliefs that every student could learn, and that "one size does not fit all," and that education needs to be fluid to meet the needs of the students based upon where they are. Ultimately, her beliefs all coalesced on equitable access to good teaching and literacy skills for all.

### **Pat's Educational and Literacy Philosophies**

When Pat talked about this idea that “one size does not fit all” in education, she was referring to the use of only one method of teaching. When only one method was used, she felt that it will reach some students, but not others. She elaborated, “I think direct, explicit instruction is really for certain students. But I think for a gifted student, more of an inquiry-based instruction would probably be more appropriate for them.” Fluid teaching meant the ability to change across grades and content disciplines to meet the needs of the students. She insisted that teachers need a wide repertoire of skills to be that fluid. She further explained, “I think all classes need a mix of operative learning, independent learning, and direct instruction to meet the needs of students... I think really an effective teachers need to have all those [skills].”

Pat believed strongly that there were certain basic skills that are essential for everyone to know “to function in society, to get a job, to be able to read their own children, to enjoy things to be able to access everything in the community.” Access to these basic literacy skills constituted for Pat what I felt was her personal form of social justice. She went on, “I guess it’s unfair that some students, some people, are able to develop those literacy skills and that some aren’t. That some have access to their full potential and other people do not.” For Pat, what kept someone from having such access were disabilities. For Pat, all people with disabilities needed access to quality programs and access to teachers who had the expertise to meet their needs in order to “have a meaningful life [and] to earn a living.”

Pat spoke specifically about her special education students. “We always refer to

special [education] kids as [being] like Swiss cheese, because they've been in school and they have a lot of sight words, but they really don't know how to get [cold read], multi-syllable words." She believes that for the special education population focus should be placed on their deficits, which should be shored up as quickly as possible. In addition, students with disabilities should also have sequential instruction with decoding as the first step and comprehension as the end goal. She stipulated, however, that students with disabilities should also be encouraged to enjoy and to engage in wide reading. "In my classroom, I've got lots and lots of books at all levels. I had books on skateboarding. I had *Where's Waldo* books. I had comic books. I had magazines.... I tried to find a lot of things the kids were interested in, have them available and to just really have an environment where there were lots of print materials at different levels and different [interests].... I found more success by just getting a lot of really easy print material that they could browse through."

While serving as a middle school literacy coach, Pat worked with teachers on their classroom organizational skills to get them to embrace a model where different stations were being used in their classrooms. This allowed for the differentiation of instruction for each child to work independently on actual authentic reading at one station, and then to work at a separate station location to receive direct instruction from a teacher designed specifically with their needs in mind. Her goal was to try to set up a classroom organizational structure for them, so they could see that there was always a way to work individually with students. As I listened to her talk, I realized that Pat was trying to create opportunities for explicit instruction that was differentiated by those

needs that were identified through assessment. She wanted to find those “Swiss cheese” holes, so that instruction could be designed to address individual needs, whether in a special education or in a regular education classrooms.

When Pat presented samples from her professional library, she recognized that she had a variety of comprehension, vocabulary, and assessment texts. She stated, “The books that I use are just for my own general information, and then my own knowledge base.” She liked *When Kids Can’t Read* (Beers, 2003) because it really got into practical applications. Another text, *Strategies That Work* (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000) and *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement* (Marzano et al., 2001) were often referred to by Pat when she did in services for teachers. “Mostly, [these are on] comprehension strategies, [and] I just use it them to let teachers know about the most effective strategies like building background knowledge.” Other books used to teach teachers dealt with word knowledge using multi-sensory manipulatives with their reading instruction (Bear, Inverizzi, Templeton & Johnston, 2007; Ganske, 2000; Honig, Diamond, Gutlohn & Mahler, 2000).

Pat also liked the idea of starting with the end goals in mind and used *Reading for Understanding* (Schoenbach et al., 1999) and *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) in conjunction. These reminded her that “there are other parts of reading...[such as] social, culture, motivation and that reading skills are not just in isolation.” She also had books dealing with vocabulary instruction (Allen, 1999; Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002), writing workshops (Calkins, 1994) and coaching writing (Wilhelm, 2007).

For assessment, Pat used a reference book called *Advanced Applications of Curriculum-based Measurements* (Shinn, 1998), which gave her background information on *DIBELS* (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) and all the fluency measures. Pat had recently picked up *The Voice of Evidence in Reading Research* (McCardle & Chhara, 2004) so she could “just evaluate what everyone says” about the NRP report. She commented, “They say it’s the end all, but is it? It would be nice to know...and get a little bit of feedback.”

Since Pat used a lot of books on computers, she had *Computer and Web Resources for People with Disabilities: A Guide to Exploring Today’s Assistive Technology* (Alliance for Technology Access, 2004). She commented here, “That’s big for us, because some of these kids who have severe disabilities their progress is going to be slower and yet they still need access to the content...and grade level materials so that they’re not always stuck reading low level materials.” She read a lot on assistive technology to find different tools to help her special education students with reading. Many of her students had special attention deficit needs, so she used *How to Reach and Teach Children with ADD/ADHD: Practical Techniques, Strategies, and Interventions* (Rief, 2005), because it dealt with the climate of the classroom and how to deal with difficult behaviors. She noted, “That behavioral component [is] a big part of dealing with special education students” (Gillingham & Stillman, 1997) and to understand more about the biological issue uncovered about dyslexia and the brain research (Clark & Uhry, 1995; Shaywitz, 2003).

Pat also had books she used to help elementary and middle school students who



struggled with reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2006). She admitted that in the past she had subscribed to professional journals (i.e., *The Reading Teacher*; *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*; *Educational Leadership*; and *Teaching Exceptional Children*). Now when she wanted to get information, she often goes on the Internet to find a quick article.

### **Conclusion and Analysis**

Pat had a variety of personal, work, and educational experiences. From the most influential of these experiences, Pat developed her dominant beliefs about learning and how to teach reading. Through the influence of her parents, Pat was raised to believe that all students should have access to good instruction. As a teacher, she taught reading in both the special education and regular education classroom environment. She learned to gear her instruction to the needs of each individual student of matter what the context or setting. She firmly believed that “one size does not fit all.” Such a philosophy has the potential deny access to various populations.

Pat’s education and work experiences had been centered on the middle school setting. She had developed an adolescent literacy secondary perspective or paradigm as it applies to literacy instruction in the regular education classroom setting. Pat’s literacy instructional applications there were focused on wide reading, strategy instruction, and supporting literacy in the content area discipline. Pat had also developed a special education instructional perspective or paradigm that applied to struggling readers in the special education setting. She approached instructional decisions for these students by identifying deficits and then matching students to skills mastery programs and interventions that address those needs. At the local university reading center, Pat was

taught to dress discrete skill mastery for struggling students with such programs as *Early Steps*, *Next Steps Howard Street Tutoring* and *Wilson Reading*.

Pat's beliefs about how to teach reading emerged from these experiences. She dichotomized her beliefs about how to teach based upon population and whether she was teaching students in special or regular education classrooms. She believed that reading instruction should utilize multiple approaches and be matched to the needs of each student based on grade level and classroom-based. For her pictorial analysis of Pat's belief development about how to teach each reading see Figure 4.3

### **Stacy's Biographical Sketch and Self-Stated Beliefs**

Stacy was reluctant at first to become part of this study, because she had recently been the lone case study participant in another study. Even though I spent the least amount of time interviewing Stacy, she appeared to me to be an introspective person who weighed her responses carefully. Yet, when she did state her views, her responses were decisive and clear. Stacy was articulate and passionate about her beliefs, was viewed by her peers and colleagues as a model reading teacher, and had a highly developed view of the world heavily influenced by her prior careers and international travels. Her formal education was spread broadly across the social sciences of education, political science, anthropology, culture and society. This reflected a strong desire on her part to learn about people, their needs, their cultures, and their languages. Her travels exposed her to multiple languages and cultures.

To me, the best way to describe Stacy is dynamic, energetic, vigorous, and

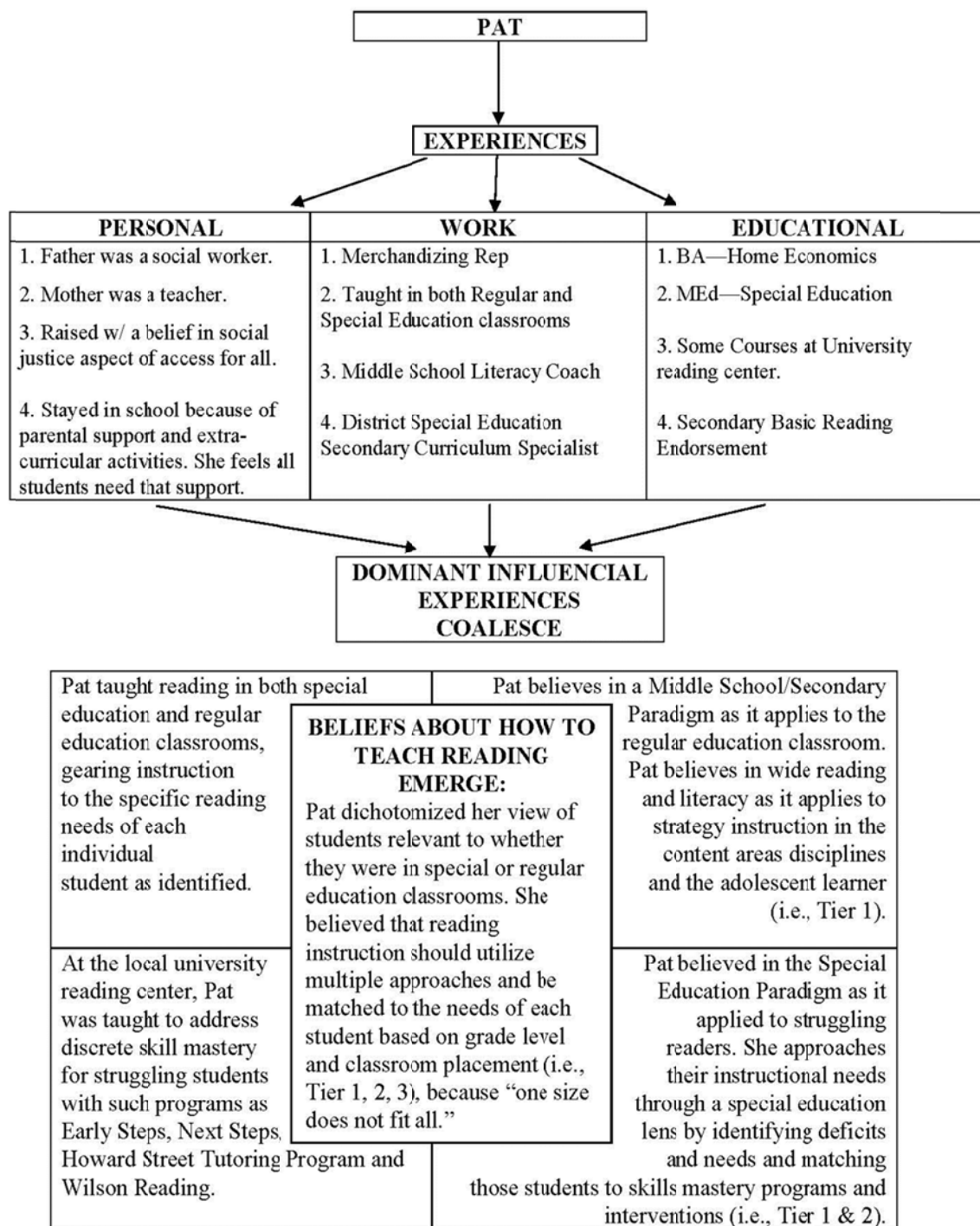


Figure 4.3. Development template of Pat’s beliefs about how to teach reading.

forceful. Yet her forceful personality was tempered by her sincere belief in honoring the feelings, viewpoints, and differences of others. Stacy was a master teacher before she came to work at the district level. Teachers from the intervention cohort want opportunities to observe in “model” classrooms within the district. Stacy’s class was one of those chosen. Stacy’s dynamic personality and teaching excellence had been noticed by many other teachers, and one day she entertained 20 teachers in her classroom who were there observing her teaching. That exposure eventually led to her becoming hired by her district as a Literacy Coach where she became part of the SRIP coaching team. Her job at the district level as a literacy coach allowed her to give classroom embedded assistance to teachers trying to implement changes and improvement of their reading instruction. She also supported and acted as a resource for the program’s cohort of teachers as they implemented reading instruction based upon the professional development lessons in workshops provided by SRIP. Stacy was greatly influenced by both her personal and work experiences, her formal education and her extensive world travels.

Stacy was influenced by several pivotal experiences in the development of her educational philosophy. These experiences all had a lasting effect. They taught her life lessons that reflected both who Stacy was, and who she would become. They influenced the development of both her professional knowledge and her expertise as an educator. In addition, Stacy’s earlier careers exposed her to opportunities to teach and be in close proximity to a variety of youth outside of the classroom. So even before she entered the educational realm, Stacy was particularly drawn to the adolescent learner.

### **Stacy's Personal Experiences**

In college, Stacy chose to study disciplines in the social sciences that reflected her deep, personal interest in other cultures and languages. While attending a small liberal arts college from 1986 to 1990, Stacy earned dual bachelor's degrees in both anthropology and political science. Afterwards, she went on to do extensive traveling in South America and Southeast Asia, even attended a language school in Peru where she became proficient in Spanish. Her travels contributed significantly to the teacher that Stacy eventually became. She claimed, "It's really shaped the way I view my students. I have traveled a lot in South America, and I have had a lot of South American students."

### **Stacy's Educational Experiences**

In 2000, Stacy enrolled in a graduate program and earned her master's degree in Education, Culture, and Society. This was a natural choice given her background. "I just really enjoyed people and cultures. It's been interesting to hear the different stories from different peoples all over the country, all over the world. It's been interesting to hear and learn different languages." So during her master's work, she focused on second language acquisition while also getting a reading endorsement. In addition to this focus, the program was "really, really political." She went on to explain how that the master's program's focus was also very political and deeply philosophical;

It was great... I read a lot of Karl Marx. I read a lot of feminist pedagogy.... We read a lot about Pablo Friere, and that was interesting work. I really learned a lot...[which] I believe shaped my education. Post-structuralism.... It was just really interesting to learn. At the same time, I was doing a lot of linguistics courses. These linguistic courses definitely fit into my educational background. [Laughing here.] Sometimes, I'd think we need a revolution to change things.... But, you know, that's very Marxist.

Stacy knew she wanted to teach in the public school system, preferably in one place, instead of being out in the field all the time.

### **Stacy's Work Experiences**

After her travels, but before she pursued her master's degree, Stacy came back to the United States from her extensive world traveling and worked for the YMCA. She said, "I was the program director, and outreach director, so I designed programs for inner city youth. Great job! I loved that job; it was so fun!" Next, she worked for a wilderness treatment clinic for adjudicated youth. She was part of an organization in Boston and then Idaho that would lead urban youth out on wilderness expeditions to help build their self-esteem. She clarified, "[We had] lots of kids from New York City and Los Angeles. Basically, the parents sent them to this program.... I have been working with adolescents my whole career."

After graduate school, she taught at the local middle school. She was hired at the school where she had done her student teaching, and she immediately started teaching second language learners. At first she taught all English as a Second Language (ESL) classes across the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades that combined those three grade levels. Her ESL classes included reading and remedial reading. Later in her career she got her English endorsement and taught language arts as well.

### **Stacy's Educational and Literacy Philosophies**

Stacy's general educational philosophy developed throughout her years of travel, her work with urban youth, and her formal education in culture and society. Stacy

believes, “All kids can learn when [they are] provided with the right resources to match their needs... It’s very differentiated instruction.” Her instruction was also based upon the core curriculum, and its standards and proficiencies. Her students could choose what they wanted to do, but the assignments were designed according to core standards that had to be met. She elaborated, “I think all kids can learn the core curriculum, but...you [still] need to differentiate your structure according to their needs, because all kids are very different.”

As a young student herself, Stacy had a difficult time sitting still and felt real empathy for her students who struggled with that. She applied this earlier experience to her teaching. “We did vocabulary in a very kinesthetic way. It was whole class, but we were out there using it [in ways that were] relevant and meaningful to their lives.” However, she admits she basically learned everything she knew after her undergraduate degrees during her travels. She learned to speak another language. Expressively, she stated that she also learned about the world through “seeing it, by touching it, by feeling it.” She realized she learned a lot of skills through this self-exploration process. She sees a link between her own self-exploring and how she believes children learn. “I have learned a lot in that way and I know kids learn that way. I haven’t seen a whole lot of kids in my career who like to be taught in a way where I [the teacher] am sitting up there lecturing.” She really believes passionately that you need “to teach according to the...needs of these adolescent students.” In her personal library, *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice* (Wolfe, 2001) supports her belief that its students need to be exposed to experiential learning.

When Stacy began to talk about her literacy philosophy, she seemed more tentative and actually asked me what I would say a literacy philosophy was. I told her, “Reading, writing...anything that has to do with literacy acquisition and learning to read. If I asked you how you view the teaching of children, teach them to read, what’s your philosophy about teaching them to read?” Stacy promptly replied, “I think motivation is a real big part of my philosophy. If you are motivated to read, you’re really going to do well. I think success feeds motivation.”

**Motivation and wide reading.** When she was trying to motivate her students to improve their fluency she was very honest with her students. She was very successful in her classroom when she would tell her students what their fluency levels were privately. She would say:

Hey, you’re reading in the second-grade level. Your goal is to get to the third-grade level. Your next goal is to get to the fourth-grade level.... They’ll tell you straight what they can’t do [such as] ‘I don’t understand a word I read’ or ‘You’re right, I can’t decode these big words.’ They know.... Tapping into what they know about their reading abilities and then making goals to help them with those difficulties and then showing them the success. You can do that through showing them two assessments we use [for fluency]. It’s been very powerful for [my] kids.

In her own classroom, she had what she called “the best library ever.” She wanted to see what middle school students were reading. She talked to a “bunch of librarians;” she talked to the kids; she really researched what the students might like before she bought her classroom library. She was awarded a grant of \$8,000 to purchase her reading library. Her students would read out loud with their peers, bringing that social aspect into it. This extensive library allowed her students to read a book of their choice that was on their level for 25 minutes each day. She commented, “They probably read an average of five



books a year just in my class.... I can't control what they're doing outside the classroom, but I can control what is going on in my classroom...they were reading tons and they were having success with that.”

When I went on to ask her how she viewed the teaching of reading, she paused and said, “That’s a hard one. I’ll tell you what... I believe in the National Reading Panel findings. I really [put] a lot of stock [into] teaching reading with those five components.”

**Report of the National Reading Panel.** When I surveyed Stacy’s professional library, there were two books that she felt supported the findings of the NRP. She particularly liked the way Allington’s (2001), *What Really Matters About Struggling Readers*, focused on adolescent literacy, talked a lot about motivation, but also brought in the five components from the NRP report. Also in her library was *The Voice of Evidence in Reading Research* (McCardle & Chhabra, 2004), which supported her belief in the five components by defending the NRP report. She strongly believed that these five components are essential to any reform efforts of reading programs (Shanahan, 2006).

According to Stacy, this second book summarized all the research of every component and supports the implementation of research-based reading practices. For her, this book “just says what’s strong [and] what’s not strong.” She came to realize that a practice that she was using was being “bashed as ineffective” by the research. That was an epiphany for her, this idea of linking research with practical application. She stated decisively, “I think your philosophy changes through experiences, and I think my philosophy has definitely evolved with his new reading research.” Though Stacy went on to admit that the NRP findings were missing the motivation part, which has been very

important in her teaching, she still rated its findings as being as highly relevant at the secondary level.

At the secondary level, Stacy believed that both phonics and phonemic awareness are important. She clarified, “There are some kids in a real low class, a special ed class. They’re reading at a primer, first-grade level. [A colleague] brought it to my attention that these kids were not able to distinguish the sounds in the words and the sounds in the syllables.” Interestingly, when I asked Stacy if that problem could be remediated with students at the secondary level, she said the following:

Yes... I think kids need to be read, read, read, reading. We can isolate these components, but if they’re not consuming tons of text, it doesn’t matter how many *REWARDS* lessons you go through, you’re not going to be able to see those words in context.... They need to be reading tons of different types of text, consuming them on their level in order for them to bump up to the next level. So, that’s a big part of my philosophy.

In addition, she felt the same way about the other five components from the NRP report such as vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. She also agrees with the cohort’s additional emphasis on writing.

According to Stacy “reading and writing go hand-in-hand,” so as the district built their framework for the secondary reading intervention program they added writing to the other five components. She called vocabulary instruction “huge” and found *Bringing Words to Life* (Beck et al., 2002) and *Words, Words, Words: Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4-12* (Allen, 1999) to be very influential since they “change the way I looked at vocabulary.” She believes that vocabulary instruction is particularly important for the ESL population that she has served since they often have limited academic vocabulary. She added, “Vocabulary is huge for the adolescent... It makes or breaks the reader.” As a

reading coach, she plans to focus on vocabulary this next year because that's what the teachers have been begging for. When teaching vocabulary, Stacy claimed, "We're going to focus on specific word instruction.... You got to say the words.... Say it.... Read it.... Use it in a variety of contexts.... Kinesthetically use it. As a teacher, I was big on kinesthetics...acting it out...constantly using it in a variety of different ways."

Stacy was a teacher with her own classroom from 2001 to 2007. After that, she began her literacy coaching career at the district level in SRIP to mentor the same teachers from the cohort who had gone into her classroom to observe her teaching. According to Stacy, "They were just like, 'I want to do this like you did.' That was the clincher [in getting the job]." She was hired to work with the teachers in the cohort in their individual classrooms. But it hasn't been easy. She admits;

I've done a lot of negotiating around personalities more than anything else this year. You really have to develop relationships and rapport. This is work with the coalition of the willing. [You go work with] people and those people will talk to other people [who then wanted to come] on board and that is exactly what happened. Those people that I worked intensely with really have talked a lot about good things that have happened in their classroom as a result of that. They mention it at professional development, so it's been perfect. You know, the resistant ones are now asking for me to come into their classrooms. That's been great.... But it's still a hard, hard job.

Stacy has two books on literacy coaching to help her in her current job, *The Effective Literacy Coach: Using Inquiry to Support Teacher in Learning* (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007) and *Literacy Coaching: Developing Effective Teachers Through Instructional Dialogue* (Duncan, 2006). What she learned most out of these two books is how to conduct dialogue with people in order to have them be more reflective. They have informed her ideas about the reflective nature of teaching how coaching should really

empower that reflection.

Eventually, Stacy wants to go back into the classroom as an elementary school teacher. That has come out of her desire to be a better reading coach. “That would be really good for my reading career, to bring it full circle, because I know a lot of the early research, but you got to actually do it.”

### **Conclusion and Analysis**

As I said earlier, I felt that the word dynamic best described the Stacy I came to know. She was vigorous, energetic, lively and active. She recognized the value in being able to change, since “when you are dealing with students and teachers, you’re dealing with humans that are constantly changing.” She recognized that certain things that she believed in could be traced back to her undergraduate studies in anthropology and political science, a social learning perspective that is often found in adolescent literacy research. Yet, she also believed heavily in the five components from the NRP report that focused on mastery learning of discrete reading related skills sets. She was aware of this dichotomy in her belief system and was very careful towards the end of our conversation to clarify why that dichotomy existed in her educational and literacy philosophies.

I do look at different people’s different cultures differently. I think [the main part of my] philosophy is there. But, right now I don’t like to mess with the research. I just think the research speaks for itself and until there is other research out there I’m going to teach according to what the research says. But, there is also a human dynamic, a human twist to it that I view as very important, too. I coach each teacher differently. I teach kids differently, too. But even more than my bachelor studies, my travels to Fiji, Tahiti, New Zealand, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Costa Rica have influenced me. I try and learn what cultures have and to be respectful and sensitive to the different cultures that I teach.... So, I think my education and my experiences have definitely shaped my teaching philosophy.

Stacy's extensive world traveling her interest in the social sciences in culture influenced her beliefs about how she viewed it interacted with both her students and the other teachers. She believed in honoring their feelings, viewpoints, and differences. She believed that all students can learn if instruction was differentiated to meet their needs. She also believed that motivation and wide reading were keys to both reading and academic success. Stacy believed in experiential learning and research-based reading instruction that actively involved, engaged, and motivated the learner she believed the reading curriculum development based upon the core curriculum and its standards and also the five components of the NRP report, which provided an instructional reading framework.

Stacy's dominant beliefs about how to teach reading were based on a blending of the above stated beliefs and principles. She believed in the utilization of research-based reading instruction is framed by the five components of the NRP report. Within that framework, she also believed that students need to be actively engaged in learning through experiences that were motivating. For a pictorial analysis of Stacy's belief development about how to teach each reading, see Figure 4.4.

### **Claire's Biographical Sketch and Self-stated Beliefs**

From the day I met Claire, I found her to be very approachable and easy to talk with. Her unique personality combined kindness and intelligence, which made me want to talk about my endeavors and to elicit her opinion. I believe this came from an instinctive perception on my part of a deeply empathetic nature that clearly saw and

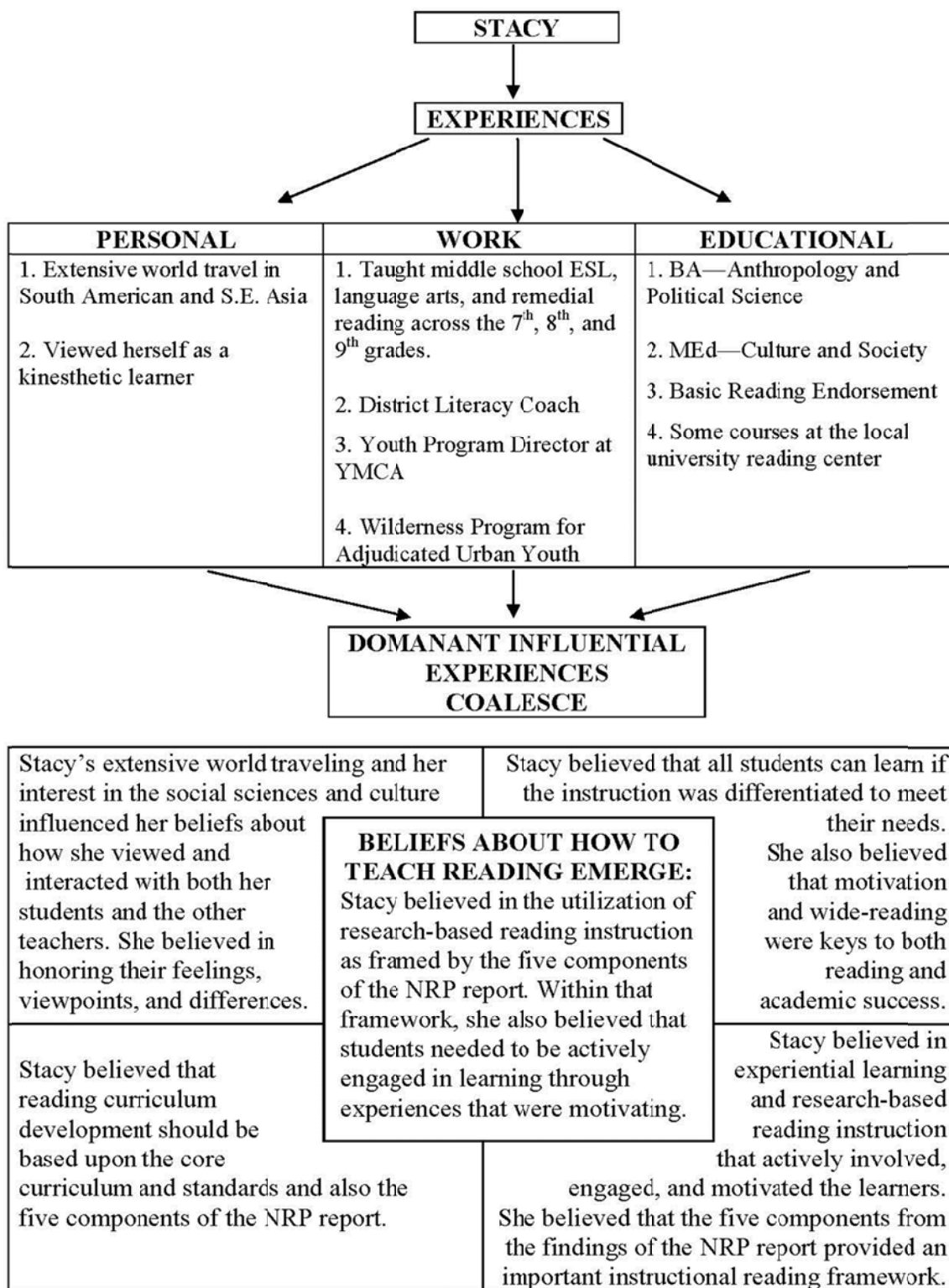


Figure 4.4. Development template of Stacy’s beliefs about how to teach reading.

understood those around her. I felt at times that one of her unofficial roles in the cohort was that of mediator. Perhaps this role was intentional or just the product of her skilled interpersonal and relational machinations across the group of professionals within the SRIP with divergent expertise.

Claire's instructional role in the coaching cohort involved her knowledge and expertise of assessment. Nora brought her in at the beginning along with Pat and an ESL specialist (who never became a real part of the cohort) to look specifically at struggling readers. There were so few assessments dealing with reading at the secondary level that, according to Claire, "we ended up using DIBLES for our incoming seventh graders, and then AIMS, because it is so much like DIBLES, and it's well respected and researched." Claire claims that when the cohort got together at this point, they talked about the importance of the five components from the NRP report at the secondary level and that such a focus might be "the way to go" for the intervention project.

### **Claire's Personal Experiences**

Claire's educational and literacy philosophies first began to develop when she was in high school. She had moved to New Jersey from the West. She states, "I had always been in a student and it had always been easy. It hadn't ever been challenging. I didn't realize that until I got to New Jersey, and it was highly academic there. [The] teachers were remarkable. I had never had teachers like I had there." Claire's English teacher in New Jersey was a former editor at a publishing house in New York, and her drama coach was an actor for Broadway. Her English teacher was hard and pushed her to learn how to write. She remembers that all her teachers "pushed the envelope and you

really had to work.”

Claire’s teachers often used lecturing, but more often it was discussion that pushed the students’ thinking. Her friends out West usually only read a book or two each year for their school, while in her New Jersey school they were reading a book of week and doing some rather intense discussion and thematic units. She recalls, “It was much more hands on than anything I’d had before, so that’s kind of how my philosophy developed when I started teaching.”

Claire had always been a ferocious reader, but until she got to New Jersey she didn’t remember that she ever talked about the books she had to read in school. She remembers talking about issues, but not the books themselves. In New Jersey, she remembers, “We read a book a week; we discussed it and we took it inside out, and we wrote papers and we researched and we really got to know the meat of everything we read.” The students were required to do three hours of homework each night, which included the assigned books. Then, they were required to be prepared to come back to class and discuss it. I suspect Claire was in a tracked system back in New Jersey, and she was in Track One. That would’ve been similar to being in all gifted classes. I experienced the same type of system during the early 1970s in Nebraska.

### **Claire’s Work Experiences**

After high school, Claire went back to her home state in the West for college. When the Claire first began her bachelor’s degree, she planned to study history and French. Marriage and children intervened and delayed her studies for a few years. When she finally went back in the early 1980s, Claire took extension courses in elementary



education. Her first job in teaching was that what she called a “highly impacted school,” a low income area that had experienced multigenerational poverty. She remembers, “I was given a two/three gifted split and was completely unaware of how to do that.” In addition, she started her school year in October, so she missed all the orientation meetings and time to prepare for class. Teaching a gifted class led to her to getting her gifted endorsement. She taught gifted third grade for two more years before she transferred to a school “that was more middle-class. And so the gifted classes were much more gifted, much more able, too.... They were just more capable.” She taught primarily gifted, self-contained classes across third, fourth, and fifth grades. She also had the opportunity to teach a first grade high reading group and a second grade low math group.

After what Claire had experienced in New Jersey, she was determined to make her instruction interesting, open-ended, inquiry-based, and challenging. She did not resort to using worksheets “unless absolutely necessary.” Claire went on to elaborate about the kind of teacher she was:

I was much more of a process kind of teacher. I think about my kids, needs, and I would pretest them. I would design curriculum based on their needs. I seldom went by the book. And I always tried to have an engaging, hands-on way to learn. So, when we did simple machines for science, they actually made simple machines.... I still did the same kinds of things with my low math [class]. I had it all hands-on. It was some direct instruction, some practice.... And I try to make it interesting and rigorous, even for the low kids. They needed that so that was how I designed my instruction. I tried to make it always thoughtful and I designed it to their needs.

Claire admitted that she had no idea how to teach students to read. She taught grammar, but primarily had her students do a lot of reading and discussing and comparing. She would have them look at the text structure of various genres such as the science textbook,

poetry, narrative, etc. She would use the text from the basal texts provided, but not the instructional piece. She would use them to teach grammar embedded in the basal.

During her first 3 years of teaching, Claire had training in a district-generated program about reading instruction. This was a direct instruction program that came out before the advent of whole language. Instructionally, it involved the use of memorized prompts and was prescribed. Claire hated it. She was required to teach it with her gifted students and she absolutely hated it. One thing she did admire about the program was the way the reading was broken down into components. That was very helpful for a new teacher who would come out of her teacher credentialing program without any knowledge of how to teach reading. She recalls, “Every single component of reading she had a book on and had a way to introduce it and practice it... It was actually quite nice to have that part. But, I would usually choose not to do the direct instruction piece.” Eventually, however, data came in on the program’s effectiveness, and since it was not what they had hoped for “the program sort of melted away.” However, she also became a trainer for *Talents Unlimited*, which was a critical thinking model of instruction. This approach came out of the gifted research and dealt with how children think. This training dominated Claire’s instructional practice and “clarified the thinking skills for me and [became] a way to teach.”

### **Claire’s Educational Experiences**

After 15 years, Claire began to study for her master’s degree in reading. She began her studies at the local university in the same program cohort as Peggy. She notes, “I didn’t have any idea of how to teach reading, so when I took my reading master’s

[degree] I didn't even know what I was doing. But it was a good thing to do; we were the first group, [the] first cadre to take that reading masters from the university, so we were sort of the test case." This master's degree program was offered in conjunction with the State Office of Education, the district, and the university. Hundreds of educators in the district applied for a place, since part of the cost of the tuition would be paid for. They all had to take the Millers Analogy Exam and 25 were chosen to join the cohort. They met two times a week, completed two classes a semester, and finished the degree in two years. Instruction occurred in the classroom at their district setting. *Early Steps* and *Next Steps*, which are based upon the concept of explicit instruction, were primarily used intervention (Morris, 1999),

Claire commented, "So, we were very well-steeped in what the components are in reading instruction." The university instructors had to design all the courses, because this was the first master's degree in reading offered in the State at that time. The instructional focus was on emergent literacy and how to teach beginning readers. Whole language as a lens for reading instruction was under attack across the country, so this represented a shift away from that. The district adopted *Open Court*, a direct instruction model, as the only basal for the district. All of these educational and work experiences and professional development opportunities were influential in Claire's development of her educational and literacy philosophies.

### **Claire's Educational and Literacy Philosophies**

At about this time Claire landed a reading specialist job at her elementary school. In addition, the NRP report was published. She basically felt it "was timely. I thought it

was great, because now I could talk to teachers... I could actually teach my students.”

Interestingly, Claire was very pointed about how her master’s degree did not prepare her to provide interventions, “because in all of the research we read of those two years [the five components] had never been [illuminated] before...[w]hen we sat down to try and help low student, we didn’t know what to do.... We were given assessments, and we had to assess a child. Then we were asked to remediate the child. None of us knew what to do with the child we tested. We knew that this might work and that might work, but we really didn’t have a good framework for how to approach this, a struggling reader. Then, [the university faculty] found and introduced *Next Steps* and *Early Steps* into the district... [*Early steps*] has a very strong framework, and it has all the [five] components...[It] is very similar to *Reading Recovery*, but was developed long before the NRP report came out on the [five] components. But, *Early Steps* had all the components to take a non-reading kid and make them a reading kid.... It was developed for K-1.... So the NRP report [also came along and] provided a framework.”

Claire noted that she had learned a great deal about how to teach reading in her master’s program, but until she had actually taught a child to read, all that knowledge and research finally become pertinent. She stated, “So, now having tutored a number of kids, I can look at a non-reader, a struggling reader and know exactly what to do. I can see their deficits. I can plan instruction.” Claire has noticed that now when she works with upper elementary grade teachers, they always start with the data. She believed that the only way to know what the children are deficit in was to look students’ scores.

When asked what she taught adults about how to teach reading, Claire said, “I

always go back to the NRP report. I was give the background knowledge and for surprisingly many of our teachers, especially upper grade, they've never heard of it.... So, I start with the most basic of the background of the NRP and we talk about the five components and what they'd look like in their specific grade level. [We look at] what their students might need. So, I'll have them do the needs [assessment] first."

While teaching a secondary literacy assessment course to master's level teachers, Claire made the point, "I made the teachers think about what the five components would look like in the eighth or ninth grade. They [would] list all the components of a good reader for their grade level and then we talked about it." Claire would then bring to the teachers' notice the list [that] the teachers made with the five components found in the NRP report. She would then ask them, "How are you spending your time addressing those five components? How much time do you spend on comprehension and vocabulary? What do you see are their needs? Do you have kids who are deficient in fluency, and how do you know that?" Claire commented that in SRIP, the coaching cohort had actually "started much the same way. We have [the teachers] think about the five components and what they teach in their classrooms, but there was a huge disconnect between the five components and what they were doing." Claire believed this occurred because they've never been taught reading before and they had never heard of the NRP report's findings.

Later on, I happened to ask Claire an interesting question towards the end of our interview. I asked her, "If she had to do it over again, how did she think coaching cohort should approach the professional development implementation for the teachers the

SRIP?” First, she said she had introduce all five components from the NRP report at once from the beginning. She would give them a little bit of information, but not too much because they would not be able to take it all in. Second, she would teach about what good instruction looks like when dealing with each component. Then, she would also provide current available data for the teachers’ students. Finally, she could ask her teachers, “What do you think the needs are [of your students] and these are [their] scores, so how would you change instruction?”

All of this early instruction would be done during the late summer before school started. That way, Claire felt that they could be challenged to start one component when the school year started. She suggested fluency, because the teachers found that to be the easiest component to conceptual change. She would also pick fluency first, because it shows immediate measurable growth with the students. Along with that, she would add classroom embedded coaching and progress monitoring from the beginning. This would help teachers come on board more quickly and developed buy-in. The second half of the first year, Claire would introduce phonics for those low students. This would require presenting the teachers with assessments to measure phonics deficits that would really tell the teachers what their students were missing. She said, “With that much instruction happening in the first year, we get some really strong numbers, and we’d see some real growth immediately.”

During the second year, Claire suggested they would need to present professional development first on vocabulary, and then comprehension and writing. Claire agreed with Nora that writing should be a strand that was implemented from the beginning. Again, the

coaching cohort's approach was to have a writing program online (i.e., *My Access*) that the teachers could work with and integrate into their classroom's curriculum.

Claire remarked that the reading and research community has done a wonderful job addressing how reading should be taught in the K-3 classroom. She stated, "And, it's really not all that different [at the secondary level]. I think the big stumbling block we have is the secondary teachers think it's different. It's really not. Struggling readers are struggling readers and just because they are in [middle school] doesn't mean that you approach it completely differently. You still have to look at their needs and what they're missing and then fill in the gaps." She had noticed that secondary teachers often have "an attitude." She felt that they had a real bias against elementary teachers.

Claire goes on to describe how she believed secondary teachers felt about literacy coaches who came from the elementary level and move into the secondary realm to teach teachers about how to teach reading. According to Claire secondary teachers might say, "You don't know what we're up against.... You don't have any idea of how it is to teach 150 kids a day and you can't do that.... I don't have to teach reading, that's not my job." She felt that it has been hard to get past that attitude. However, she had also come to realize that secondary teachers who had been assigned to teach reading were hungry for knowledge about how to do that, because they didn't know and had never been taught how to teach reading. Claire concluded intuitively. "That was hard to get past, and maybe that was a paradigm shift that we [the cohort] were not considering. Maybe that's why it took two years to get fluency in the door."

Claire brought 10 books to our interview on her professional library. She did

place her stack of books in order of personal importance and influence. Since she listed fewer books in her library, I will comment on them all. First, she had listed *The Howard Street Tutoring Manual: Teaching at-risk Readers in the Primary Grades* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition; Morris, 2005). Morris's work had been very dominant during her time at the university reading center while she worked towards her master's degree. Santa's (1999) *Early Steps: Learning from a Reader* was also influential during this time. This book examined the effectiveness of *Early Steps*, a first grade reading intervention program that involved one-on-one tutoring during the school year. Claire liked its emphasis on fluency, phonics, and comprehension for at-risk students. *Words Their Way* (Bear et al., 2007), *When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do: A Guide for Teachers, 6-12* (Beers, 2003), and *The Fluent Reader: Oral Reading Strategies for Building Word Recognition, Fluency and Comprehension* (Rasinski, 2003) were all books used in as resources for professional development activities with teachers. The first two books were among the materials given out to the teaching cohort of SRIP to use as resources.

Claire also had books in her professional library that dealt with assessment and adult learners. "*Sit & get*" *Won't Grow Dendrites: 20 Professional Learning Strategies that Engage the Adult Brain* (Tate, 2004) was used with her new duties at the district level where she taught and interacted with primarily teachers. *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teacher and School-based Coaches* (Killon & Harrison, 2006) was also a book that helped her interact effectively with teachers in her role as a district-level literacy coach. Assessment knowledge was a very important part of Claire's duties with the SRIP cohort. She had several books on assessment that helped her: (a) *Assessment in*



*Instruction: Reading, Writing, Spelling, and Phonics for all Learners* (Glazer, 1998); (b) *Assessment in Instruction of Reading and Writing Disability: An Interactive Approach* (Lipson & Wixson, 1996); and (c) *Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures from Kindergarten through Eighth Grade* (Consortium on Reading Excellence [CORE], 2004).

Claire commented more generally about the books in her list. She had been so concerned about seven years previously about how to teach reading at the middle school level.

NRP hadn't filtered up to the Jr. High level and the national level. *No Child Left Behind* was there and they were now feeling the pressure of getting the kids to succeed and to read at the Jr. High level, but no one knew how to. So they were having classes for it. They'd assign teachers to teach reading [in the schools], but they'd assigned PE teachers and home ec teachers and English teachers. They had no background in how to teach kids how to read. So this helped and we just focused on the five pillars, and we talked about assessment, ongoing assessment, but mostly we talked about how to teach kids how to read.

In addition, she had been asked to teach a class as an adjunct professor at the local university where teachers were pursuing master's-level instruction in reading.

### **Conclusion and Analysis**

For many years, Claire taught in a self-contained, Gifted and Talented classroom. She believed in making her instruction interesting, open ended, inquiry-based, and challenging. She usually focused on process and designed her instruction based upon the needs of her students. That was her Gifted and Talented worldview about learning. When dealing with struggling readers, her worldview changed. Claire's training at the university reading center and her belief in the NRP report influenced Claire's belief that the five components (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction,

and reading comprehension) provided a complete instructional framework for the teaching of reading. She believed that assessment was a key to determining a child's reading deficits (i.e., struggles, challenges etc.). Then instruction was designed to address those deficits by using a framework based upon the NRP reports five components of reading instruction. This belief about how to teach reading saw the NRP as providing the best model for literacy instruction when dealing with struggling readers at any grade level. For a pictorial analysis of Claire's belief development about how to teach each reading, see Figure 4.5.

### **Peggy's Biographical Sketch and Self-Stated Beliefs**

Peggy said to me during our interview, "I wonder about the role of reading; it's changing, [but] my hope is that we always have people who love to read." Peggy spoke those words with the intense passion and articulate style that was characteristic of her. Have you ever met someone whose voice appeared to laugh as they talked? That was Peggy. She spoke with a gentle energy that was compassionate, ardent, and optimistic. Her demeanor was gentle yet compelling, drawing and holding the teacher's attention as she taught her professional development lessons.

At the district level, Peggy was a literacy coach with one of her primary roles being that of conducting professional development lesson. "I've had some training in...how to organize and do strong professional development." One of Peggy's primary roles within the SRIP coaching cohort has been to teach whole group lessons to teachers involved in the program at the quarterly meetings. In addition, Peggy was added to the

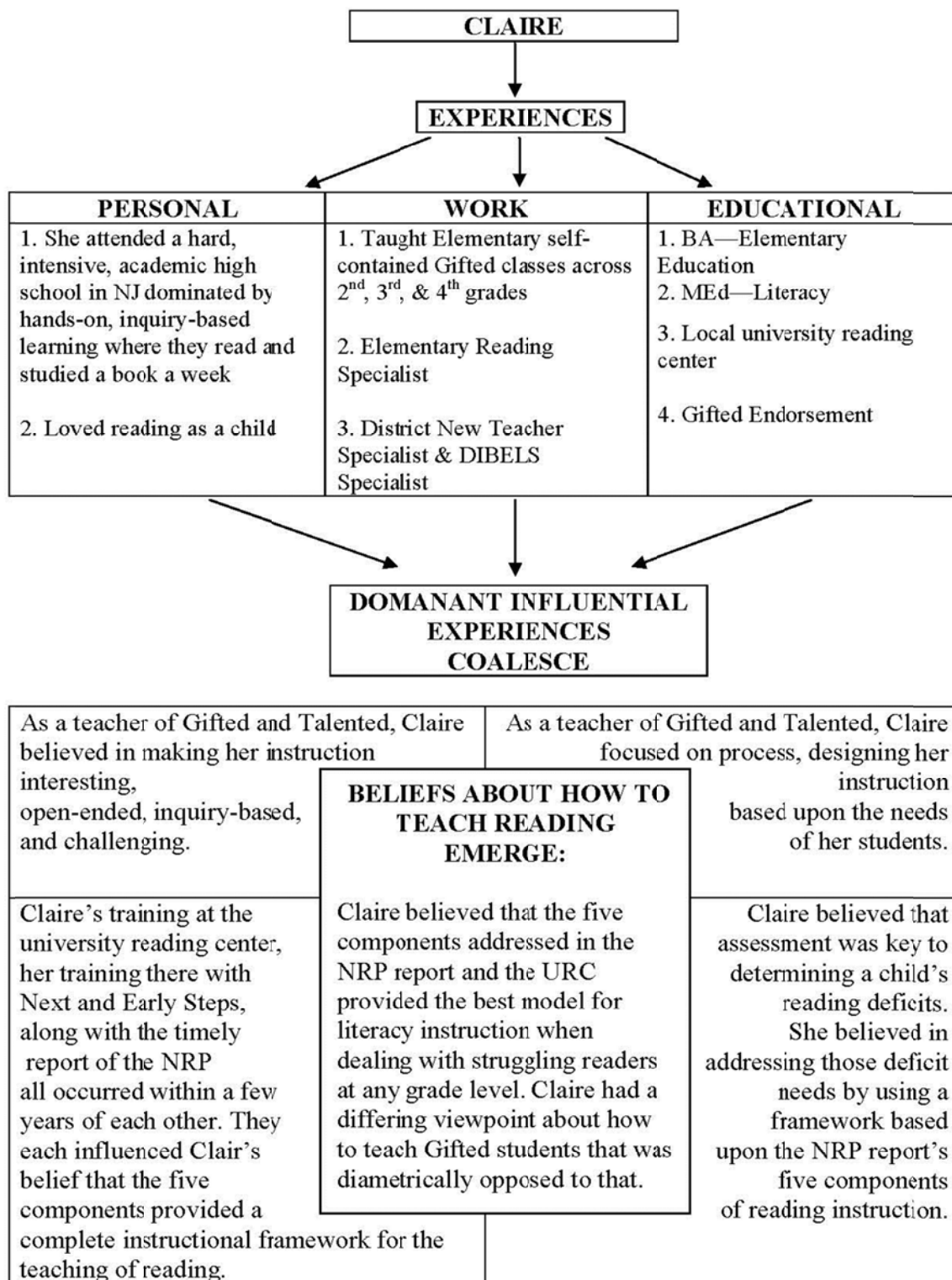


Figure 4.5. Development template of Claire’s beliefs about how to teach reading.

coaching cohort to support seventh- and eighth-grade reading teachers in her role as a literacy coach to implement best reading practices. Peggy's vast talents and abilities which she developed over the years, coupled with her love of reading, made her a highly effective literacy coach. Peggy told me that she went into teaching because she "was worried about those kids that weren't getting it. I always took personal responsibility for why didn't they at the end of the school year...why didn't they read like they should?"

### **Peggy's Personal Experiences**

Peggy admits that literacy has always been very important to her. She was born loving books and would ride her bike to the library to check out books to read. For her, literacy was powerful; because it gave her knowledge and experience that she would never have had otherwise. She loved the whole experience of reading as a child. She still remembers sitting under the shade tree and reading *Gone with the Wind* during her sixth grade year. Literacy was really motivational for her and she knew when she started teaching first grade that she wanted to share that feeling with her students and their families. She wanted to share, "This love for books and the excitement it brings to your life." She laments the current obsession with information technologies. She wonders whether reading is going to be relevant for them. She sees too many people who do not see reading as a recreational choice.

Peggy grew up and graduated from high school in the same district she would eventually teach in. Though she always liked young kids and had a good rapport with them coming out of high school, she didn't want at first to be a schoolteacher. She clarified, "I wanted to do something that sounded more exciting. So, I thought maybe I'd

be a pharmacist or who knows...a doctor.” However, in college she got involved in service-style project helping in the elementary school. She remembered a first grade teacher telling her, “At the end of the school year, I know that I’ve taught these kids to read.”

### **Peggy’s Work and Educational Experiences**

That statement by caring first grade teacher had a powerful influence on her, so Peggy began gravitating towards those classes that would lead to an education degree. Marriage and children intervened, but when she went back she knew what her passion was, “I wanted to finish and be a school teacher.” She taught at the elementary setting for 10 years mostly in the first grade, but at the third and fourth grades as well. Always deeply concerned about those students who were not able to read like they should, Peggy went back to school to get an endorsement in reading, because “I had to know what I was missing.”

Peggy was in the right place at the right time and was chosen from that first co-op of endorsement students striving to get their master’s degree at the university. She and five others from her district started to work in a tutoring program for struggling readers offered at the university reading center. During this time, Peggy was hired as a professional rating interventionist, a district literacy coach, so this tutoring program involved a consortium between her district and the local university. “We were working right under the university folks...and it was an incredible year. It went on for more than two years. We then changed our focus to work with...struggling readers...[in] the upper elementary.” During the third year, the co-op group looked at how efficiently they could

tutor ESL students. In 2000 the consortium partnership ended and her district was now ready to hire more literacy coaches.

At the district level, Peggy took full advantage of her desire to keep doing something new. She said, “I went with Reading First for a while, and then I saw this opportunity to work with the Jr. High students.” So, Peggy transitioned into working with SRIP under Nora. She brought to her job there a will-defined perspective about how to teach reading that had developed over time. When she first entered college to become a teacher, the program she entered was strongly whole language. “I remember a children’s lit class...being fun and fluffy.... We had a great time, but not a lot of meat there.” She transferred to the university where she received her teaching certification, and her new reading classes had a somewhat stronger focus on reading. She remembers talking about phonics a little bit, but she also remembered “spending about as much time talking about how to teach kids handwriting.” She felt reading was not a dominant part of these two elementary classes she was involved with while she studied for her teaching credentials. This changed when she went back to graduate school to get her master’s degree.

Peggy taught for 10 years and studied for her master’s degree during the last few years of that time. This university had just gotten approval from the state office of education to offer a reading endorsement. She said, “We were the very first to go through that process, and the instructors up there were incredible.” As part of this program, Peggy and others from her district were trained at the district site by the university professors who had already made significant names for themselves in the reading education field. Peggy recalled that even though this was pre-NRP, the focus at the university was on the

five components (i.e., phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction, and reading comprehension) later emphasized by that report. In addition they addressed writing. She noted emphatically, “It was a great opportunity!” Peggy’s general education philosophy developed out of this and all of her other prior experiences.

### **Peggy’s Educational Philosophy**

Peggy believed that learners come to her classroom with their own set of talents and experiences. She viewed them as having a wealth of positive knowledge, regardless of their grade level. She specified, “I believe that it’s the role of the teacher to help take that knowledge base and move those students to the next [level].” Therefore, Peggy understood that scaffolding instruction meant knowing where the students were in moving them forward to where they needed to be next. She clarified, “Teaching is a very active skill. [It’s up to the teacher] to identify the next concept or principle that would move them forward, allow them to integrate more knowledge that will then help that student.” She believed that careful assessments were necessary to establish exactly where the students were. In addition, Peggy explains, “Deciding whether to use social learning, to use constructivism, or to use a more direct, explicit approach to instruction with a more behaviorist component to teach a concept or idea is the responsibility of a good teacher.” She applied these beliefs about teaching to both her work with young students and the adult teachers she taught.

When speaking of literacy and instruction, Peggy believed “We’ve been pretty much off the mark for a long time.” In general, Peggy remarked that previously teachers did not have good models for literacy instruction in the schools. She had often noticed

that teachers' literacy instruction was still grounded in more traditional practices from the past. She felt a sense of urgency about what she perceived as "a real mismatch between the students that we are serving and the literacy instruction that we are providing." She realized that most of the teachers had never looked at the NRP report or knew of its findings about the five components of reading instruction (i.e., phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction, and reading comprehension).

Peggy commented extensively about the differences she saw in implementing the five components from the NRP report. Prior to the seventh grade SRIP workshops, the teachers in the cohort were "still just reading novels." But, she said, "The teachers that have worked with us are now starting to own [all those five components] and teach with them. But, it's just such a small number district-wide." Even though she had been out of the elementary setting for two years, Peggy had seen her district put a lot more time, a lot more resources into changing things at that level. Teachers had been provided with basals to help guide that change, though, she had to admit that "our scores aren't enough to suggest that."

So at that point, I asked Peggy if the NRP report was relevant to the secondary level. She said, "Absolutely." She referred back to the Sandy's scenario interview and how we had talked about a struggling student at the tenth-, seventh-, and fourth-grade levels. She elaborated, "It's the same process regardless of where we find struggling readers, and those five components guide what I assess and what I do. So, yes, I'd say that they're critically important for any struggling reader that's still in the system at that point (i.e., secondary)." Peggy concluded this part of the interview by saying, "When I



work with teachers it's the same philosophy as when I work with kids. This [teaching] should include not only what I teach you, but what we teach each other. Also, how can I scaffold to bring it to the next step?"

### **Peggy's Literacy Philosophy**

When I asked Peggy what the five components of the NRP report looked like and what instructional strategies would be used at what level, she talked about these three years of work as an interventionist. Peggy's approach to these issues was based on the intervention reading plan that was used when she worked at the university tutoring with struggling readers. She explained, "When I go into seventh grade classrooms, and there's a bunch of struggling readers now, I fall back onto that reading plan." According to Peggy that plan contained components dealing with comprehension, fluency, word work, decoding skills and spelling. Peggy noted;

So based on what we did then was to look outside at the different programs. We wanted to find a basal. That would've been a nice option to find a basal that had all of those components covered that we could give to 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. But we couldn't find one that we liked that key is the paradigm did a sufficient job. I think that'll change in the near future, because so many publishers are working on it... So two years from now there may be an excellent program.

During the development phase of SRIP, Peggy had significant influence focusing the group upon the five components and the use of her critical component lesson plan acquired from URC. More specifically according to Peggy, she was most influential in identifying particular fluency and phonics pieces. Peggy went on to explain what commercial programs were chosen by SRIP to cover the five components: (a) fluency: *The Six Minute Solution* (Adams & Brown, 2007); (b) word study, vocabulary, and

phonics: *REWARDS* (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2011); (c) comprehension: *Reading Advantage* (leveled texts; Robb, 2005); (d) writing: *My Access* (Vantage Learning, 2011); and (e) all five components (for both the lowest struggling readers and ESL students): *LANGUAGE!* (Greene, 2007). Peggy also took on the assessment piece, because of her past experience with Reading First. They have used criterion-based measures for progress monitoring of the students such as the fluency piece from *AIMSweb* and comprehension piece from *Maze* (Pearson, 2011). Peggy explained, “We’re collecting data more regularly to make sure that what we are doing is working.”

Towards the end of this interview session, I asked Peggy the following question for clarification, “When you think of reading [instruction], does it vary as the students change grades or does it stay basically the same?” Peggy’s response added a lot to my understanding of her literacy philosophy:

I’d say it doesn’t vary as much on grade level as it does on ability, and I think what’s happened most is that we now have kids coming into any grade that you can name that are non-readers or below level. Those kids need what we would provide at first grade in a different way that’s age appropriate, but they need those same beginning reading skills. So, I see the process for student that’s a non-reader being the same as a first grader, but again age appropriate. Essentially, what we want to do is get those kids to where reading is for learning.... Reading changes when you can do it... and you can [then] use it to learn.

While interviewing and surveying Peggy about her professional library, we began with those that were most influential to her professional development dealing with issues of how to teach reading and her literacy philosophy in general.

### **Survey of Peggy’s Professional Library Findings**

As a teacher, Peggy was influenced by the work of Darrell Morris (1999) and his

*Early Steps* approach, an early intervention program for first grade, at-risk readers. An article by Ehri (1998) got Peggy thinking about phonemes and graphemes and developing her expertise in that direction. But it was Louisa Moats (2000, 2001, 2006), one of Peggy's favorite researchers and authors, who most influenced Peggy's knowledge of how to teach decoding and who has been "powerful in my life." She specifically liked Moats' work in terms of word study, word knowledge, how to help older kids when they can't read, decoding processes (grapheme/phoneme mapping). She first became aware of her work when she went to the Reading First training where Moats presented LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling), which is a professional development program designed for literacy educators. It's important to note that Peggy was already at the district level at this point so she never took it directly to her classroom, but used for the professional development of teachers.

Peggy was influenced by research-based reading that came out of the NRP report (NRP, 2000) and the National Reading Counsel (Snow et al., 1998). She said, "Having those five components of reading identified, and then having research to go along with each about practices that were more effective than others really changed the way I started to think about reading. So now, everything I do is based upon those five components. It's just the way I think about it." As Peggy looks back over the years she's taught first grade in the classroom, she comments, "We didn't have a basal. We didn't really have anything that we were supposed to use." Looking for answers, Peggy gravitated to whole-language instruction. Her students had access to many books with opportunities to interact with text but she knew she "was missing four or five kids every year."

Still looking for answers, she began working on her master's degree. As she began to learn about five components, phonics instruction took on a new importance. Since she didn't have any instructional materials to draw from, she went to the special education department to get materials to teach phonics. Spelling (Moats, 2006) also took on a new importance, "because then it was part of that phoneme/grapheme mapping and the phonological awareness piece." She concludes by saying, "[The five components] continues to give the structure to what I do in terms of reading."

As Peggy moved into the middle school realm as part of the coaching cohort of the secondary reading intervention program, she began to look for sources dealing with adolescent learners. Concerned with motivation she found an articles by Guthrie and Davis (2003) and Pressley (2001) to be very helpful as they talked about making sure the adolescent student feel successful. Peggy also felt that adolescent learners "certainly have struggled with issues that are common for students with dyslexia" but often were not diagnosed. Peggy believes that dyslexia is an issue of phonological awareness where students can't hear, segment, or blend sounds. According to Peggy, Shaywitz's (2003) *Overcoming Dyslexia* has constructively addressed this issue by highlighting instruction that would help students to "rewire their brain to bring those pieces together to become more successful as readers."

Each quarter, the SRIP coaching cohort hosted an all day workshop for the 20 teachers involved in the seventh grade secondary reading intervention program. The coaches introduced the teachers to the five components from the report of the NRP (2000). The coaching cohort chose to adapt the panel's findings to the secondary setting

by combining phonics with phonemic awareness and adding writing. During the first year, Peggy taught an explicit lesson about fluency which included an introduction to *Six Minute Solution* (Adams & Brown, 2007), a program designed to increase reading fluency. During a subsequent year, she taught a professional development lesson on *REWARDS* (Archer et al., 2011), which utilizing a direct, explicit instructional approach to teach multisyllabic words.

### **Conclusion and Analysis**

Peggy's love for reading began its child and became a passionate love for teaching reading to young children that continued to influence her beliefs about how to teach reading to all children. Peggy's beliefs about how to teach reading had been influenced by a paradigm that viewed the five components from the findings of the NRP report as the central instructional framework for the teaching of reading. During her 3 years at the university reading center, Peggy was taught a reading plan that has dominated her beliefs about how to teach reading. That plans saw assessment as key to determining a child's reading deficit. Once that had been established, an instructional approach, usually in the form of a program, would be used as an intervention to address the deficit. This discrete skills mastery approach was based upon the use of the NRP report's five components as an instructional framework for the teaching of reading. In summary, Peggy believed that the five components addressed in the NRP report and at the local university reading center provided the best bottle for literacy instruction when dealing with struggling readers any grade level. For a pictorial analysis of Peggy's belief development about how to teach each reading, see Figure 4.6.

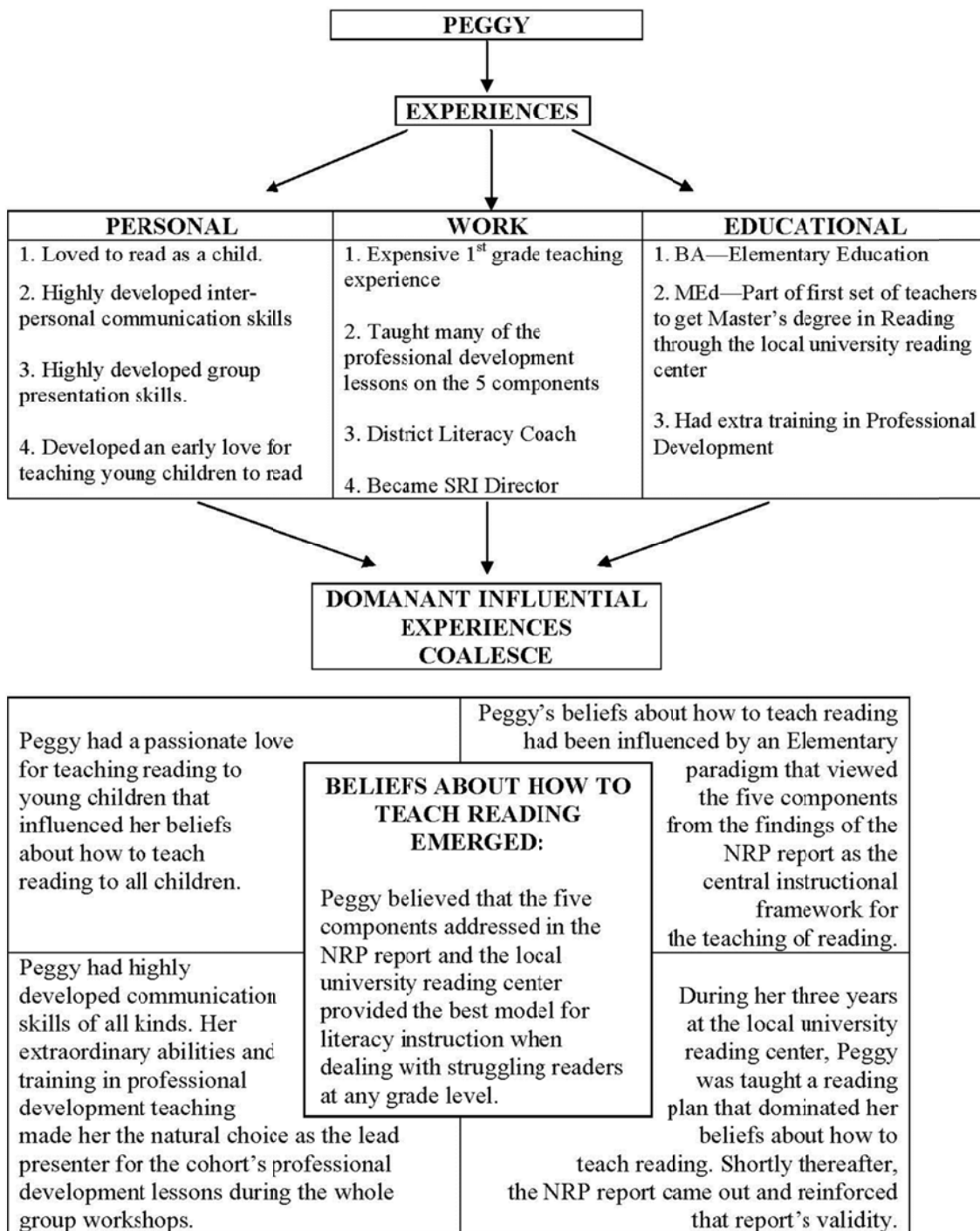


Figure 4.6. Development template of Peggy’s beliefs about how to teach reading.

## Chapter Conclusion

Each of the six district level literacy coaches is a highly experienced educator and has expertise and deep knowledge about teaching reading. This knowledge and expertise has been contextualized through years of teaching experience at various grade levels. Rich and deep descriptions throughout this chapter have documented their self-stated beliefs and the journeys each literacy coach took while these beliefs developed. These beliefs developed through personal, work, and educational experiences unique to each individual literacy coach. Themes or issues emerged that dealt with what these beliefs about how to teach reading were and how they developed. Some of these themes and issues were common across several coaches' experiences, while others were unique to one individual coach.

The literacy coaches' biographical sketches yielded data that could be placed on a common matrix table that included topics that dealt with educational degrees, teaching experience, training, and non-educational work experience. See Table 4.1 to see the table matrix and its comparison across the six district level literacy coaches.

The template used to illustrate how experiences coalesce into dominant beliefs (see Figures 4.1 through 4.6) produced a single statement of belief about how to teach reading by each individual literacy coach in the study. Table 4.1 compared the dominant beliefs held by each coach about how to teach reading across all six literacy coaches. The following section will describe each coach's dominant belief statement about how to teach reading as compiled in Table 4.2. Nora and Jeanette's beliefs about how to teach reading did not easily coalesce into one dominant belief statement. Nora's beliefs

Table 4.1

*Work and Educational Experiences Comparison Chart of Six District-Level Reading Coaches*

Name	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Teaching career subject and grade <sup>a</sup>	Additional training	Other jobs	What got her into reading
Nora	English major history minor	Secondary education— literacy	<b>High School English</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> —English 7 <sup>th</sup> —Honors English	1 – Junior great books 2 – Secondary reading endorsement 3 – Reading apprenticeship	Business field for 20 years	She had a personal love of literature, learning, and reading.
Jeanette	English major reading minor	Instructional technology	<b>Middle school: Language arts, ESL, &amp; reading</b>	1– ESL endorsement 2 – Basic reading endorsement	Middle school Assistant librarian	She wanted to teach struggling readers.
Pat	Home economics	Special education	<b>Middle school: Special education: English &amp; reading in resource classes</b>	1 – Next steps 2 – Wilson reading 3 – Lindamood-Bell 4 – Secondary basic reading endorsement 5 – Auditory processing	1-Merchandizing 2-Sales representative	She was on a personal quest to learn all she could about reading.
Stacy	Anthropology political science (double major)	Education, culture, & society	<b>Middle school: ESL reading classes</b>	1 – Speaks Spanish 2 –Next steps 3 – Basic reading endorsement 4 – English endorsement 5 – Extensive world travel	1-YMCA program director 2- Adjudicated youth program	She taught ESL reading courses at the middle school and needed more education.
Claire	Elementary education	Education— literacy	<b>Upper elementary: Gifted &amp; talented for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, &amp; 4<sup>th</sup> grades</b>	1 – Next Steps 2 –Early Steps 3 – Gifted Endorsement 4 –Talents Unlimited		She wanted to teach elementary education.
Peggy	Elementary education	Education— literacy	<b>Elementary: 1st grade</b>	1 – Advanced reading endorsement 2 – Reading first 3 – Tutoring program for struggling readers		She was worried about kids who were not reading as they should.

<sup>a</sup>The most influential/important/high expertise in grades and subjects are in bold.



Table 4.2

*Comparison of Dominant Beliefs about How to Teach Reading*

Teacher	Dominant belief
Nora	Nora's beliefs about how to teach reading include all four components in this square. They did not coalesce to form one dominant principle, but instead reflect the complexity of Nora's thinking about how to teach in general and reading more specifically. She blends them seamlessly. This openness to complexity also makes her flexible to adding new beliefs to her philosophy.
Jeanette	Jeanette took English, reading, ESL and instructional technology and developed multiple "ways of knowing" that blended to create her educational philosophy and practice. It allowed her to see the reading process through multiple perspectives and to incorporate divergent instructional choices into her repertoire of classroom practices to address the differing needs of her students. This made her open minded and flexible in her beliefs.
Pat	Pat dichotomized her view of students relevant to whether they were in special or regular education classrooms. She believed that reading instruction should utilize multiple approaches and be matched to the needs of each student based on grade level and classroom placement (i.e., Tier 1, 2, 3), because "one size does not fit all."
Stacy	Stacy believed in the utilization of research-based reading instruction as framed by the five components of the NRP report. Within that framework, she also believed that students needed to be actively engaged in learning through experiences that were motivating.
Claire	Claire believed that the five components addressed in the NRP report and the URC provided the best model for literacy instruction when dealing with struggling readers at any grade level. Claire had a differing viewpoint about how to teach Gifted students that was diametrically opposed to that.
Peggy	Peggy believed that the five components addressed in the NRP report and the local university reading center provided the best model for literacy instruction when dealing with struggling readers at any grade level.

about how to teach reading included all four components in the bottom square of her template. Nora's openness to multiple perspectives was an inherent part of her role as a high school English teacher, where multiple perspectives on literature were honored and encouraged. In addition, it reflected Nora's belief about recognizing the component parts of the whole child (i.e., social, emotional, intellectual, physical) while planning instruction and interacting with her students. Her ability to accept and blend multiple perspectives reflected the complexity of Nora's thinking.

Jeanette's formal education included English as a content area, reading specialization, ESL specialization, and a master's degree in instructional technology. This diversity reflected Jeanette's eclectic personality, but additionally developed multiple perspectives that influenced her beliefs about how to teach reading in her instructional practice. Her classroom was dominated by differentiation of instruction to meet the differing needs of her students, thus reflecting the practical need for those multiple perspectives.

Pat had two views about how to teach reading that was contingent upon the ability levels of the students she was working with at any given time. She dichotomized her view about how to teach reading between a special education classroom and a regular classroom. If the classroom was regular education, her dominant view about how to teach reading involved the precepts of adolescent literacy research and instructional practices rooted in constructivist philosophy (e.g., strategy instruction, content area reading instruction, wide reading, etc.). If the classroom were special education, Pat's dominant view about how to teach reading involved the precepts of special education research and instructional practices rooted in behaviors philosophy (e.g., direct instruction, deficiency model, skills mastery, etc.).

Stacy, Claire, and Peggy shared a common belief in the research-based reading instruction as framed by the five components of the NRP report. All three educators had attended the local university reading center where a skills-development model focused on beginning reading skills was stressed along with the five components of reading instruction. They each expressed a strong belief that the NRP report provided the best

model for literacy instruction for both beginning readers and struggling readers at any grade level.

Other differences that influenced each of their beliefs about how to teach did not seem to interfere with the formation of their dominant beliefs. For example, Stacy worked almost exclusively with adolescent students, traveled extensively in other countries, studied deeply in fields dominated by social learning theory, yet her dominant beliefs about how to teach reading were most informed by scientifically-based reading research such as that addressed in the NRP report. Claire worked exclusively with teaching upper elementary gifted students, yet her beliefs in inquiry-based learning were not utilized when she addressed the needs of struggling readers. Then, she relied on the discrete skills-development model inherent in instruction models that have emerged as a result of the findings by the NRP report. Peggy worked predominantly with first grade students where instruction was logically focused on the skills development model for beginning readers. This perspective on how to teach reading blended easily with the instructional models that emerged from the NRP report. Instructionally, Peggy utilized that model when dealing with struggling readers at any grade level.

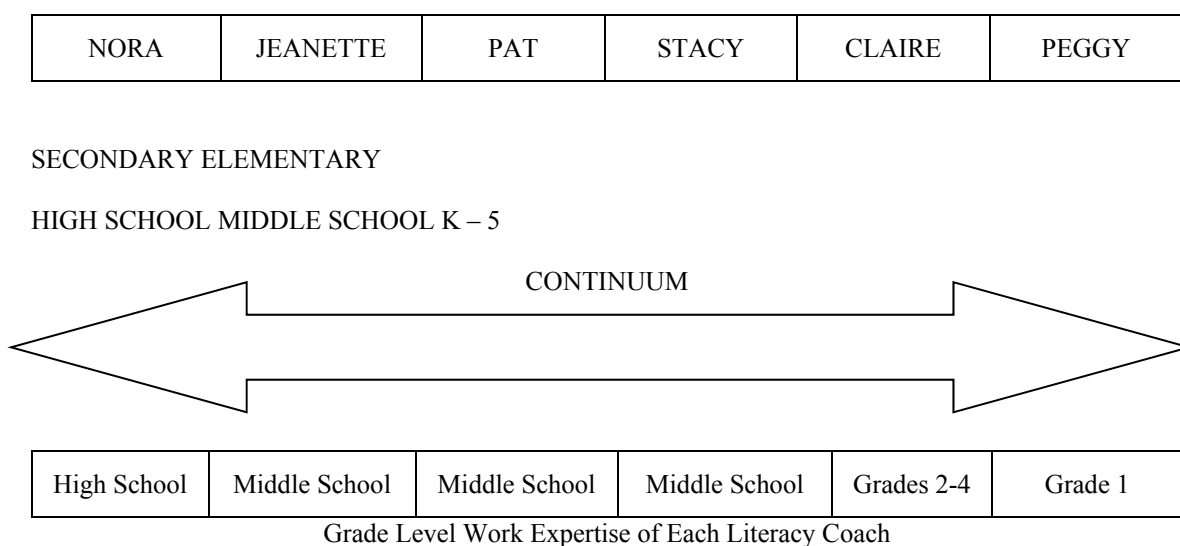
The similarities across Stacy, Claire, and Peggy's beliefs about how to teach reading emerged from a common educational experience at the local university reading center where reading interventions were taught through a strong theoretical lens. The strength of the framework used at the center seemed to influence the intensity of belief development. How much those beliefs resistant accommodating alternative perspectives will be explored as we look at their responses to other data collection instruments.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**DATA AND FINDINGS: PART II: COMPARISONS ACROSS**  
**ALL SIX LITERACY COACHES**

The order in which I have listed the literacy coaches across the study findings and through the study in general (i.e., Nora, Jeanette, Pat, Stacy, Claire, and Peggy) has reflected a continuum of the dominant classroom teaching experiences by the coaches across the grade levels. Nora taught high school English; Jeanette taught the middle school language arts and ESL; Pat taught middle school special education; Stacy taught middle school language arts and ESL; Claire taught upper elementary gifted talent; and Peggy taught lower elementary (see Figure 5.1). The coaches matched up along a continuum across a K-12 grade level distribution. Across this continuum order, certain assumptions about how to teach reading have emerged. The reasons for this will be addressed throughout this section and will be part of the discussions of various findings.

Across the grade levels, there exist student populations who differ in their learning needs, including their instructional needs. To address this, reading instruction should necessitate different instruction approaches based on the age-appropriate, instructional needs of the various student populations contextualized across grade levels. How teachers or coaches approach that instructional choice depends a great deal on their worldview about how to teach reading. This worldview has often included a definition of literacy. Historically, some researchers' (Resnick & Resnick, 1977, as cited in Christenbury et al., 2009) conception of literacy has been identified as holding autonomous views of literacy.

**Six Literacy Coaches in Study**



*Figure 5.1.* Grade-level continuum of six literacy coaches.

The data collection process involved three instrumentation protocols and a question that emerged during the interview process. They will each be reported individually and then compared collectively in this section. They will appear in the following order: (a) Schraw and Olafson’s four quadrant scale of epistemological and ontological worldviews; (b) Schraw and Olafson’s brief summaries of realist, contextualist, and relativist world views; (c) Sandy’s scenario question; (d) and NRP question. “Researcher as instrument” will be assumed as part of the analysis process. This refers to the interpretive lens of the researcher. Each instrumentation protocol was administered orally, allowing for an oral response in the form of a think-aloud or as part of an interview format discussion. A comparison across each instrument will be analyzed and described in this section.

## **Comparison of Coaches' Responses to Schraw and Olafson's (2008)**

### **Four Quadrant Scale of Epistemological and Ontological Worldview Instrument**

The literacy coaches' responses to the four quadrant scale came after each read the instructions (see Appendix A). During the responses, they would think-aloud to clarify their reasoning. A summary of the concepts in each quadrant was placed in Table 5.1 on the following page (see Figure 3.1 for the Four-Quadrant Scale). The name of each coach was also placed in the quadrant each chose as best representing their beliefs (epistemological and ontological worldviews). The table was presented first for easy review, and then a summary of each coach's reasoning response was summarized after the table by quadrants.

#### **Literacy Coaches Who Chose Quadrant 1**

The following literacy coaches chose Quadrant 1 on the scale "Ontological Relativist and Epistemological Relativist" (see Table 5.1).

**Nora.** Nora stated strongly that she believes different people have different realities (i.e., ontological relativist). Speaking, listening and reading are realms where there are basic skills that need to be mastered, such as being able to decode reading. Nora admitted that when she teaches primary skills, then she was more of an epistemological realist. When dealing with adult or high school-aged learners, problem-based or inquiry-based curriculum was at the heart of Nora's teaching practice. Nora explained the dichotomy in these beliefs, "I believe that students need foundational pieces. You need to

Table 5.1

*Coaches Responses to Schraw and Olafson's Four Quadrant Scale of Epistemological and Ontological Worldviews*

Quadrant 4	Quadrant 1
<p>Ontological Relativist—</p> <p>Teachers assume that different students have differing realities. Teachers are seen as collaborators, co-participants, and facilitators with each student.</p> <p>Epistemological Realist—</p> <p>Teachers believe there is an objective body of knowledge that must be acquired (one size fits all). Curriculum is fixed and permanent and focuses on fact-based subject matter.</p> <p>Pat (Special Education Students)</p>	<p>Ontological Relativist—</p> <p>Teachers assume that different students have differing realities. Teachers are seen as collaborators, co-participants, and facilitators with each student.</p> <p>Epistemological Relativist—</p> <p>Teachers describe curriculum as changing and student-centered. Problem-based or inquiry learning are used in this curriculum, which is seen as not fixed and permanent.</p> <p>Nora, Jeanette, Stacy, Peggy Pat (Regular Education Students)</p>
Quadrant 3	Quadrant 2
<p>Ontological Realist—</p> <p>Teachers assume one reality that is the same for everyone. This means that students should receive the same instruction regardless of their individual circumstances or contexts.</p> <p>Epistemological Realist—</p> <p>Teachers believe there is an objective body of knowledge that must be acquired (one size fits all). Curriculum is fixed and permanent and focuses on fact-based subject matter.</p> <p>None</p>	<p>Ontological Realist—</p> <p>Teachers assume one reality that is the same for everyone. This means that students should receive the same instruction regardless of their individual circumstances or contexts.</p> <p>Epistemological Relativist—</p> <p>Teachers describe curriculum as changing and student-centered. Problem-based or inquiry learning are used in this curriculum, which is seen as not fixed and permanent.</p> <p>Claire</p>

be able to read it before you can really interpret and understand and digest the material... to be able to become the relativists. So, I believe in a scaffolded sequencing [of instruction] where students learn in their zone of proximal development.” Therefore, if Nora were in the classroom right now teaching high school English, she would be an [epistemological] relativist. For these reasons, Nora chose Quadrant 1 (see Table 5.1).

**Jeanette.** Jeanette stated strongly her belief in the tenants of epistemological

relativist and ontological relativist found in Quadrant 1 (see Table 5.1). She reasoned that teachers need to make everything they teach relevant, so the students can make connections between what was being taught and their world and themselves. She states, “If it’s just memorizing facts [and] it has no meaning of why it is important to learn, then we lose our kids and education becomes more meaningless. It doesn’t really build people; it just builds knowledge.” Jeanette also believed that there are certain things that students need to know and certain basic skills that should be mastered. The key would be making learning real by designing curriculum that builds those basic skills while it also helps students learn the things they need to know. Such a curriculum would deal with real life issues, hands-on learning, and collaborative learning activities, because ‘whoever is doing the work is the one who’s learning.’”

**Stacy.** Stacy thought that students today have brains that are wired differently than in the past. Yet, people are still teaching the same way without taking that into consideration. She thought technology was a huge issue in our classrooms today. One year, Stacy surveyed her students and asked them what type of learners they were. She claimed that 75% felt they were kinesthetic learners and learn best through projects and presentations and getting up doing things.

As a secondary teacher, Stacy considered her adolescent students to be very social learners who want to work together and complete assignments as a team. Another reason Stacy picked [epistemological and ontological] relativist was because of her ELL students. Curriculum must be designed to specifically meet the needs of that community. She claimed, “Often times it doesn’t, so that’s why I think the failure rate is so huge.



They are learning about things that are not applicable to their world.” In the classroom, Stacy saw herself as the director tapping into the background knowledge of her students to help them succeed.

**Peggy.** Peggy’s answer suggested that she would have preferred to choose two quadrants based upon considerations relevant to the processes of reading: a) reading as an actual decoding process, and b) the actual process of being able to read material. She stated that there were certain things that needed to be taught to mastery. However, teachers should also have the students reading in teams, discussing material together as they read, partnering together to pull out the meaningful concepts, and applying it to “their lives and their reality.” This concept was what placed her into the realm of Quadrant 1 (see 5.1), which matched with her belief that “the curriculum needs to be responsive to the community. Students need to engage in tasks where there is more than one right answer. That also fits my belief system that we need to get kids to think, to problem solve and to try to make it relevant.”

#### **Literacy Coach Who Chose Both Quadrant 1 and Quadrant 4**

Pat was the only one literacy coach who chose two quadrants. What occurred with Pat during this part of the interview fascinated me. The objective was to mark the quadrant that most accurately reflected her educational philosophy and beliefs about epistemological and ontological issues. She simply was not able to pick one quadrant, because her beliefs became quite different depending upon the student population she was dealing with. In other words, Pat had two philosophies: (a) a general education

philosophy that applied to regular classroom students; and (b) a special education philosophy that applied to disabled students.

Pat chose Quadrant 4 (see Table 5.1) when applying her philosophy to special education students, because she felt there are certain things these students needed to know and specific skills that need to be mastered. She said, “When you look at it from a special education standpoint, you look at kids with disabilities and deficits.... My focus [for them] is on basic skills mastery.” Pat viewed knowledge as fluid and existing across a continuum. Therefore, Pat believed that a curriculum needed to be evolving, therefore her special education students’ instructional needs were found in Quadrant 4 when they were “trying to get those skills, so they can move to Quadrant 1.” When dealing with regular education students, Pat chose Quadrant 1 (see Table 5.1). Again, Pat said it best, “So, I look at it from two different standpoints. I think they should work as teams. I think that knowledge is fluid; it’s not fixed.” For these reasons, Pat chose two different quadrants, each representing the needs of two student populations.

### **Literacy Coach Who Chose Quadrant 2**

Claire was the only literacy coach in the study who chose Quadrant 2, ontological realist and epistemological relativist (see Table 5.1). Her reasoning during her think-aloud was a bit disjointed. She stated that learning to read required the certain skills to be acquired; yet she added that learning to read “is not a defined set of learning tasks. It isn’t something you can discuss in a group or you can read in a group.” She talked about the limitations reading teachers and coaches have in designing curriculum. As a gifted teacher, she admitted to having more “leeway.” She clarified, “I had a great deal of

discussion of projects, activities around learning tasks. I wouldn't stick to the core, so it was far less structured in that way." However, during her role as an assessment leader, the work was very cut and dry, involved "punching numbers," was completely linear, and lacked any creativity. She would change that approach today. "I would look at [and do] assessment much more carefully.... Not structured assessment necessarily.... I think across the country there's becoming more of a trend. Thank goodness because I used to always do pre- and posttests, but I'm not sure I changed my instruction to meet the needs of all my students.... Today, in the classroom I would do more pretesting."

Interestingly, Claire ended with the following statement, "I do not think my basic way of teaching will change now that I know more about reading as a reading coach." Here, she came back to her role as a teacher of gifted and talented students. To me, this was the key to interpreting her statements. As an ontological realist (one part of this quadrant), she would give the same instruction to all students. As a gifted teacher, she would give the same instruction to all students. However, her instruction would be based upon her beliefs that instruction should be student-centered and involve problem-based and inquiry learning. These are all tenants of the epistemological relativist, the other half of Quadrant 2.

### **Comparison of Coaches Responses: Schraw and Olafson's Three**

#### **Worldview Vignettes: Realist, Contextualist, and Relativist**

The Schraw and Olafson's (2002) Three Worldview Vignettes were introduced to the participants in an interview format so they could comment on their answers through a

think-aloud protocol. The purpose of this instrument and protocol was to provide participants a concrete format to talk about their own beliefs. The summary definition of each worldview appeared in the form of a vignette (see Table 3.2 and Appendix B) provided to the participants with specific language to assist in a self-stated articulation of certain beliefs about knowledge and how that related to their actual instructional practice. The following section will provide a summary of the coaches' responses. In addition, Table 5.2 (shown later in this chapter after the summary of coaches' responses) will compare the commonalities across their responses where common themes emerged. How each coach responded to those common themes will also be listed on the table.

### **Literacy Coaches' Responses to Three Worldview Vignettes**

All six literacy coaches responses to this data protocol are summarized below.

**Nora's response.** Nora disagreed with the realist world view. Within that view, she agreed there was a core body of knowledge and skills that each student must learn, but rejected the idea of the teacher who is a "sage on the stage" dispensing expert knowledge.

Nora readily acknowledged that the contextualist worldview "best describes" her belief system. She "loved to see her students experience a personal "ah-ha" moment." But, she was also careful to contextualize those beliefs, "Remember, I am looking at this from the lens of a high school English teacher. By the time students were in my classroom, they had basic reading skills and my responsibility was refinement. I was not teaching and drilling basics." She believed it was her responsibility to promote inquiry,

personal response, and relevancy and to create a synergy that allowed students to learn from one another.

Conversely, Nora was almost neutral with the relativist world view for almost the same reason she disliked the realist worldview. “There are certain things that I really believe that [students] need to know, [but] they just can’t be left free, willy-nilly and without guidance.” Nora wants her students to think independently, but acknowledged the need “to mentor and guide them on how they go about acquiring their knowledge.” Therefore, she put neutral but ended up moving a half step towards agree with conditions.

**Jeanette’s response.** Jeanette strongly agreed with the contextualist and relativist world views, while she strongly disagreed with the realist worldview. She explained that part of her personal philosophy of life was to listen to people and understand them and what they are saying. She felt that was reflected in the contextualist and relativist world views, but not in the realist world view. Jeanette explained;

I don’t believe the best way to acquire knowledge is through an expert like me, [just] because I [supposedly], as the teacher, have a much better sense of what is important to learn. I don’t agree that students are unlikely to create knowledge on their own. I don’t agree that it’s important for me to assume a take charge attitude. I feel like I need to value all kids where they are at and how they all can learn.

This reflected Jeanette’s view that all children can learn.

**Pat’s response.** Pat disagreed with the realist world view, because she was unwilling to assume a “take charge attitude” as a teacher and be seen as an expert dispensing knowledge. She agreed that there was a core body of knowledge and skills that each student must learn as outlined in the state core, which should be sequenced across grade levels and subject to change over time. She felt students needed to know that

knowledge was fluid and could be added upon allowing for increased understanding.

Pat agreed with the contextualist worldview. Pat stated, “I totally agree that classroom knowledge needs to be personally useful and meaningful to students.” However, Pat also believed that students at the middle school level need some guidance, because they have limited world experience and developmentally immature reasoning skills. She clarified, “[T]heir decisions are guided by emotion and their peers. So I do think that a teacher needs to guide them a little.” She acknowledged that there was a lot of value in students working with their peers, because “by having kids work together, they can...kind of challenge their own belief systems.”

Pat’s also agreed with the relativist world view. Pat explained it best yourself in the following quote:

The reason that I pondered over this one is that I guess I’m kind of in a dilemma on whether [special education] students that I teach really have the ability to get to this level.” I really have a hard time thinking in the broader terms of my philosophy of education in general and the specific population that I work with (special education). Given an average intelligence without a disability, everybody should have the freedom to be able to evaluate things, recognize that things change, and you should have the freedom to question everything. But when I look at the special education population, I wonder about their cognitive abilities. I don’t know if they’ll ever reach that cognitive level where they could have the intellectual ability to do all that. So, you have to try to find the mesh. And you know some students have more capacity than others. You have to work from where the students are and how you can move them along. I view it as a continuum.

This quote indicated the tension inherent to Pat’s dichotomized view of her students’ when this view was based upon their classroom placements and academic abilities.

**Stacy’s response.** Stacy disagreed with the realist worldview, because she does not agree that the best way to acquire knowledge was through “an expert like me.”

However, she did agree that there was a core body of knowledge in reading right now. She said, “To the best of our ability, the research out there says that we need to approach reading with the five components.” She believes that including those five components constitutes a well-rounded classroom. However she also states, “Yes, I believe that right now, but in five years if the research changes, I am not going to believe that. I’ll believe what the current research says that is accurate and valid research.”

Stacy agreed with the contextualist worldview. She acknowledged that adolescent students do need to learn to distinguish good information from bad information, especially in the Internet age. She might be able to guide them and teach them these skills, but she felt the best way for them would be to learn them through trial and error during experiential learning opportunities. However, this does not apply to phonics instruction where the teacher needed to assume the role of an expert who must help students learn phonics in a systematic, explicit way.

Stacy almost chose neutral in the relativist world view, but decided to mark agree instead. She elaborated, “I think it’s because I have worked in a very, very diverse community. Sometimes kids figure out how to read on their own. Certain kids can break the code and others need explicit instruction.” But, Stacy strongly believed in the reading research right now. She has seen impressive results when teachers use systematic phonics instruction such as *REWARDS* (Archer et al., 2005), a program that addresses that the coding of multisyllabic words. She explained, “Before it was just guess and go. And that’s my own little action research, because I have tested...300 kids in the past year....Kids were actually sounding out these words. I’ve seen a dramatic difference from

the classrooms that have *REWARDS* (Archer et al., 2005) to those that haven't. It's coming through in our data big time."

**Claire's response.** Claire strongly disagreed with the realist world view and said it made her very uncomfortable. Claire believed that any teacher who stood and told her students all they needed to know and all they need to learn were "devaluing them." She remarked, "Most of the teachers we work with are like that, which is really hard to observe. And it doesn't engage the kids."

Claire agreed with most of the contextualist worldview. She did not agree with the following statement in the vignette, "The students will pool their resources and come to best the understanding possible." To Claire this meant peer tutoring or collaboration, which if left unstructured was ineffective and actually impeded learning.

Claire strongly agreed with the relativist worldview, which most closely reflected her personal beliefs. She believed that we should come to our own conclusions as we study and learn. However, most of the comments she made after reading this worldview did not seem to fit that statement. Claire said the following:

When you teach reading, it has to be much more structured because you know you have to have them acquire certain skills and that was nonnegotiable. But now we know there are five components that need to be taught. They need to be taught to a certain level for students to be successful. And if you have the [five] components in place, the likelihood that the child will read well is higher. If you structure it like a whole language classroom is structured, then some of the kids might get it intuitively, but a lot won't, because it isn't structured enough. After the NRP report came out, we started looking at the [five] components, and I was doing *Next Steps* and *Early Steps* and they encompassed the five components. I actually was relieved, because then I knew that what I've been doing in my class was appropriate. And it just really helped me hone in on those skills.

This added easily to Claire's existing beliefs solidified during knowledge construction in



during her master's degree work at the local university reading center.

**Peggy's response.** Peggy disagreed with the realist worldview. But admittedly, she agreed there was a core body of knowledge and skills that each student must learn during those actual steps to becoming a reader. But, she did not agree with this worldview when applying its principles to the process of reading.

Peggy had no such ambivalence about the contextualist worldview, which she strongly agreed with. She did believe that the key to giving students ownership of their own learning rested in allowing them to develop their own understanding. However, she also believed that it's the teachers' role to know when to scaffold instruction to support knowledge growth. In other words, Peggy contends that students need to pool their resources and come to the best understanding possible, because some conclusions are better than others. Peggy said, "[I] really agree that kids are often times the very best teachers and that the opportunity to interact with each other can be so powerful in the classroom."

Though Peggy strongly agreed that students need to learn to think for themselves, she marked neutral on the relativist worldview, because she does not agree "that teachers need to keep all of her beliefs to herself...That sounds like an extreme to me to keep your beliefs and what you learned through your experience totally out of the picture."

### **Comparison of Literacy Coaches Responses to Sandy's**

#### **Scenario Question**

This question about Sandy's scenario (see Table 5.3) was in the form of a vignette

Table 5.2

*Schraw and Olafson's Three Worldview's Comparison Table Across Coaches Common Think Aloud Themes*

Scoring of each worldview and most common think aloud themes	Nora	Jeanette	Pat	Stacy	Claire	Peggy
Scoring of Realist Worldview	2	1	2	2	1	2
1. There is a core body of knowledge and skills that each student should learn or master.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2. Teachers should have a take-charge attitude as they dispense expert knowledge.	N	N	N	N	N	—
Scoring of Contextualist Worldview	5	5	4	4	4	5
1. Classroom knowledge needs to be personally useful and meaningful to students as they learn and study.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2. There is a lot of value in having students work together to pool their resources and come to the best understanding possible.	—	—	Y	—	N	—
3. Teachers need to know when to scaffold instruction and/or teach in a systematic, explicit way	Y	—	Y	Y	Y	Y
Scoring of Relativist Worldview	3½	5	4	4	5	3
1. Teachers should create an environment where students can learn to think independently and question the knowledge and opinions of others.	Y	Y	Y	—	Y	Y
2. Teachers do not need to monitor and guide students as they learn and gain knowledge, because the students need to figure it out on their own.	N	—	N	N	—	N

1 = Strongly disagreed

2 = Disagreed

3 = Neutral

4 = Agreed

5 = Strongly agreed

Y = Yes, did agree with statement.

N = No, did not agree with statement.

[—] = Made no comment either way

Table 5.3

*Sandy's Scenario Interview Question*

Question	Vignette
What instructional interventions would you use to help this student?	<p>Sandy has always done well in school because she is a hard worker. She has just entered the tenth grade where they are expected to read the various textbooks assigned. She has always gotten by in the past by taking notes as the teacher's retaught the material in her texts and by studying with friends. You have discovered through some assessments that she reads very slowly. She comments to you, "I read the material you assign, but I don't understand anything I have read." What to do? (Pause and allow response.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What if she was in seventh grade? Would you do anything differently? (Pause)</li> <li>• What if she was in fourth grade? Would you do anything differently? (Pause)</li> <li>• What if she was in first grade? Would you do anything differently? (Pause)</li> </ul>

and was actually the last question of the interview process. Since the responses were so interesting and constituted a use of original voice and terminology selection, I chose to remove it from the interview list and have it become its own data instrument. This instrument was designed to elicit a response to an instructional dilemma across grade levels. The scenario was read to the participants, up to the point where it is asked, "What do you do?" After the participant had responded to that part of the scenario, she was asked what she would do differently in grades 7, 4, and 1, respectively. This required each participant to think creatively about student populations they have had less experience with in regards to teaching reading. The Sandy's scenario question was read to each participant and they responded in an interview format.

All six literacy coaches' responses to this data protocol are summarized below.

### **Nora's Response**

Nora identified Sandy's reading difficulty as a problem with fluency and comprehension (see Table 5.4). She called Sandy's tenth-grade reading problem a "fix-up" issue. She would "diagnose the girl as if I was a doctor." With this assessment knowledge, Nora could identify the challenges and intervene with critical support. This would be necessary to give Sandy the "foundational pieces" that she would need. Once she had tested Sandy to determine her independent reading level, she address her fluency issues through a "book flood" by having her engage wide reading at her independent reading level. Nora would create opportunities to read aloud with Sandy and have her

Table 5.4

#### *Nora's Response and Intervention Plans for Sandy's Scenario*

Grade level	Intervention plan	Literacy issues at that grade level
<i>Nora's diagnosis:</i> Fluency and comprehension problems		
1. "Diagnose" and assess Sandy to learn her challenges and to gain clear data.		
2. Determine independent reading level through assessment.		
10 <sup>th</sup>	1. "Book flood"—Initiate wide reading at an independent reading level to build fluency 2. Would benefit from reading aloud with a partner	1. No direct fluency instruction 2. Comprehension is critical 3. Need for intensive intervention
7 <sup>th</sup>	1. Would do the same thing as 7 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup>	1. Fluency is a small part of instruction. 2. No direct fluency instruction 3. Comprehension is critical.
4 <sup>th</sup>	1. Would do the same thing as 7 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup>	1. Teaching and stressing fluency is part of the daily curriculum.
1 <sup>st</sup>	1. Would look at data and include phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study as needed. 2. Make plans to catch her up by 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade.	1. Fluency at this level is a skill deficiency. 2. Small groups are commonly used to differentiate instruction.

read aloud with a partner. Nora believed that at the 10<sup>th</sup>-grade level, if left unresolved this problem could negatively influence her for life, so she would need some intensive one on one instruction “to make two years growth in one year [of] intensive tutoring.” By the time she gets to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, she might be 2 to 3 years behind her peers, or even more at the 10<sup>th</sup>-grade level.

Nora would not do anything differently if she was in seventh grade. She needs to be diagnosed and to get proper individual support with reading materials at her level. Nora noted that in a Tier 1 classroom at the seventh or tenth-grade level, there would not be direct fluency instruction. Nora contends that in seventh grade fluency might be a small part of daily instruction, but “comprehension is critical.”

In the fourth grade, Nora would also do the same thing. But Nora went on to clarify the difference, “In fourth grade you would be teaching and stressing and utilizing fluency in the classroom, so it would be part of the curriculum.” In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Sandy would not have as large a deficit as in 7<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

At the first-grade level, Nora believed Sandy’s fluency problem reflected a skill deficiency caused by a lack of practice. Nora reasoned that at the first-grade level a teacher automatically differentiates her instruction based on the ability levels of her students. Efforts would be made at that grade to make sure she caught up by second grade. So, Nora reasoned that she would also be looking at the data carefully to plan instruction that would include phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study pieces.

### **Jeanette’s Response**

Jeanette identified Sandy’s reading difficulty as a problem with fluency and

comprehension (see Table 5.5). First, she would listen to her reading to see why she was not reading more quickly. Was it because she couldn't decode or was she just a slow reader? Jeanette also wanted to make sure that Sandy understood the vocabulary and text features of the textbooks she was reading. After identifying the problem, Jeanette would

Table 5.5

*Jeanette's Response and Intervention Plan for Sandy's Scenario*

Grade level	Intervention plan	Literacy issues at that grade level
<i>Jeanette's diagnosis:</i> Fluency and comprehension problems		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Listen to her read to find out why she was not reading more quickly.</li> <li>2. Was she having trouble decoding?</li> <li>3. Did she not understand the vocabulary?</li> <li>4. Was she struggling with the textbook features?</li> <li>5. Was she just a slow reader?</li> <li>6. Does she have a learning disability or a visual or auditory disability?</li> </ol>	
10 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. She would address fluency practice with a commercial program like Six-Minute Solution</li> <li>2. She would verbally encourage her to reading faster with fewer errors.</li> <li>3. Vocabulary or decoding issue: Teach her to segment words and focus on word morphology.</li> <li>4. Academic language: Talk to all of her content area teachers.</li> <li>5. Teach her how to handle text structure issues.</li> </ol>	
7 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jeanette combined her analysis of seventh and tenth grades. She would do the same for both.</li> </ol>	
4 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would assess the same things.</li> <li>2. Would focus more on text structure issues.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students have moved from using mostly narrative text in earlier grades to now using informational text.</li> </ol>
1 <sup>st</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would find out if Sandy had problems with sound-letter relationship.</li> <li>2. Would want to know if phonics or phonemic awareness instruction is needed.</li> <li>3. If she is able to decode, then comprehension was the problem.</li> </ol>	

address the instructional interventions. She felt that if it was a fluency problem, then fluency practice using a program such as *Six-Minute Solution* might be needed. Jeanette would also figure out what her instructional reading level was by having her read passages, practice reading timed readings, and encourage her to read a little faster each time with fewer errors.

Jeanette felt that if it was a vocabulary issue or maybe a decoding issue she then might need to teach her to segment words and to focus on word parts, such as suffixes and prefixes and roots. If Sandy needed work on academic language, then Jeanette would address the issue with all her teachers, so that she would be supported across her content area instruction. Perhaps Sandy does not know how to approach then textbook, then Jeanette and her other teachers would teach her to look at headings and subheadings, and to main ideas and supporting details.

At the 7<sup>th</sup>- or 10<sup>th</sup>-grader level, Sandy may have other issues interfering with fluency and would have her tested for a learning disability, or maybe an auditory or visual learning disability. Jeanette had prior students who were hard workers, got good grades, but struggled a bit more each year. Through testing, she found out they had visual processing disorders. She discovered that they could read and say the words, but being slow readers, they could not retain what they read without auditory support. Once they could listen and read at the same time, those students demonstrated almost 100% comprehension. Therefore, Jeanette believed that when instructional interventions are not working well enough, than other possible solutions should be considered. This reflected Jeanette's belief that all students can learn if taught correctly. If that does not work, then

the teachers are responsible for the learning success of their students, and they should not give up finding the answer.

If Sandy was in the fourth grade, Jeanette would still want to find out everything, but she would probably focus on text structure more than anything. At that grade, students may be only now moving from using mostly narrative text to expository textbooks. Jeanette reasoned that if Sandy had been a good reader up to that point, and suddenly she's not "getting it," she may not understand this new text structure.

At the first-grade level, Jeanette would want to find out if Sandy even understands the sound-letter relationships. She would want to find out what abilities Sandy has in relationship to phonics and phonemic awareness. Jeanette reasons that if Sandy was able to decode the words, but had absolutely no idea of their meaning, then her comprehension would be impacted.

### **Pat's Response**

Pat identified Sandy's reading and learning problems to be centered on the need for fluency instruction and practice (see Table 5.6). She felt Sandy probably had limited sight word knowledge, struggled with decoding multi-syllable words, and lacked vocabulary, fluency and comprehension strategy knowledge. So, Sandy also needed to be taught study skills and strategy instruction. Since she is in tenth grade, this instruction would need to be taught quickly and might involve the use of technology programs to fast-track the instruction. Pat believed that the content teachers at the secondary level are less willing to assist struggling students to read their textbooks.

If Sandy were in seventh grade, Pat would give her more direct strategy



Table 5.6

*Pat's Responses and Intervention Plan for Sandy's Scenario*

Grade level	Intervention plan	Literacy issues at that grade level
<i>Pat's diagnosis:</i> Needs fluency instruction and practice. (Pat did not mention any ways to diagnose the problem. She appeared to diagnose it straight from the scenario description.)		
10 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wide reading their instructional level</li> <li>2. Lots of opportunities to build their knowledge base and sight words</li> <li>3. Providing simpler, differentiated, and below grade level texts and materials.</li> <li>4. Teach specific fluency instruction</li> <li>5. Teaching decoding, reading and comprehension strategies, and study skills.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Instruction would need to occur quickly.</li> <li>2. May need to use technology programs to fast-track the instruction.</li> <li>3. Content teachers are less willing to assist struggling readers with their textbooks.</li> <li>4. Students lack access to reading instruction across the content areas.</li> </ol>
7 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would be the same across all grades (See 10th).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers have time to teach direct instruction and practice.</li> <li>2. Special Education students have a study skills course to teach all these things.</li> <li>3. Students lack access to reading instruction across the content areas.</li> </ol>
4 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would be the same across all grades (see 10th).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the Elementary level teachers can apply strategy instruction across all content areas in their self-contained classrooms.</li> <li>2. Instruction would become more explicit using simple texts and materials.</li> </ol>
1 <sup>st</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would be the same across all grades (see 10th).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Same as comments on fourth grade.</li> </ol>

instruction and more practice on comprehension strategies and fluency, vocabulary, multi-syllable words, and reading strategies to address the fluency and comprehension problem. Ever practical, Pat felt that at the seventh-grade level, the teacher would have

more time for direct instruction and practice. Pat comments, “I can’t get out of the special [education] lens. Because [in a special education classroom], we have a study skills course where we really teach them how to do this.”

At the fourth-grade level, Pat would probably do the same, but would make the instruction more explicit by using more simple texts and materials. Sandy would be given many opportunities to work with peers. At the elementary level, teachers have the opportunity to show a student how to apply a strategy across all of the different content areas. In first grade, Pat’s fluency instruction for Sandy would focus on letter-word identification, recognizing sight words, lots of reading, lots of opportunities to read text and predictable text, and learning about text patterns.

Interestingly, Pat ended her reflections on Sandy’s fluency problems by noting that you would really be doing all the same things across all the grades: (a) wide reading at her instructional level; (b) opportunities to build her knowledge base and sight words; (c) providing simpler, differentiated, and below grade level texts and materials; and (d) specific fluency instruction, decoding, advanced skills, comprehension strategies and study skills. For Pat, the differences between the grade levels would not be so much an instructional issue, but would involve how the various grade levels allowed for access to various instructional approaches. At first and fourth-grade levels, Pat felt that such reading instruction and practice were easier to provide across the content areas. At the middle school level, Pat believed access will be “more hit and miss.” At the high school level, Pat laments, “[The teachers] are really into teaching their content and not so much with strategy instruction. You’d hope that they would be, the reality is I don’t believe

they are.” It should also be noted that Pat addressed both issues of fluency and comprehension evenly as she planned the instructional intervention.

### Stacy’s Response

Stacy stated that Sandy needed fluency practice (see Table 5.7). First, she would administer an assessment on oral reading fluency to establish benchmarks and to observe how well she could decode. At the 10<sup>th</sup>-grade level, Stacy felt Sandy should be placed in a reading class that focused on fluency instruction as one of its instructional components. If not, then she would recommend sending fluency exercises home, so she could practice with somebody by reading aloud one or two repeated readings of a nonfiction passage.

Table 5.7

#### *Stacy’s Responses and Intervention Plans for Sandy’s Scenario*

Grade level	Intervention plan	Literacy issues at that grade level
<i>Stacy’s diagnosis:</i> Needs fluency practice		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stacy would administer assessments to Sandy to establish benchmarks and to observe her decoding skills.</li> <li>2. Usually it is not just a comprehension issue, so fluency instruction would also be needed.</li> </ol>	
10 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would place her in a reading class with fluency instruction (if available).</li> </ol> <p>OR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Would send fluency exercises such as repeated readings of a non-fiction passage home with her, so she could practice with somebody.</li> </ol>	
7 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would place her in a reading class with fluency instruction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In a reading class at this level, she would receive instruction from all five components.</li> </ol>
4 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stacy would not do anything differently.</li> </ol>	
1 <sup>st</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No special instruction would be needed since fluency is already taught.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fluency practice is already occurring during daily instruction at this level.</li> </ol>

At the seventh-grade level, Stacy would recommend Sandy's placement in a reading class where she could receive instruction right down to the phonics level, though she admits "it could be just a fluency issue." Stacy also believed it could be a comprehension issue, but clarified that "usually it's not just a comprehension issue."

At the fourth-grade level, Stacy would not do anything differently. At the first-grade level, Stacy stated, "At the first-grade level...that's the big year. That's when you learn, [so] a lot can happen." I took that to mean that fluency could be dealt with easily at the first-grade level, because fluency practice was already occurring in daily instruction.

### **Claire's Response**

Claire recognized that Sandy's reading problems dealt with fluency and comprehension (see Table 5.8). Claire would begin her intervention by doing broad-based needs assessment of Sandy's literacy skills. Interestingly, she would also test all the rest of her students to ascertain whether any of the other tenth grade students in her classes were struggling at reading. After learning Sandy's reading level, Claire would get her materials at her reading level. She would also have Sandy work at both school and home to build her fluency skills through repeated readings. Claire would also get leveled texts for her. Claire commented, "She's probably not reading at a tenth-grade level; she's probably reading more on a fifth-grade level, so I would try to find some texts that are fifth-grade level that are hopefully within the realm of instruction." Claire would also want to rule out phonics and decoding as possible problems.

If Sandy were the seventh-grade level, Claire would provide text that she could read, because, "my experience with seventh-grade struggling readers is that they are

Table 5.8

*Claire's Response and Intervention Plans for Sandy's Scenario*

Grade level	Intervention plan	Literacy issues at that grade level
<i>Claire's diagnosis:</i> Fluency and comprehension problems		
	1. Claire would administer a broad-based assessment to establish benchmarks of Sandy's literacy needs and to establish her reading level, and rule out decoding and phonics problems.	
10 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would provide instructional materials at her reading level</li> <li>2. Would provide her w/leveled texts.</li> <li>3. Would have her practice repeated readings at school and at home.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Logistically difficult to provide reading interventions to students.</li> <li>2. Instruction must be included in regular education classroom.</li> <li>3. Teachers do not know how to teach in small groups.</li> <li>4. Direct Instruction to the whole group is the norm.</li> </ol>
7 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would do same as above (See 10th).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Same comments from 10th grade level. See above.</li> </ol>
4 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would do same as above (See 10th).</li> <li>2. Would provide fluency instruction in small groups.</li> <li>3. Would have partners read repeated readings together.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There would probably be many students struggling with fluency issues, so groups could be broken down by ability levels.</li> </ol>
1 <sup>st</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No special instruction would be needed since fluency is already taught.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is more likely a beginning reading problems dealing with phonics and/or phonemic awareness.</li> </ol>

thrilled to get material they can read and they are not really bothered by it being childish.”

If Sandy were in fourth grade, Claire would do the same thing. She admitted that she would likely have a “bunch just like her at that level.” Claire would create a small group and have them all work with each other to build their fluency. She would make sure that they were all reading at the same level, so they could partner read repeated readings.

If Sandy were in the first grade, Claire would test her to locate the deficits. At that grade level, it is more likely a beginning reading problem such as phonics or phonemic awareness. She commented, “With other kids in the class in the same situation, we could do word sorts. We could focus on vowel patterns and reading on their level a lot.” Claire also made general comments about how it would be different across the various grade levels. She said:

When you look across the grades from first [grade] up to secondary, the logistics is incredibly difficult in junior high and high school. You don’t have the freedom of having the kids all day and structuring a lesson to work around that. You have to work it into a 70 minute class. And secondary teachers still haven’t figured out how to do that. They’re still whole class. Even in our upper elementary, teachers struggle with the concept of doing small groups within a larger group. They are still doing direct instruction whole group.

This comment reflected a general tension that existed between worldviews that exist between either the elementary and secondary levels or the worldviews that may exist at each level that may be inherent to that setting. Such worldviews could influence beliefs about how to teach and learn.

### **Peggy’s Response**

Peggy identified Sandy’s problem as fluency and comprehension issues (see Table 5.9), but acknowledged that at the tenth-grade level there were limited resources to help students when they had made it that far. She would begin by addressing the speed issue of fluency. She would have Sandy listen to a reading partner first and “come back and mimicked what she’d heard.” Peggy also suggested using fluency timings carefully, because “we need to honor that expertise that she has and not make her feel demeaned.” In addition, Peggy would provide after school strategy and comprehension instruction.

Table 5.9

*Peggy's Responses and Intervention Plans for Sandy's Scenario*

Grade level	Intervention plan	Literacy issues at that grade level
<i>Peggy's diagnosis:</i> Fluency and comprehension problems		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Peggy would administer a broad-based assessment to establish benchmarks of Sandy's literacy needs and her reading level.</li> <li>2. She would also assess at the first-grade level to locate a deficit. She would want to rule out phonics and/or phonemic awareness problems.</li> </ol>	
10 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would provide instructional materials at her reading level</li> <li>2. Would provide her w/leveled texts.</li> <li>3. Would have her practice repeated readings at school and at home.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Logistically difficult to provide reading interventions to students.</li> <li>2. Instruction must be included in regular education classroom.</li> <li>3. Teachers do not know how to teach in small groups.</li> <li>4. Direct Instruction to the whole group is the norm.</li> </ol>
7 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would do same as above (See 10th grade above).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Same comments from tenth-grade level. See above.</li> </ol>
4 <sup>th</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would do same as above (See 10th grade above).</li> <li>2. Would provide fluency instruction in small groups.</li> <li>3. Would have partners read repeated readings together.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There would probably be many students struggling with fluency issues, so groups could be broken down by ability levels.</li> </ol>
1 <sup>st</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No special instruction would be needed since fluency is already taught.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is more likely a beginning reading problems dealing with phonics and/or phonemic awareness.</li> </ol>

Peggy perceived her strength as an ability to listen well and take notes. Therefore to build on that, she would teach Sandy to summarize and jot down notes frequently as she read. Since Sandy was in tenth grade, Peggy expressed the need for the intervention to occur quickly.

If Sandy were in seventh grade, Peggy could be put her in a reading class where

she would have an opportunity to practice some of those same skills mentioned earlier. She would monitor her progress to make sure she is moving forward. If not, Peggy would assess her decoding skills to see if those were impeding her comprehension and provide phonics instructions as needed.

If Sandy were in fourth grade, Peggy stated that the interventions would be the same, as would the progress monitoring, and phonics intervention as needed. However she would also have Sandy work with a partner to read and discuss the text on an ongoing basis. At the fourth-grade level, all the students would be working on comprehension strategies, which would be to Sandy's advantage.

If Sandy were in the first grade, Peggy would begin by placing her in a small group that addressed fluency issues. She clarified, "I'd start at the basics and work up, so I'd start with her decoding skills...Then, I'd go to the next step which is fluency...Then I'd start to work on fluency with attention to comprehension, so she's be learned to retell and then eventually to summarize for me." Peggy commented that at first-grade level, "It is harder to assess comprehension." Peggy concluded by saying, "So, it looks really similar, at least in my mind, through all of the grades. But you have many more options in first grade, more options with time and more options with materials. It is so much easier if you can catch it at that point. Definitely."

### **Comparison of Literacy Coaches' Responses to NRP Report Question**

An additional theme in the form of a question emerged during the interview process. The question dealt with the NRP report (2000) and was not part of the original



interview list (see Table 3.1). The discussion emerged spontaneously during an interview with Peggy when she brought up the influence of the NRP upon her beliefs and her belief in its findings. This discussion generated a question by me that was subsequently added as an question during all literacy coaches' interviews. That question was, "What do you think of the NRP report? Do you think its findings are relevant at the secondary level?"

The intent of the question was to gather more information about the impact the NRC has had upon the instructional decisions being made by the SRIP leadership cohort. To report the literacy coaches' responses to this question, I chose to list and discuss only three to four quotes that reflected their core beliefs that addressed both the findings and influence of the NRP report. First, the quotes chosen for each coach will be summarized. Next, they will be listed in a table for easy comparisons. Finally, I will reflect upon how the responses compare.

### **Nora's Response**

Nora's quotes consisted of the following three statements. They addressed her orientation as a secondary teacher. She did not think that the NRP findings were as relevant to her as a secondary English teacher, because they did not address issues most significant to literacy issues at the secondary level, such as writing. She felt that instructionally the focus is very different between elementary and secondary. She referred to them as realms, implying a division between them that may not be easily dismissed. Her three quotes were as follows.

1. I think it is a great beginning and that's what I see it as, a beginning. And now I say there needs to be more.
2. They never did get to writing, so I fault them for that.

3. I think secondary and elementary are two separate animals. You cannot take this three-hour literacy block of reading, writing, and thinking and the inquiry and put it in a secondary realm and say it's going to look anywhere near the same.

### **Jeanette's Response**

Jeanette did believe that the findings of the NRP report or relevant to the secondary level, however she had criticisms. She felt they had done a pretty good job with their meta-analysis. She admitted that because of her constructivist philosophy, she would usually not view phonics and direction instruction so favorably. Her teaching experience, however, involved struggling readers, so she had learned to value a marriage between whole language and teaching explicitly to the five components identified in the NRP report. She did not believe that phonemic awareness issues were relevant to the middle school level and beyond. At that level, she felt something else must be going on. Jeanette's three quotes were as follows.

1. I think that it was a pretty good study.
2. Back to my [constructivist] philosophy, I would be all for whole language and not so much for phonics and direct instruction, but I think there has got to be a marriage of both...You can't just do "book flood" and expect kids to learn how to read!
3. Students should have the phonemic awareness by...seventh or eighth grade, [so] something else is going on.

### **Pat's Response**

Pat has always taught at the middle school level. She felt that the NRP report was relevant at the secondary level, but had uncertainties that expressed themselves as criticisms. Though the NRP report had given educators a lot of direction, she felt their

focus a bit too narrow. As a result, certain components such as motivation and writing had been left out. She believed that phonemic awareness would not be an issue at the middle school, but could be replaced by decoding multisyllabic words and reading comprehension. Her other comments addressed the report's general influence at the secondary level. She felt that content teachers had very little awareness of the report's findings. Pat's three quotes were as follows.

1. I think the NRP report has given us a lot of direction. But in way, I also think it also narrowed our focus a little bit. And, it's excluded some pieces like motivation, which is a huge piece. They didn't do a lot about writing.
2. I think there is very little awareness of [the NRP] out there...because we (i.e., secondary) are content specific, I would assume most content teachers have never heard of it.
3. Yes, I think most kids have phonemic awareness intact by middle school. At the middle school level you're probably addressing issues like decoding multiple syllable words.... Comprehension, of course, that's just the key.

### **Stacy's Response**

Stacy believes strongly in the findings of the NRP report. Her feelings were more intense due to her strong commitment to scientifically-based reading research. She taught reading using the five components, even believing that phonemic awareness should be taught at the secondary level. Her criticisms were mild and centered upon the NRP report's lack of focus on motivation and wide reading. Stacy's four quotes were as follows.

1. I believe in the NRP findings. I really take a lot of stock when I'm teaching reading with those five components.
2. They are missing the Reading Next work.... That talks about motivation [which] is very important to secondary reading.

3. Yes, students at the secondary level do need phonemic awareness.
4. The students need to be reading tons of different types of text...to bump up to the next level, a big part of my philosophy.

### **Claire's Response**

Claire was enthusiastic about the findings of the NRP report. She believed it was relevant at the secondary level and very timely. In her role as an instructor of adult teachers, she found the framework with the five components provided by the NRP report useful and extremely relevant. Claire's three quotes were as follows.

1. I thought it was lovely to have the components illuminated by the NRP report [which] provided a framework, and I felt it was very timely, because now I could talk to teachers.
2. We have [the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers] think about the five components and what they teach in their classrooms and there was a huge disconnect between the five components and what they were doing.
3. In my role as a reading coach, I teach adults how to teach students how to read. I always go back to the NRP report.

### **Peggy's Response**

Peggy was also very enthusiastic about the findings of the NRP report. Her comments reflected back on an earlier era when she used whole language and did not focus in on the five components. She saw that time as being one of misguided priorities in reading instruction. She believed that the five components are critically important and should guide reading instruction K-12 for all struggling readers.

Peggy's three quotes were as follows.

1. And I think back to those first graders, and I'm lucky I only lost three or four every school year! You know, it was scary. Yes, exactly, this was pre-NRP.

2. My view of literacy instruction in general is that we've been pretty much off the mark for a long time.
3. It's the same process regardless of where (i.e., K-12) we find struggling readers and those five components guide what I assess and what I do...they're critically important for any struggling reader that's still in the system at [secondary level].

Table 5.10 reviews these findings about the influence of the NRP report upon the six coach's instructional choices. Themes across this table included whether the coaches felt the findings were as relevant to the secondary level and general viewpoints. By charting the quotes of each participant, their voices were allowed to express their self-stated beliefs about the NRP report. This allowed for a comparison of key statements across the coaches that demonstrated levels of intensity of support. This will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

### **Comparison Across Coaches' Professional Library Lists**

The professional library list is a survey of the literacy coach's books when asked the interview question #15 (see Table 3.1). "Do you have any favorite researchers? Do you read any works that help you learn more about your field? What books or professional magazines comprise your professional library? What sources do you use to decide on instructional strategies and interventions in relationship to how to teach reading?" The response item volume varied greatly across coaches: (a) Nora, 40; (b) Jeanette, 18; (c) Pat, 21; (d) Stacy, 14; (e) Claire, 10; and (f) Peggy, 19. The variation was driven by the restrictions of the interview location, time allotted, and personal preference of the coach. Each listed item, and the vast majority were books, was

Table 5.10

*Comparison Across Six Coaches: Response to Questions about the NRP Report Findings*

Literacy coaches	Literacy coaches responses to question: What do you think of NRP report? Do you think its findings are as relevant at the Secondary level?
Nora Secondary <sup>a</sup> No <sup>a</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "I think it is a great beginning and that's what I see it as, a beginning. And now I say there needs to be more."</li> <li>2. "They never did get to writing, so I fault them for that."</li> <li>3. "I think secondary and elementary are two separate animals. You cannot take this three-hour literacy block of reading, writing, and thinking and the inquiry and put it in a secondary realm and say it's going to look anywhere near the same."</li> </ol>
Jeanette Secondary <sup>a</sup> Yes, but w/ criticism <sup>b</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "I think that it was a pretty good study."</li> <li>2. "Back to my [constructivist] philosophy, I would be all for whole language and not so much for phonics and direct instruction, but I think there has got to be a marriage of both...You can't just do 'book flood' and expect kids to learn how to read!"</li> <li>3. "Students should have the phonemic awareness by...seventh or eighth grade,...so] something else is going on."</li> </ol>
Pat Secondary <sup>a</sup> Yes, but w/ criticism <sup>b</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "I think the NRP report has given us a lot of direction. But in way, I also think it also narrowed our focus a little bit. And, it's excluded some pieces like motivation, which is a huge piece. They didn't do a lot about writing..."</li> <li>2. "I think there is very little awareness that it out there...because we (i.e. secondary) are content specific, I would assume most content teachers have never heard of it."</li> <li>3. "Yes, I think most kids have phonemic awareness intact by middle school. At the middle school level you're probably addressing issues like decoding multiple syllable words.... Comprehension, of course, that's just the key."</li> </ol>
Stacy Secondary <sup>a</sup> Yes, with mild criticism <sup>b</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "I believe in the NRP findings. I really take a lot of stock when I'm teaching reading with those five can opponents."</li> <li>2. "They are missing the Reading Next work...That talks about motivation [which] is very important to secondary reading."</li> <li>3. "Yes students at the secondary level do need phonemic awareness."</li> <li>4. "The students need to be reading tons of different types of text...to bump up to the next level, a big part of my philosophy."</li> </ol>
Claire Elementary <sup>a</sup> Yes <sup>b</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "I thought it was lovely to have the components illuminated by the NRP report [which] provided a framework, and I felt it was very timely, because now I could talk to teachers."</li> <li>2. "We have [the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers] think about the five components and what they teach in their classrooms and there was a huge disconnect between the five components and what they were doing. "In my role as a reading coach, I teach adults how to teach students how to read. I always go back to the NRP report."</li> </ol>
Peggy Elementary <sup>a</sup> Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "And I think back to those first-graders, and I'm lucky I only lost three or four every school year! You know, it was scary...this was pre-NRP."</li> <li>2. "My view of literacy instruction in general is that we've been pretty much off the mark for a long time."</li> <li>3. "It's the same process regardless of where (i.e., K-12) we find struggling readers and those five components guide what I assess and what I do...they're critically important for any struggling reader that's still in the system at [secondary level]."</li> </ol>

<sup>a</sup>Secondary or Elementary Levels .

<sup>b</sup>Yes or No on whether or not NRP findings are as relevant to Secondary level as to Elementary level.

evaluated base upon whether the item fell into one or more of the following categories: (a) special education (SpE); (b) elementary education (E); (c) adolescent education (A); (d) general literacy education (GL); and (e) other education (O). Other education usually meant related to topics in education such as leadership, literacy coaching, brain research, and so forth.

The placement of items in the category was done by me, the study researcher, to allow for consistency across all of the items. The amount of items in each category for each coach was then converted to a percentage rate for that category type item found in the list (see Table 5.11). The primary purpose of this analysis of the list is to glean any cases of where certain categories may be privileged or marginalized by each coach. All coaches had between one third to one half of their items classified as general literacy; therefore, that category will be viewed as fairly consistent across the coaches' survey lists. Only one coach, Peggy, other than Pat who was trained in special education had any items in that category.

Nora's selections (see Appendix C) reflected her role as the director of the intervention cohort and her experience as a high school English teacher. She had many books on professional development and leadership issues classified as other and about teaching writing classified as general literacy that were not seen on any other list. The only category left empty was special education.

Jeanette's selections (see Appendix D) were dominated by adolescent education and general literacy items. The only categories left empty were special education and elementary education. These omissions reflected a lack of formal training in early literacy

Table 5.11

*Comparison Across Six Literacy Coaches' Professional Library Collections by Percentage of Book Types/Topics*

Literacy coach's name	Literacy coach's primary work experience by grade & subject	% Special education books	% Elementary education books	% Adolescent education books	% General literacy books	% Other: (i.e., leadership)
Nora	High school English Secondary literacy	0	10	25	40	22
Jeanette	Middle School ELA, <sup>a</sup> reading, and ESL <sup>b</sup>	0	0	33	56	11
Pat	Middle school special education ELA <sup>a</sup> & reading	14	0	24	52	10
Stacy	Middle school ESL <sup>b</sup> reading	0	0	7	50	43
Claire	Upper elementary gifted & talented	0	33	10	33	33
Peggy	Elementary K-2	5	32	16	42	5

<sup>a</sup>ELA = English Language Arts.

<sup>b</sup>ESL = English as a Second Language; ELA.

and special education. Her books dealt almost exclusively with instructional applications and her roles as a reading teaching in the middle school setting.

Pat's selections (see Appendix E) reflected her broad knowledge of the secondary student. Her selections were not dominated by special education, even though that was her specialty. She clearly valued the literature with an adolescent education focus and more generalized instruction and research dealing with the secondary student. The only category left empty was elementary education. This omission reflected a lack of formal



training in early literacy.

Stacy's selection (see Appendix F) were dominated by general literacy and other items. The only categories left empty were special education and elementary education and only one item in adolescent education. These omissions all reflect a lack of formal training in these areas of concentration. Her dominant items consisted of general reading instructional books and books that reflected her interest in the NRP's demand for research-based programs.

Claire's selections (see Appendix G) show an even percentage distribution across elementary, general literacy and other. But, she had the largest volume of items of any of the coaches in the elementary category at 33% and the smallest in the general literacy category at 33%. The only category left empty was special education and she only had 10% in the adolescent education category. This reflected her lack of formal training in these areas of concentration.

Peggy's selections (see Appendix H) range across the five categories. She is the only coach with no category left empty. She had 32% in elementary and three items in adolescent education and only one item in the categories of special education and other. Her dominant concentrations were in elementary education and general literacy with 14 out of 19 items in these two categories. Her item distribution reflected her background as a working, classroom-imbedded reading specialist/coach.

Implications of this analysis lies in what categories were privileged by being dominant on the list and which were marginalized by being less dominant on the list. The clearest way to analyze this data is to focus in on the instructional tensions between

Elementary and Adolescent Reading Education. The three coaches formally trained in secondary (i.e. Nora, Jeanette, Elaine) privileged the category of Adolescent Education and marginalized the Elementary Education. The opposite was true of the formally trained elementary teachers (i.e. Claire, Peggy). The only exception was Stacy, who took a less conventional teacher certification route, bridged the tensions between the two through a generalist approach dominated by scientifically-based reading research.

### **Tensions Between Elementary and Secondary Educators**

Tensions within the program seemed to manifest themselves between Nora and Jeanette on one side and Claire and Peggy on the other over instructional choices or programs in the decision making in the SRIP literacy coach's cohort. When this became obvious to me, I conducted a separate interview with the elementary coaches, Claire and Peggy, to address these tensions. This issue will be touched upon briefly as something that occurred, but deep analysis will not be possible because it goes outside the study question and reasonable time allotted for the study. However, it is worth mentioning due to the focus in the study on instructional choices.

Jeanette was given an article by Peggy when she asked for help to understand the elementary reading process. The article by Morris (2006) looked at five studies that used variations of the same tutoring model: (a) Howard Street Tutoring Program; (b) Book Buddies; (c) Next Steps; (d) Partners-in-Reading; and (e) Howard Street in Richmond (p. 356). According to the author, noncertified reading tutors, "when provided with appropriate supervision, can raise the achievement of at-risk primary grade readers"

(Morris, 2006, p. 359). These exchanging of material reflects the need for cohort participants to find common ground in their discussions about literacy. Jeanette's educational background in reading and English did not prepare her with a knowledge base to discuss the emergent literacy instructional process.

The interview with Peggy and Claire occurred with them together. At the beginning of the interview, both coaches talked primarily about the difficulties of working at the secondary level. They had concerns that centered on how to find the students they needed to work with, getting the right kids into the right classes, and working with counselors and teachers. They both felt the secondary setting allowed for less flexibility to allow teachers to come together and to move kids around. They also had difficulty with what they called the size issue. Peggy said, "You have three times the kids, three times the teachers, and three times the problems."

Peggy also commented on conversations she had with Nora about the differences between secondary and elementary teachers. According to Peggy, Nora would remind her that secondary teachers teach different subjects throughout the day and often think differently about planning for the day, the degree of commitment that they could reasonably put into each class, and the tendency to view students as part of a group. Michelle commented, "There are factions in the Jr. High. Many [content] departments don't talk to other departments."

Both Peggy and Claire felt a philosophical difference about how teaching students is viewed at the secondary versus the elementary levels. They view elementary as holistically student oriented and secondary as more teacher centered, because the

emphasis at secondary is on teaching the content area. The teacher presents the content material and the students are responsible for their own learning of that material. At the elementary level Claire commented, “One sense for elementary teachers is that when they have their class they own the students in all areas, in all contents, and their struggles become the teacher’s struggle.” She believes that the structure of the Jr. High does not allow that to happen. “We really wanted and needed extra time for those struggling students. We wanted two reading periods and that meant some organizational changes. And it meant that teachers had to collaborate to put that into place.” They both had observed that successful school change often comes down to supporting scheduling changes, with buy-in at the district level, the school level and the principal level.

However, Peggy and Claire acknowledged even greater philosophical differences and tensions during instructional planning or professional development sessions. While working in SRIP, they often heard from Nora, “You just don’t thing like secondary teachers.” They were often told by others that something they were suggesting just wasn’t going to work at the secondary level. Peggy reflected, “It was manually what we were asking teachers to do...the preparation time. We heard a lot of times, that they didn’t have time for that.” They both laughed and Claire said, “It did make us crazy...[as elementary teachers] we prepped nonstop, really.”

At times it became quite personal. Peggy commented, “Every once in a while people would say, ‘You must be elementary teachers.’ Or they just get mad at us and they’d say, “you *are* an elementary teacher!”” Claire laughed at that point in the interview and said, “We would try not to be offended, but...” And then Peggy finished her sentence,

“... It’s a big put down when they would say that to us.” It was said during a training session for counselors in administering an AIMS fluency assessment. The counselors just didn’t want to practice giving the test. Peggy believed, “They were out of their comfort zone.... I think there’s this bias about listening to grown kids read that maybe they’re trying to overcome.... When we offered a practice session, they rolled their eyes.” Claire ended the discussion with, “It was really uncomfortable how it happened.”

They were both very frank about the reception they had from secondary and elementary teachers when presenting professional development. During a discussion about how teachers at the secondary level were resistant to professional development when the presenter brought in something new, Peggy commented, “Elementary teachers tend to have a gentler nature. I may be stereotyping, but to a presenter they’re generally more welcoming. They hide their feelings a little more.... I think Jr. High teachers are a lot like Jr. High students. They call it like they see it.” They seemed to feel that secondary teachers have difficulty focusing on the individual student and are reluctant to listen to a student to read. “I’m too busy,” these two literacy coaches are often told. Claire exaggerated their response a bit, “I’ve got 300 kids! Don’t bug me about the one.” Peggy added, “It’s a different culture, the Jr. High setting.”

I brought the conversation back to reading instruction by asking, “Did you find coming up from elementary that there were just things you didn’t know about teaching reading at the secondary level?” Claire said, “I think the components [the five pillars] are the same, but we were surprised at the lack of teaching going on in the reading classes.” Peggy added, “There were no materials.... I observed silent reading. There’s a lot of

passing out a novel and we silent read and we talk...that type of thing.” They both clarified that they mostly saw worksheets, crossword puzzles, word searches, book reports, but no real teaching going on. Claire said, “There was no instruction, [explicit or otherwise] going on in any classroom where you’d observed.” However at this point in the interview, Peggy made a key observation, “It really took a coach [in the classroom], I think, to make a difference.”

Peggy talked about a professional development workshop she had given on the program *REWARDS*. I remember attending that workshop and the tensions I personally felt as a former secondary teacher, in addition to the tensions I observed from watching the other seventh-grade teachers present. Peggy remembered, “We had the Anita Archer video that we played little clips from. And she was snapping and clapping and pointing...the direct instruction. Nobody wants to do direct instruction, either. One teacher said;

If I snap and clap, they’re going to laugh at me. They’ve all used *REWARDS* this year and adapted it. Their classes and snaps look different in each classroom. They do what they’re comfortable with.... They’re all doing it, using it, and in fact that’s one of the things they love the most is the *REWARDS* program, because it is scripted and so they feel comfortable enough that they could get in and give it a try, because there’s a lot of support there.

In conclusion, the interview between Peggy and Claire articulated the differences and resulting tensions that often exist between the elementary and secondary teachers. These often stem from differing belief systems, both epistemological and ontological, that exist and develop within a community of practice dominated by a philosophical paradigm. In other words, the formal educational experience and work experiences of elementary teachers versus secondary teachers differ in structural and philosophical

views about knowledge, teaching, and student's. These paradigmatic ways of knowing can become either a wall or a bridge to communication and knowledge exchange. This section had a tendency to emphasize the tensions and differences due to the nature of the interview questions, but let it be understood, that the professionalism of this coaching cohort encouraged a high level of collegial productivity. Their differences created a type of synergistic consensus building that often broke down barriers and build bridges of understanding and shared cognition. In other words, it seems to me that their planning sessions became more than the sum of their parts, and knowledge exchange and instructional and program planning benefited by their differences.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

The order I have listed the literacy coaches across the study findings and through the study in general (i.e., Nora, Jeanette, Pat, Stacy, Claire, and Peggy) has reflected a continuum of the dominant classroom teaching experiences by the coaches across the grade levels. The coaches matched up along a continuum across a K-12 grade level distribution. Across this continuum order, certain assumptions about how to teach reading appeared to have emerged. Each coach developed differing beliefs about how to teach reading (see Table 5.12).

Nora taught high school English; Jeanette taught the middle school language arts and ESL; Pat taught middle school special education; Stacy taught middle school language arts and ESL; Claire taught upper elementary gifted talent; and Peggy taught lower elementary (see Figure 5.1). The coaches matched up along a continuum across a

Table 5.12

*Comparison Across Six Literacy Coaches' Dominant Paradigms about How to Teach Reading*

Participant	District-level job title and duties	Grade level expertise	Classroom teaching expertise	Dominant educational perspectives	Dominant paradigm sources about how to teach reading
Nora	Secondary language arts chair	High school	English	Secondary, English, adolescent literacy	--Reading apprenticeship --Junior Great Books --Adolescent literacy
Jeannette	Secondary differentiation specialist	Middle school	ESL, language arts, reading	Secondary, ESL, reading	--Constructivism --Differentiation and multiple intelligence theory --Adolescent literacy
Pat	Special education secondary curriculum specialist	Middle school	Special education (general), regular education (reading)	Secondary, special education, reading	--Regular ed. class/adolescent literacy --special ed. class/discrete skills mastery; --Some university reading center experience --NRP report's five components
Stacy	Literacy coach	Middle school	ESL, language arts, reading	Secondary, ESL, reading	--NRP report's five components; --Lots: University reading center experience --Motivation & wide reading
Claire	New teacher specialist & DIBELS specialist	Upper elementary	Self-contained (gifted only)	Elementary (2-4), gifted, reading	--Inquiry-based learning; --NRP report's five components; --Lots: University reading center experience
Peggy	Literacy coach	Lower elementary	Self-contained	Elementary, primary (K-2), reading	--NRP report's five components; --Lots: University reading center experience



K-12 grade level distribution. Across this continuum order, certain assumptions about how to teach reading appeared to have emerged. Across the grade levels, there exist student populations that differ in their learning needs, including their instructional needs. To address this, reading instruction should necessitate different instruction approaches based on the age-appropriate, instructional needs of the various student populations contextualized across grade levels. How teachers or coaches approach that instructional choice depends a great deal on their worldview about how to teach reading. This worldview has often included a definition of literacy. Historically, some researchers' (Resnick & Resnick, 1977, as cited in Christenbury et al., 2009) conception of literacy has been identified as holding autonomous views of literacy.

## CHAPTER 6

### THEMES, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The themes and issues that emerged from this study of six district-level reading coaches centered upon the development of beliefs about how to teach reading, the knowledge construction dealing with reading issues in general, and how these all might have influenced instructional choices. I initially realized that I wanted to explore the possible influence discipline perspective (e.g., English, social studies, elementary education, special education, ESL, etc.). The study also described any other issues from personal, work, or education experiences that might have had an influence upon the development of each literacy coach's views about how to teach reading.

Towards this goal, the study explored how these perspectives might have developed, how work and personal experiences might have contributed to their development, and how these perspectives might have influenced staff development instructional choices made by a literacy coach at the secondary level. This chapter will briefly review the research and methods chapters in less depth, restate and explore the three major findings of the study, and link those findings back to the literature review.

#### **Statement of Problem and Study Objectives**

The call for highly qualified teachers through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation has contributed to the increased attention on how to improve students' literacy skills through improving teachers' teaching skills. Literacy coaches have been recruited to bridge this gap and to better help teachers meet the literacy needs of

adolescents at the middle and secondary levels (Frost & Bean, 2006; Marsh et al., 2008). The purpose of this study has been to describe the phenomenon of how literacy coaches at the secondary levels (grades 7-12) might have developed their personal perspectives about how to teach reading.

In addition, the research agenda dealing with adolescent literacy and literacy coaches has come to intersect as the use of literacy coaches as a change agent for effective literacy reform has gained popularity over the years (Marsh et al., 2008). In today's educational environment of standards and accountability, effective literacy coaches at the secondary levels must be able to assume roles as collaborators, job-embedded coaches, evaluators of literacy needs, and instructional strategists across the content areas (IRA, 2006).

The study has dealt with the beliefs about how to teach reading that are held by six district-level literacy coaches who were collectively involved in designing and implementing a seventh grade reading intervention program for struggling readers in their district. The specific research objectives addressed in this study were as follows: (a) to identify and describe the general philosophies (worldviews) about education and literacy held by the literacy coaches; (b) to identify and describe their educational backgrounds, their personal experiences, their professional journeys as these relate to their beliefs about how to teach reading at the secondary level; and (c) to identify and describe how these beliefs might be affecting the instructional and staff development choices made by the literacy coaches.

The aim of this study was to add to the professional literature concerning literacy

coaches at the secondary level by: (a) identifying and describing the personal literacy beliefs held by these six literacy coaches, (b) providing information about how these beliefs developed, (c) identifying how these beliefs impact the professional development choices made by these coaches, and (d) how these might affect reading instruction and literacy curriculum development dealing at the secondary level. It should also add to the current literature dealing with literacy coaches and teacher beliefs. Throughout my study, I have worked from the premise that literacy coaches from varying educational and work experience backgrounds have brought differing perspectives on literacy to their jobs as reading coaches.

### **Study Setting, Participants and Design**

About 5 years ago, personnel in these coaches district began the process of designing and implementing a secondary reading intervention program for junior high students in the seventh grade. The first year was spent in planning and adding participants to the literacy coach's leadership cohort. During the second year, these literacy coaches designed and conducted professional development workshops. The six district-level reading coaches in the cohort targeted seventh-grade teachers who were teaching struggling readers in reading, ESL, and special education classrooms.

This study was qualitative in design and attempted to describe and compare issues and themes that emerged during an activity involving all participated. These issues and themes dealt with beliefs about how to teach reading and how they were developed. The study involved six literacy coaches in a common setting where they served in close

proximity to each other as they implemented a secondary reading intervention program. For my study, comparing the commonalities and differences across all participants has involved thick descriptions, explanations, and judgments of issues, themes and assertions that evolved out of the study.

Throughout the data collection process in this study, think-alouds were used to catch the participants thought processes and stated beliefs about why they answered as they did (Wilson & Wineburg, 1988; Wineburg, 2001). This allowed for a deeper exposure and clarification of the rationale behind each participant's stated beliefs and knowledge and the emergence of identifiable, but often unconscious, discrepancies to those stated beliefs. Triangulation of the data collection involved five instrumentation protocols: (a) interview questions; (b) survey of each coach's professional library collection; (c) Schraw and Olafson's Four Quadrant Scale of Epistemological and Ontological Worldviews; (d) Schraw and Olafson's Brief Summaries of Realist, Contextualist, and Relativist World Views; (e) Sandy's Scenario question; and (f) researcher as instrument. The first five protocols were administered orally, allowing for a think-aloud response as part of an interview format discussion. Researcher as instrument protocol involved the interpretive lens of the researcher. During the time period before I started the formal study, I did not participate or attend any planning meetings, but transitioned into an observer as participant role (Glesne, 2006), continuing to have some limited interaction with the group members, but acting primarily as an observer.

## **Review of Research Literature**

Reviewing the research of how teachers' beliefs and domain-specific knowledge interrelate has revealed that they how knowledge and beliefs are difficult to accurately identify. My central objective has been to allow the data to tell the self-reported story of six literacy coaches' development of their personal beliefs about how to teach reading. As I gathered data, the coaches were immersed in the authentic task of designing and implementing a secondary reading intervention program. My objective was to identify and describe any issues and themes that emerge and point to possible associations between their knowledge, their beliefs, and their practice. In order to shed light on the many aspects of this complex phenomenon, this study was grounded in the following research frameworks: (a) ontological and epistemological worldviews (Schraw & Olafson, 2002, 2008); (b) teacher knowledge and beliefs (Calderhead, 1996; Hoy et al., 2006; Kagan, 1992); (c) domain-specific beliefs about knowledge (Alexander, 1992; Hofer, 2001; Shulman & Quinlan, 1996; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988); and (d) dominate theoretical learning models that influence reading education (Alexander & Fox, 2004). No one theoretical framework allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon addressed in this study.

### **Ontological and Epistemological Worldviews**

Defined broadly, epistemology is a branch of philosophy dealing with the theory or study of the nature, sources, or limits of knowledge. Within the context of this study, the literacy coaches self-reported beliefs held about education and literacy were viewed

as their epistemological beliefs, their belief systems about teaching and learning (Kinchin et al., 2009) and as an acknowledgment of their personal beliefs about their own reality. Other areas of epistemology relevant to this study deal with sources of knowledge upon which individuals draw. Knowledge and beliefs often function in tandem. Beliefs are a mental state where propositions (something is either true or false) serve as reasons for action (Honderich, 2005). Varied epistemological frames within educational research have helped to clarify such questions when dealing with beliefs. According to Honderich (2005), those would include: (a) foundationalism, (b) coherentism, (c) reliabilism, and (d) social epistemologies.

Foundationalists and coherentists both rely on indubitable, internal beliefs as the basis for truthfulness. If additional sources of data support stated beliefs, then they are judged as true. Coherentists go a step further and require that internal consistency exist among beliefs. Within this frame, a new belief would be judged based upon how well it meshes with already established beliefs. The reliabilist frame supports external sources of information about beliefs to strengthen a judgment of truth, such as test scores that provide empirical evidence. Finally, social epistemologists also seek external justification; however, they seek it in the form of testimonies by established authorities or beliefs already established by a given community of practice, such as one espoused within an academic domain (Dancy, 2005).

In my study dealing with the epistemological beliefs of reading coaches, the entity that may exist is an abstract phenomenon dealing with beliefs about how best to teach reading to students in a seventh grade reading intervention program. When belief

becomes congruent with action, then it can directly influence the instructional choices about how to teach reading. The six district-level literacy coaches who designed and directed SRIP reform effort had differing beliefs about how to teach reading based upon knowledge formation that had occurred over years of personal, educational, and work experiences.

Each coach had differing composite experiences that have led to expertise in teaching reading, which may also be quite different in form. In addition, each developed a different world viewpoint, an epistemological belief, about learning and teaching that influenced their beliefs. Each coach subsequently developed an individualized approach dealing with how to teach reading, an ontological entity that reflected their existing practice (i.e., actions) about how to teach reading. This reflected the intersection that is possible between teacher's beliefs and behaviors (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002).

### **Teacher Knowledge and Beliefs**

As teachers acquire knowledge, they develop epistemological beliefs about knowledge and learning. This set of beliefs become an epistemological worldview, a knowledge formation that can solidify into an ontological worldview (Schraw & Olafson, 2008), a state of being that reflects who that teacher has become. Cognitive psychologists became interested in the intersection of knowledge, thought, and behavior (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). According to Hoy and colleagues (2006), there was a shift to studying teachers' mental lives, which included "attitudes, perceptions, implicit theories, cognitions, reasoning, images, metaphors, and epistemological beliefs" (p. 715).

Packer and Goicoechea (2000), while looking at the debate of whether



sociocultural or constructivist perspectives about learning, best described what actually occurred during knowledge construction. They came to the conclusion that these perspectives are complementary and claimed that “learning is considered chiefly in terms of changes in knowing” (p. 227). Within this philosophical endeavor, they considered the ontological assumptions hidden in each of the sociocultural or constructivist perspectives, and they examined the outlook of earlier philosophers of modern sociocultural theory. They derived six key themes dealing with ontological transformation of self that emerged as they traced back to the roots of these earlier theoretical discussions. These six themes were: (a) the person is constructed, (b) in a social context, (c) formed through practical activity, (d) and formed in relationships of desire and recognition, (e) that can split the person, and (f) motivating a search for identity. They noted that these themes emerged “simultaneously with empirical investigation” (p. 228).

According to Packer and Goicoechea (2000), the search for identity (a consciousness of self) becomes an effort to overcome internal divisions, which are created by membership in a community (p. 234). The paradox here is that identity is not just a matter of membership in a community of practice, but is achieved in practical activity, in desire, and in struggle as the individual is becoming—“striving to be what it is not (yet)” (p. 234). Therefore, gaining knowledge or understanding—epistemological beliefs—is an integral part of the ontological changes that stem from participation in a community.

This ontological change transforms human nature into culture that can then be reflected in possible ways of being human and in the development of a dominant

worldview. With this transformation is a solidifying of belief, the creation of principled practice (action), and the formation of an inner realm of mental deliberation based upon this internalization process. Therefore, belief and practice are acquired during the struggle to find an identity as the result of a membership in a community. The six themes stated by Packer and Goicoechea (2000) can be used as an interpretive framework and lens to study how a teacher may have developed beliefs and practice dealing with teaching reading.

Schraw and Olafson (2008) have examined both the epistemological and ontological worldviews held by a set of teachers. In a pilot study, they focused on the collective nature of worldviews rather than the individual nature of beliefs. They recruited 24 graduate student volunteers from a curriculum and instruction course they were teaching. The purpose of the study was to develop a measuring scale that would provide a “separate conceptual definition of epistemological and ontological beliefs” (p. 26). Schraw and Olafson’s four-quadrant scale used in their study had a four-part grid where each quadrant represented a relationship between the worldviews listed as follows: (a) ontological relativist and epistemological relativist (Quadrant 1), (b) epistemological relativist and ontological realist (Quadrant 2), (c) ontological realist and epistemological realist (Quadrant 3), and (d) epistemological realist and ontological relativist (Quadrant 4; see Appendix A for complete definitions).

As defined by Schraw and Olafson (2002, 2008), a realist believes in a fixed, core body of knowledge (i.e., universal truth) based on theory, partial empirical evidence or faith that is transmitted by an authority (e.g., teacher). Teachers from a realist position

would most likely emphasize the role of deliberate practice to develop skills and a curriculum based upon a pre-established knowledge base. The relativist believes that we can never be totally sure that a phenomenon really exists, and if we can, then it is subject to change. Teachers from a relativist position would most likely endorse students' need to construct their own knowledge independently from what is known by the teacher.

Schraw and Olafson's (2008) preliminary findings suggested that different worldviews held by teachers may correspond to differences in other classroom factors (e.g., assessment and discipline practices, etc., p. 36). In addition, they observed a statistically significant positive relationship between the epistemological and ontological dimensions of the scale. This suggested that "realist beliefs [or relativist beliefs] on one dimension are positively associated with realist beliefs [or relativist beliefs] on the second dimension" (p. 36). Schraw and Olafson went on to admit that since the participants were experienced teachers selected from the same graduate course, the outcome may not be generalizable to other populations. However, this study hints at the possible relationship between the beliefs we espouse and the type of educators we will become.

Two detailed reviews covering the research on teachers' knowledge and beliefs over the past three decades. Calderhead (1996) contended that across the past two decades, research in this field of inquiry has progressed through stages involving teachers' decision making, teacher's perceptions, attributions, thinking, judgments, reflections, evaluations, and routines; and teachers' knowledge and beliefs. A second review by Hoy and colleagues (2006) suggested that individuals were embedded in and significantly affected by their environment, which included the contexts of classrooms

and students, state and national policies, and cultural values and norms. Both reviews pointed to the complexity of teachers' knowledge and belief structures, the role of context and outside experiences in shaping those structures, and the need for research on the diverse processes of knowledge growth involved in learning to teach.

In a third review of research, Kagan (1992) reported researchers who looked at teachers' content-specific beliefs. The studies Kagan highlighted suggested the following: (a) that the professional literature read by teachers influenced their goals and instructional choices, (b) that their classroom instruction matched a teacher's beliefs, (c) that classroom instruction changed when a teacher changed their orientation towards teaching, (d) that teachers will change new curriculum to match their beliefs, and (e) that teacher beliefs are related to student achievement. One study dealt with teachers' understanding of reading instruction.

Overall, Kagan (1992) contended that these findings were consistent with two broad generalizations. First, teacher beliefs are fairly stable and resistant to change. Second, teacher beliefs are often associated with a congruent style of teaching that is noticeable across differing domains and grade levels. Since teacher beliefs are perhaps resistant to change and consistent across domains, the same is likely true for literacy coaches.

If that is true, then once reading coaches have developed their personal educational philosophy with a perspective on how to teach reading, then such beliefs might be resistant to change even if the literacy coaches move across domains and between grades as they execute their jobs. In the literature on learning to teach, three

forms of experience influence the development of beliefs and knowledge about teaching: (a) personal experience, (b) experience with schooling and instruction, and (c) experience with formal education (Richardson, 1996). Such experiences within formal education included domain-specific knowledge (Shulman & Quinlan, 1996).

### **Domain-Specific Beliefs About Knowledge**

Alexander (1992) has claimed that domain knowledge occurs in a particular field of study. Domains vary since some are academically or problem (task) oriented with formal or informal rules. This domain knowledge creates a disciplinary perspective or “way of knowing” that becomes the lens through which an individual may view the world, which may influence both the education courses taken in a teacher preparation college and the teachers they eventually become.

Epistemological beliefs about knowledge and the ontological assumptions that develop as a way of knowing differ across various content disciplines or domains (Hofer, 2001; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988). According to Alexander and Dochy (1995), particular communities of adults often share similar views of knowing and believing that arise from shared cultural, social, or educational experiences. As part of the educational experience, students can become immersed in the ways of knowing within an academic discipline or domain such as mathematics, science, English or the various domains in social science as they pursue their undergraduate degree.

In the context of a large research project, Wilson and Wineburg (1988) noticed the role disciplinary perspectives were having upon four novice social studies teachers’ conceptions on how to teach history. These teachers came from a variety of discipline

majors within the social sciences (i.e., political science, history, anthropology, and American studies). The researchers claimed that their disciplinary backgrounds decisively influence their instructional decisions. Results from this study suggested that the way of knowing learned in a dominant discipline went on to influence the students' future roles as teachers and, therefore, could be true for literacy coaches. The findings further suggested that personal epistemologies and/or ways of knowing in a discipline can be developed in communities of practice where individuals in a group are all involved in a "cognitive apprenticeship" and where students become socialized to the common values and beliefs of that group (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997, p. 124).

Cunningham and Fitzgerald (1996) articulated seven issues dealing with epistemology. They then used these tools to engage in epistemological inquiry as they examined two theories of knowledge in differing views of the reading process. They proposed it was important to understand our own and others theoretical perspectives or epistemological worldviews. They asserted that reading education itself is a "way of knowing" that can be influenced by differing worldviews. Based upon that premise, they also noted that differences between advocates of whole language and systematic phonics instruction reflected distinct epistemologies that may have interfered with understanding or agreeing with the other party's beliefs. This illustrated the importance of reading coaches' ability to understand their own beliefs about reading and to also be aware of the possibility of encountering differing beliefs held by others.

Such an inability to see and understand the views of others has been called incommensurability across paradigms. First introduced to the general public by Kuhn in

his publication, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, words such as paradigm and incommensurability have become more commonly known and used (Fuller, 2004). According to Fuller, paradigmatic incommensurability could denote mental inflexible and an inability to shift between paradigms. Hraby (2009) made the same observation about paradigmatic tensions when discussing how the field of neuroscience has influenced our knowledge base as it relates to the reading process. In an effort to dispel false assumptions, he claimed that potentially misleading metaphors that provide assumptions about the functionality of the brain (e.g., brain as computer; neurons as wires) could provide incommensurable background knowledge that would interfere with understanding his argument. Such assumptions would interfere with a literacy educator's ability to fully grasp the neuroscience involved. Hraby also made the point that neuroscience is also not a monolithic domain, but is made up of many academic fields and subdisciplines. Linking his observations back to my study, epistemological and ontological assumptions underlie such theories of mental structure found in differing neuroscience fields. He acknowledged that such assumptions create tensions within the field of neuroscience, within the field of social science (i.e., literacy education) and across both of these fields. Such paradigmatic tensions also exist between teachers or literacy coaches as they work together to make instructional and curricular decisions.

Though epistemological and ontological issues are separate philosophical endeavors, they can blend almost imperceptibly when researchers are trying to ascertain a teacher's beliefs (Schraw & Olafson, 2008). Buehl and Alexander (2006) have noted that "over the last quarter century, researchers have come to appreciate that knowledge is not

a unitary construct but is multidimensional and multilayered” (p. 29). They have also noted that beliefs can be complex and multidimensional. This complexity can impact content and pedagogical knowledge and influence professional development and classroom practice. They argue that it is for this reason that the beliefs of teachers, and by extension literacy coaches, should be examined more closely.

Teachers’ beliefs involve underlying assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and subject matter content (Kagan, 1992). Buehl and Alexander (2001) suggested that such beliefs are contextualized within specific domains of knowledge. Pearson’s (2004) review on the reading wars has continued to remind us that reading as a domain has been made up of differing perspectives. However, Wilcox-Herzog (2002) might have disagreed and claimed that ascertaining the beliefs-actions link between teacher’s beliefs and their actions may be more complex than that. She claimed that researchers often fail to take into account variables or factors that might influence and make difficult to ascertain correctly that link between beliefs and actions by teachers. Three factors noted by Wilcox-Herzog (2002) and of interest to my study were: (a) situation factors, (b) dichotomous comparisons, and (c) strength of training.

Situation factors refer to teachers’ freedom to act upon their beliefs (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002). Teachers who must teach from scripted, commercial programs and being required to stay with basic skills mastery may interfere with that freedom. Constraints upon teachers’ practice may come from administrators, colleagues or parents, thereby limiting teachers’ ability to enact their personal beliefs about education in general or more specifically about how best to teach reading.



Dichotomous comparisons refer to the limits or extremity of beliefs and how that impacts the strength of the belief-action relationship. A study that examined the belief-action relationship for early childhood educators obtained information regarding kindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices (Wilcox-Herzog (2002). The questionnaire constructed and administered to 113 kindergarten teachers. The teachers with higher ratings on developmentally appropriate beliefs felt more in control of planning and implementation of instruction than did the teachers with lower ratings. The researchers hypothesized that limits of beliefs can impact the strength or intensity of that belief-action relationship (Wilson-Herzog, 2002). In other words, teachers with extreme (intense, uncompromising) beliefs about teaching are more likely to express their beliefs and actions with congruity. Conversely, teachers or coaches with weaker beliefs may demonstrate inconsistency between their beliefs and their actions.

Finally, strength of training is another factor that can affect the consistency between teacher's beliefs and actions. When beliefs about teaching are blended with other beliefs dealing with childhood development, domain knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge which were taught in a program that embraces a strong theoretical framework, there will be a strong consistency between beliefs and actions. One would expect to observe a greater mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and their actions if they had little theoretical training that informed their teaching or if their training programs did not adhere to a strong theoretical framework (i.e., behaviorism, information/cognitive processing, constructivism; and social/cultural learning theories; Wilson-Herzog, 2002).

### **Dominant Theoretical Learning Models**

Theoretical models of learning are worldviews that have influenced how we view learning and instruction (Driscoll, 2005) and subsequently the teaching of reading (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Each learning model could be used as a lens to analyze certain aspects of a phenomenon. According to Driscoll, four dominant theoretical models of learning are: (a) behaviorism, (b) cognitive/information processing, (c) constructivism, and (d) sociocultural learning. Educators have been influenced by these learning models whether they realize it or not. Alexander and Fox (2004) compiled an historical analysis of the past 50 years of reading research. They surveyed eras in reading research and practice in order to describe each era. They claimed that across reading research has existed a shifting emphasis on the physical, psychological, and sociological dimensions reflected in each era.

Each era was dominated by one or a blending of more than one broad theoretical learning model that have been placed in italics in the following list of eras by Alexander and Fox (2004): (a) The Era of Conditional Learning (1950-1965): *behaviorism*; (b) The Era of Natural Learning (1966-1975): *psycholinguistics, reading as natural process, constructivism*; (c) The Era of Information Processing (1976-1985): *cognitive, information processing, constructivism*; (d) The Era of Sociocultural Learning (1986-1995): *sociocultural*; and (e) The Era of Engaged Learning (1996-Present): *cognitive, sociocultural, developmental*. They contended that throughout these 50 years, each era has developed a broad theoretical perspective that has dominated the field of reading research. They were careful to clarify that the boundaries drawn between each era were

approximations of time and could overlap.

### **Three Major Findings of the Study**

**Finding # 1: Self-stated instructional choices were made by the literacy coaches based upon three patterns or models that reflected their perspective about how to teach reading.** The three patterns or models of how to teach reading that emerged from the study were: (a) a *skills-development model* that focused on beginning reading skills, (b) a *deficiency model* that focused on intervention and remediation, and (c) a *proficiency model* that focused on social-constructivist learning. For the sake of analytical clarity, I will define these instructional models and their assumptions about learning and how to teach reading. These definitions will be used as interpretive lens to analyze beliefs and assumptions held by the six literacy coaches in this study.

***The skills-development model.*** According to Street (1995, as cited in Christenbury et al., 2009), an autonomous view of literacy removes literacy contextually from its social and cultural settings to view it as a discrete skill, thereby allowing for quantifiable measurements through large-scaled assessments. Literacy from this perspective removes literacy from cultural practice, making it reductive by eliminating variables found in contextual factors involved in a reader's efforts to engage in reading.

The skills-development model has been a perspective about how to teach reading that was strongly influenced by two government sponsored documents, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Small Children* (Snow et al., 1998), a report of the National Reading Council, and *Teaching Children to Read*, a Report of the NRP (NICHD, 2000; J. Smith, personal communication, Spring 2007; P. Fawson, personal communication,

Spring 2007). The NRP has set the agenda all over the country in establishing current policies and practices for how educators view the successful teaching of reading (J. Smith, personal communication, Spring 2007) as it relates to student achievement.

According to Sweet (2004), the NRP report has not only had a significant impact on public policy decisions about how to teach reading in America, but he and others (McCardle & Chhabra, 2004) view this report as “the most rigorous and comprehensive review of reading research ever undertaken, and it provided clear and unequivocal evidence that, indeed, early reading instruction could be conducted effectively for all children, if teachers were provided the training necessary to implement the findings of the research” (p. 24). Sweet went on to identify the essential components for such an implementation should include the explicit, systematic instruction of the five components as identified by the NRP report. This approach has been widely implemented and has become political policy across the country as many states have received Reading First grants to provide professional development to early childhood teachers in the five components.

The Reading First model grounds the teaching of reading in scientific, evidence-based instructional approaches and strategies that have been identified through experimental reading research studies (P. Fawson, personal communication, Spring 2007; McCardle & Chhabra, 2000). The NRP report has led to an instructional emphasis at the elementary level that rest upon the five components of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, which are considered to be five essential areas of focus for effective reading instruction. The Reading First model suggests the use of a

3-hour instructional block for the teaching of reading (J. Smith, personal communication, Spring 2007). During this block, whole group instruction in basal readers occurs, followed by small group, thereby differentiating instruction along ability groupings. It is designed to meet the reading needs of all students in the classroom, including at-risk and struggling readers who need extra support throughout the early years of schooling.

***The deficiency model.*** Johannessen and McCann (2004) claimed that the traditional approach to dealing with students who are struggling readers has been compensatory education. This back-to-basics approach has been used to try to remediate students' deficiencies through skills-based instruction. The deficit model perspective on how to teach reading is primarily shaped by the fact that the student populations served by those with this viewpoint already have reading difficulties. Struggling readers are usually instructionally naïve student who do not easily retain information taught for the first time, become easily confused, and have attention difficulties during whole class instructional presentations (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004). Based upon a three-tiered system, students are provided with primary instruction in a general classroom (Tier 1). When this proves insufficient, students are given additional instruction in small groups of four to five (Tier 2), or more intense intervention in groups of two to three (Tier 3; Vaughn & Roberts, 2007). Special education instructional models should not be applied to the general population (Tier 1), but should be reserved for supplemental interventions (Tiers 2 and 3; Slocum, personal communication, Spring 2007). This becomes especially important, since the same five components of reading instruction identified by the NRP report are addressed across all special education populations at all

grade levels.

The five skill areas addressed during the teaching of reading are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction, and comprehension strategies. Many students in special education may not be able to learn these on their own (Vaughn & Roberts, 2007). Therefore, struggling readers are most effectively taught to read when the instruction occurs directly, explicitly, and systematically (Carnine et al., 2004; Slocum, personal communication, Spring 2007). The instructional viewpoint favored by many in the special education community (Carnine et al, 2004; Slocum, personal communication, Spring 2007) is direct instruction. Direct instruction is an approach to teaching that is “skills-oriented, teacher-directed with lessons that are carefully articulated for use in small-group, face-to-face instruction where units of cognitive skills are taught sequentially and explicitly” (Carnine et al., 2004, p. 11).

Direct instruction involves the breaking down of a learning task (such as the teaching of reading) into subsets that are taught usually from more basic to more complex skills. Before instruction, the first task in teaching reading is to determine what the student does or does not know (or what they have or have not mastered). Through this assessment process, a student’s skill mastery levels are determined for the five reading skill areas. Only then should instruction be designed for a student to address his or her specific needs. It would then be taught in a systematic manner to address their basic skill development, with the long-term goal of building towards more complex skills.

According to Slocum (personal communication, Spring 2007), the additional challenge at the secondary level is that “kids have been through a lot of education already

and if they are not good readers, then they have splintered skills.” This results in a variety of mastery levels across the five skill areas both within each student and across the population. For example, if a secondary student still lacks decoding skills, then this must be mastered while they are also expected to read complex materials in general content area classrooms. This necessitates the *simultaneous* application of three basic approaches to the teaching of reading at the secondary level. The three approaches include: (a) the building of basic skills, (b) the promotion of fluency development, and (c) the learning of comprehension strategies. Carnine and colleagues (2007) most clearly stated the primary position of the Special Education perspective on the teaching of reading. “Reading is a complex process—complex to learn and complex to teach.... Our position is that many students will not become successful readers unless teachers identify the essential reading skills, find out what skills students lack, and teach those skills directly” (p. 2).

***The proficiency model.*** The proficiency model would require the emphasis for learning to be placed upon the existing abilities and proficiencies of the students. From viewpoint of this model, the key to teaching a student would lie in understanding the complexity of issues dealing with cognitive processes, identity, engagement and motivation at each developmental stage. The brain is still growing during each developmental stage, which complicates both students’ cognitive processes and emotional responses. In addition, the brain does not develop independent from environmental stimulus. Three key findings have come out of research in neurological and cognitive sciences: (a) learning changes the physical structure of the brain, (b) learning organizes and reorganizes the brain by altering these structures, and (c) different

sections of the brain learn at different times (National Research Council, 2000).

Therefore, it is very important that a window of opportunity to promote engaging, rigorous, and complex learning be allowed to occur at each stage of a students' development, thereby building upon students age-appropriate abilities and affinity for engaged learning. For the sake of the adolescent population at the center of this study, since the SRIP reform focus was on seventh graders, the rationale behind the proficiency model will be grounded in an adolescent perspective.

Identity is strongly linked with the affective development of adolescent students, which is further linked to motivation. Some researchers have found that students' intrinsic motivation towards learning academic work declines during the school years (Ormrod, 2003). Reed, Schallert, Beth, and Woodruff (2004) defined motivation as the persistence with which humans engage in certain behaviors to reach to achieve chosen goals, activities and actions. They highlighted three perspectives on motivation that they felt were relevant to understanding adolescent's motivation for literacy or learning: (a) self-determination; (b) self-regulation; and (c) involvement. There is a strong interconnectedness among these three concepts.

Reed and colleagues (2004) claimed that when people are allowed a certain degree of autonomy that this fulfills a need to have control over one's life. "Anytime students are given some degree of choice, their feelings of *self-determination* increase, and they move closer to the intrinsic end of the motivation continuum" (p. 255; italics added). School activities from the self-determination perspective allows for authentic choice and encourage peers to work together to demonstrate competence by accomplish a



challenging task. *Self-regulation* strategies can be used to successfully stay on track to accomplish each task or goal. This involves the personal performance monitoring of identifying off-task, ineffective or inefficient behaviors. This can be quite complex since human behaviors involve “pursuing an almost infinite number of interweaving and overlapping goals simultaneously” (p. 256). To achieve true *involvement* in a task is to go beyond engagement or interest and to become engrossed. Involvement in a task is an integral aspect of motivation, since it results in a positive affective response when the task is completed, which often leads to a desire to do it again. It is unlikely that a task can be designed to guarantee involvement which can wax and wane over time. However, Reed et al. noted that the greater the interest or affinity for a task, the more readily a teacher can precipitate the students’ process of “falling into involvement” (p. 261). Outside influences can affect this process.

Literacy and learning are placed under a great deal of stress during the transitions between elementary, middle, and high schools. During this time students’ identities of self are often threatened by these transitions, which impacts motivation about all domains, including reading and writing (Reed et al., 2004). Adolescent research of the last decade that reflected concern for these issues has been encapsulated in two edited volumes by Jetton and Dole (2004) and Alvermann and colleagues (2006).

The volume by Jetton and Dole (2004) consisted of two primary areas of focus, content area literary and dealing with struggling readers. Both of these major section headings are standard fare when addressing literacy instruction at any grade level. However, phonological awareness was only mentioned in Chapter 6, “Adolescents who

Struggle with Word Identification.” The author of this chapter had worked in special education and claimed that “one out of every 10 adolescents has serious difficulties in identifying words,” which she links to “problems associated with word analysis” (p. 121). The instructional remediation mentioned in the chapter was primarily phonics drills. This appeared to be due to an emphasis placed upon the deficiency model of learning. Otherwise, the volume dealt primarily with adolescent students need for explicit instruction to help them deal with informational material both prior and during their secondary years. Teaching for understanding involves going beyond the mere teaching of information to ensure that students understand topics deeply. This involves building upon the strength of the students and their proficiencies thorough comprehension monitoring and strategy instruction that involve self-regulation, thus demonstrating an emphasis reflective of the proficiency model of learning to read.

The edited volumes by Jetton and Dole (2004) and Alvermann and colleagues (2006) also dealt primarily with topics from sociocultural and critical theory perspectives. They dealt with adolescent literacy issues such as new literacies, adolescent’s identity making practices, motivation and engagement, and adolescent’s personal, social, and cultural experiences as they relate to learning and literacy (Alvermann et al., 2006, p. ix).

A strong example of the use of the proficiency model stems from the era of whole language with its primary emphasis on the use of fictional, narrative text while teaching English or language arts (Pearson, 2004). Langer (1994), from The Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA), has been a strong proponent of the use of reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1978) to teach reading, writing, and reasoning skills.

Langer claimed:

In a literary experience, readers also continually try to go beyond the information. From the moment they begin reading, they orient themselves toward exploring possibilities—about the characters, situations, settings, and actions—and the ways in which they interrelate. Readers also think beyond the particular situation, using their text understandings to reflect on their own lives, on the lives of others, or on human situations and conditions in general. In doing this, they expand their breadth of understanding, leaving room for alternative interpretations, changing points of view, complex characterizations, and unresolved questions—questions that underlie the ambiguity inherent in the interpretation of literature. (p 205)

There appeared to be a presumption in this approach that students can build upon existing proficiencies and abilities, personal experiences through high levels of engagement, and motivation to deal with complex reasoning in a text. This approach seemed to be grounded in the proficiency model with its assumptions about learning that blend: (a) cognitive processes, (b) engagement and motivation, and (c) identity.

*Literacy coaches responses and Finding #1.* These three models, skills development, deficiency, and proficiency represented beliefs held by the coaches. These beliefs were demonstrated through approaches to instructional practice. The coaches whose perspectives primarily reflected the proficiency model were flexible in their beliefs, because they changed how they would teach reading across grade levels. Nora, Jeanette, and Pat fell into this category. This flexibility was reflected in their responses to the Sandy Scenario Question.

Nora (see Table 5.4) subtly changed her instruction to reflect the developmental changes across the ages and stages. For her, the use of wide reading and fear of having Sandy develop a negative identity reflected the proficiency model. She did not employ a deficiency or skills development approach until fourth grade. When she reflected on

Sandy's needs at the first-grade level, Nora commented that skills development was a normal part of classroom instruction for reading. "In fourth grade you would be teaching and stressing and utilizing fluency in the classroom, so it would be part of the curriculum."

Jeanette (see Table 5.5) addressed her intervention for comprehension primarily through cognitive strategies such as text structure and vocabulary instruction. For fluency, she suggested a skills-mastery approach through the use of *Six-Minute Solution* (Adams & Brown, 2007) through all the grade levels. How she would use these interventions across grade level changed by making the instruction more developmentally age appropriate.

Pat (see Table 5.6) identified Sandy's problem and planned intervention across multiple approaches such as limited sight word knowledge, struggled with decoding multi-syllable words, and lacked vocabulary, fluency and comprehension strategy knowledge, study skills and strategy instruction. She recognized identity issues at the tenth-grade level and the need for quick intervention. Pat also changed how she would use these various approaches across grade level by changing not what, but how she would teach reading and would intervene. She commented on needing to make the instruction more explicit and skills-based at the younger grades. For Pat, the differences between the grade levels would not be so much an instructional issue, but would involve how the various grade levels allowed for access to various instructional approaches. At first and fourth-grade levels, Pat felt that such reading instruction and practice were easier to provide across the content areas, and it should also be noted that Pat addressed both

issues of fluency and comprehension evenly as she planned the instructional intervention.

Stacy's (see Table 5.7) intervention at all grade levels remained fundamentally the same stressing assessment of fluency to establish benchmarks and to observe how well she could decode. Her interventions reflected the skills development model as she recommended sending fluency exercises home so Sandy could practice repeated readings. At tenth and seventh, Stacy would recommend Sandy's placement in a reading class where she could receive instruction right down to the phonics level, though she admits "it could be just a fluency issue." Stacy also believed it could be a comprehension issue, but clarified that "usually it's not just a comprehension issue." She would not do anything differently across any of the grades.

Claire (see Table 5.8) would begin her intervention by doing broad-based needs assessment of Sandy's and all other students in the tenth grade content class of their literacy skills. Claire would get her content materials at her reading level, build her fluency skills through repeated readings, get her leveled texts for her, and deal with phonics and decoding problems. These are all based upon a skills development model. She would do the same across all grade levels. Claire also made general comments about how it would be different across the various grade levels, but referred to structural classroom organizations and not instructional issues.

Peggy (see Table 5.9) would begin her intervention by addressing the speed issue of fluency using fluency timings carefully, because "we need to honor that expertise that she has and not make her feel demeaned." Peggy also perceived her strength as an ability to listen well and take notes and wanted to build on that. Peggy would provide after

school strategy and comprehension instruction. These all showed a concern for identity and ability reflective the proficiency model. Structurally, Peggy saw the differences, but instructionally Peggy also used a skills development model. Peggy concluded by saying, “So, it looks really similar, at least in my mind, through all of the grades.” In many ways, Peggy appeared to blend both the skills development and the proficiency models. More research would be needed to see how she might be using them in tandem across grades. Most of her instructional choices for the SRIP reflected the skills development model for beginning learners.

The final instructional choices by the coaching team for the SRIP interventions were commercial programs that reflected the skills-development model and the deficiency model. More specifically according to Peggy, she was the most influential cohort participant in identifying particular fluency and phonics pieces for remediation. Peggy went on to explain what commercial programs were chosen by SRIP to cover the five components: (a) fluency: *The Six Minute Solution*; (b) word study, vocabulary, and phonics: *REWARDS*; (c) comprehension: *Reading Advantage* (leveled texts); (d) writing: *My Access*; and (e) all five components (for both the lowest struggling readers and ESL students): *LANGUAGE!* Peggy also took on the student assessment piece, most likely because of her past experience with Reading First. They have used criterion-based measures for progress monitoring of the students such as the fluency piece from *AIMSweb* and comprehension piece from *Maze*. Peggy explained, “We’re collecting data more regularly to make sure that what we are doing is working.”

These instructional programs privileged the skill-development and deficiency

models about how to teach reading to struggling readers. The use of these programs marginalized the proficiency model and therefore most research approaches to instruction for struggling adolescent readers that come out of adolescent literacy research.

Fundamentally, it appeared that the coaches whose perspectives reflected the skills-development and/or deficiency model seemed to be more inflexible or rigid in their beliefs, because they did not change how they would teach reading across grade levels.

**Finding #2: The literacy coaches' epistemological and ontological beliefs about how to teach reading to struggling readers were either flexible (changing) or rigid (unchanging) as reflected by whether they changed their instructional approaches or choices across grade levels or populations.** Finding # 2 was addressed in Findings #1. Those coaches who did not change their practice across the grade levels in Sandy Scenario (i.e., Stacy, Claire, and Peggy) by definition were not flexible in their ability to change practice across the development stages and grade levels.

All three of these coaches deemed not flexible by this definition were trained at a local university reading center. Based on the instructional choices made by the coaches in the study trained there and other indicators that will be discussed in more detail, the skills development model for beginning readers was stressed. It also seemed to have a very strong framework as defined by the influence upon beliefs made evident in this study upon participants who completed their master's degree at this local university. The possible reasons behind both of these issues will be explored in greater detail.

In this university reading center, the framework's intensity seemed to result from a combination of two factors: (a) the presence of a charismatic leader; and (b) the

structure of knowledge acquisition. The director of this reading center had a reputation for being a strong leader and teacher. It was common knowledge in the teacher education community in her area. She has received rewards for her teaching and one of her primary academic interests lies with the development of educator's conceptual frameworks for teaching at-risk and struggling readers. This suggests an effort on her part to link her framework with the tutoring being done by master's students at the universities reading center. This deliberate structuring of knowledge acquisition with work experience can influence the intensity of beliefs and the memory of knowledge acquired in this manner (Packer & Goicochea's, 2000).

Packer and Goicochea's (2000) six themes of ontological transformation support this concept of how beliefs about knowledge can be solidified in the above context. This university master's program in literacy placed their students in a social context with a strong leader (i.e. the charismatic director), where beliefs are connected to and formed through practical activity (i.e. tutoring at the reading center). Through the strength of this combination, the master's students can become strongly motivated to accept and internalize these teachings and accompanying framework. Each student will struggle to form an identity within this community of practice. This can result in the ontological formation of a new set of beliefs that can become their dominant worldview about how to teach reading. In this case, the emphasis applied to how to teach reading to at-risk or struggling readers.

Some researchers also hypothesize that limits of beliefs can impact the strength or intensity the belief-action relationship (Wilson-Herzog, 2002). This can become



important when knowledge has become limited to one dominant framework. In other words, teachers with extreme (intense, uncompromising) beliefs about teaching are more likely to express their beliefs and actions with congruity. Educational experiences at this local university appeared to influence the intensity of the beliefs (e.g., intensity equals rigid adherence across grades) about how to teach reading for participants involved in their master's degree program. The literacy coaches in this study who were trained at the university reading center all had the same dominant beliefs about how to teach reading.

The coaches trained at this center also seemed to be more rigid in their beliefs, because they did not change how they would teach reading across grade levels. Three factors were noted by Wilcox-Herzog (2002): (a) situation factors, (b) dichotomous comparisons, and (c) strength of training. The three coaches in this study all experienced the same curriculum, dominant framework, and tutoring experiences in this master's program.

These common situational factors included a limited, but highly focused framework dominated by the skills development and deficiency models of how to teach reading to struggling readers. This becomes apparent when you look at the intervention and instructional programs used by the master's students while tutoring struggling readers. As supplied by the coaches when discussing their experiences at the university's reading center, these include but may not be limited to the following reading intervention approaches: (a) Wilson Reading; (b) Reading Horizons; and (c) Howard Street Tutoring Program, which included Early Steps and Next Steps. Each approach reflected the framework dominated by the skills development and deficiency models of how to teach

reading to struggling readers.

According to their official internet website ([www.wilsonlanguage.com/WRS.asp](http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/WRS.asp)), the *Wilson Reading System* is based upon Orton-Gillingham principles. The Orton-Gillingham Approach to reading instruction was developed as a remedial reading program and commercially published in 1946. This program was the first of its kind to implement multisensory (i.e. visual, auditory, kinesthetic) approach to teaching struggling readers to read (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2006). That era was dominated by the behaviorist learning model of instruction (Alexander & Fox, 2004; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Instruction was usually broken down into small, successive steps with instruction designed around Direct Instruction principles of scripted lesson plans, signal-based teaching, frequent and corrective feedback, and skills mastery (Huitt et al., 2009). *The Wilson Reading System* is implemented through an incremental and cumulative 12 step system. Steps one through six focuses on instruction in decoding and encoding before moving on to steps seven through 12, which provides instruction in word analysis, vocabulary development, comprehension and metacognition.

According to their official internet website (<http://www.readinghorizons.com>), *Reading Horizons* was originally the software component to the program, *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* program, but since 2001 has been a separate endeavor. This program was designed to provide effective literacy instruction that is explicit, systematic, with specific, direct instruction for low-level literacy students of all ages who have been “unable to learn to read through traditional approaches and are thus left behind.” The method to teaching reading through this approach has three components: (a)

42 sounds of the alphabet; (b) five phonics skills; and (c) two decoding skills. Stated on the website is the claim that “explicit phonics instruction is essential for students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities.” Curriculum content is taught in a logically sequential, cumulative manner that teaches language-based skills for deciphering (decoding, analyzing, and identifying) and word that’s read. This program also incorporates an Orton-Gillingham, multi-sensory approach “that encompasses the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile modalities...to address each individual learning style.” It correlates with the DIBELS test and provides controlled-vocabulary stories for K-3. Reading Horizons also addresses fluency and comprehension with students in grades 4-12 through a library of “225 high-interest-leveled passages” accompanied by comprehension questions.

*The Howard Street Tutoring Manual* (Morris, 2005) claims to be a comprehensive approach to setting up one-on-one instruction through a volunteer or professional tutoring program to address the needs of struggling readers in grades first through third. An assessment of *Early Steps* (Morris, Tyner, & Perney, 2000) by Santa and Hoiem (1999) demonstrated that results at the end of first grade and at the beginning of second grade indicated that “children with the lowest pretest levels, the very high-risk children, benefit most from the intervention” (p. 60). The author’s felt that the improvement and substantial progress among the high-risk children reflected the importance of a balanced approach to beginning reading. They also concluded that the effectiveness of the Early Steps program lead to increased phonological and word study skills among those children.

The director of the university reading center and master's program pursued by three members of the study (i.e., Peggy, Stacy, and Claire) made the following statement about this book:

This [manual] is a 'must' for any educator working with struggling readers and any teacher educator developing reading methods or intervention courses. Morris's strong theoretical background and decades of experience as a reading clinician allow him to expertly weave the 'how' and the 'why' of reading intervention into a text that is sure to be used as a professional resource time and time again. Moreover, many of the basic tutoring components can be transferred to small-group instruction.

As a student under this director, Peggy participated at a conference presentation of research done at the university reading center utilizing the *Howard Street Tutoring* approach. These studies took place from 1999 to 2003 and compared the use of the one-on-one tutoring by Morris (1999) and the use of *Open Court* (SRA/McGraw Hill Education, 2011) in small group venues used for instructional intervention of at-risk, struggling readers at their reading center. *Early Steps* and *Next Steps* are classroom approaches to implementing the *Howard Street Tutoring* model that utilize teaching assistants. Both were used at the university reading center. Based upon the conference handout given to me by Peggy, the study concluded that the Howard Street model was more effective at boosting at-risk and struggling readers' and ELL students' progress in than Open Court.

The general conclusions of this finding are that the coaches whose perspectives reflected the proficiency model were more flexible in their beliefs, because they seemed to be able to change how they would approach teaching reading across grade levels (i.e., Nora, Jeanette, and Pat). In addition, they each reflected more of a proficiency model

perspective in their instructional approaches at the secondary level and there were some indications that they were able to switch to more of a skills development model at the elementary-grade level when addressing intervention during the Sandy's Scenario question. These coaches were trained and worked at the secondary level and were educated with an adolescent literacy perspective, more reflective of the principles in the proficiency model.

**Finding # 3: The NRP report was extremely influential to the formation of beliefs held by the literacy coaches about how to teach reading. The NRP report's findings were privileged, while adolescent literacy research was marginalized in making instructional decisions by the literacy coaches on the SRIP leadership team.**

All participants believed that there was a core body of knowledge that needed to be learned and an essential set of skills that needed to be mastered. The reading skills were identified in the NRP report as the five components of reading instruction: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency; (d) vocabulary instruction; and (e) reading comprehension. The intensity of those beliefs varied, but followed a continuum pattern from most intense at the K-2 levels to least intense at the high school level. Intensity was defined as how rigid (unchangeable) or flexible (changeable) those beliefs were when addressing instructional choices about how to assist struggling readers across grade levels.

Nora was least intense in her beliefs and did not see the NRP report as relevant at the secondary level. She said, "I think it is a great beginning and that's what I see it as, a beginning. And now I say there needs to be more." Jeanette, Pat, and Stacy each saw it as

relevant at the secondary level, but had criticisms. Jeanette did not believe that phonemic awareness issues were relevant to the middle school level and beyond. Pat was more explicit in her criticism, “I think the NRP report has given us a lot of direction. But in way, I also think it also narrowed our focus a little bit. And, it’s excluded some pieces like motivation, which is a huge piece. They didn’t do a lot about writing.” Stacy said, “They are missing the Reading Next work...That talks about motivation [which] is very important to secondary reading.” Claire and Peggy also saw them as relevant to all grade levels and reading interventions. Claire said, “I thought it was lovely to have the components illuminated by the NRP report [which] provided a framework, and I felt it was very timely, because now I could talk to teachers.” Peggy said, “My view of literacy instruction in general is that we’ve been pretty much off the mark for a long time [before the NRP report].”

Stacy, Clair, and Peggy had the most intense positive beliefs about the NRP report, seeing strong applicability across all grade levels of struggling readers. Stacy remarked several times, “I believe in the NRP findings. I really take a lot of stock when I’m teaching reading with those five components.” Claire spoke almost affectionately, “I thought it was lovely to have the components illuminated by the NRP report [which] provided a framework, and I felt it was very timely, because now I could talk to teachers.” Peggy said clearly;

It’s the same process regardless of where (i.e., K-12) we find struggling readers and those five components [from the NRP report] guide what I assess and what I do...they’re critically important for any struggling reader that’s still in the system at [secondary level].

### **Implications of Study's Findings**

The beliefs that literacy coaches bring to their jobs impact how they execute their various roles and responsibilities. These beliefs are formulated through the coalescing of dominant influences that emerge during personal, work, and educational experiences. First, this has implications in university teacher education programs. Reflections on self-study of beliefs by students will need to be encouraged, so that they recognize their beliefs and how that informs their practice. Practicum experiences should bridge across the grade levels to ensure a deeper understanding of how teaching reading changes based upon grade level and student population. Second, these beliefs also impact on whether the teachers will be receptive to new concepts that perhaps challenge these dominant beliefs. Beliefs that are covert have an impact whether the teacher knows about them or not. But, a lack of overt knowledge of beliefs may make conceptual change more difficult.

Beliefs that have become inflexible can lead also to conceptual rigidity and hinder conceptual change or the ability to see multiple perspectives. This could make it difficult for literacy coaches to transition between grade levels and student populations and change their practice to adapt to new but necessary approaches to teaching reading or planning interventions. Administrators need to be aware that literacy coaches need experience working with the students and organizations structures at various grade levels and that early elementary reading coaches may not transplant easily to the secondary level.

Professional standards (i.e., IRA) may also need to be written to address to address the various conditions across grade levels that are situational. Standards for

literacy professionals and coaches are written the same for teachers of reading for populations that range from pre-kindergarten to adults. The findings in this study suggest that these standards may need to be different for teachers at various grade levels.

What kind of beliefs about how to teach reading should inform the teaching of literacy at the middle school or high school setting? Beliefs about how to teach reading may need to be different across the grade levels to be able to flexibly apply knowledge to meet the various needs of the students. Adolescent literacy research was marginalized in this study. There are implications for student achievement in disregarding a whole body of research knowledge about how to teach reading to adolescent students will need to be considered.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

First, there was a tension between the elementary and secondary literacy coach participants in this study about how best to teach reading to the students in the SRIP for secondary students. The form this tension took between the elementary and secondary coaches was not of a personal nature. All the coaches in this leadership cohort were highly professional in their interactions and each employed and demonstrated collegial and highly developed interpersonal communication skills. Analysis of the tensions and differences found in this study could include all of the data subsets and sources involving all six literacy coaches who were participants. An additional look at research literature in the field of education could be used to form a differing evaluative lens to reevaluate the data collected in this study with the intent of shedding light on what form this tension



took and how it impacted the instructional choices being made about how to teach reading and to provide greater clarity of this issue. These differences involved issues that addressed knowledge assumptions, organizational structure, and instruction issues. The existence of tensions between educators at various instructional levels of practice can be of significant importance, because issues dealing with literacy stretch across the grade levels and effect both instruction and policy decisions.

Second, research dealing with how beliefs develop could also address how beliefs change over time. A longitudinal study of literacy coaches' beliefs about how to teach reading would be helpful in identifying when or how beliefs become rigid or remain flexible. After having coaches beliefs made overt, then research could be done to address effective conceptual change to assist in shifting those beliefs.

Third, research could be done on how certain things push against or reinforce literacy beliefs about how to teach reading. What would that entail? How many of those are situational? How are they impacted through growth in a professional learning community?

Fourth, a survey of each literacy coach's professional library was used in this study. Research could be done on this form of measurement and other issues dealing with literacy beliefs and knowledge that might emerge from this instrument. How effective is it as a research instrument? What does it really tell us about the teachers or coaches beliefs?

Fifth, the use of Sandy's Scenario as an instrument to glean a literacy coach's view about how to teach reading across the grades levels showed great promise in this

study. To strengthen the reliability of the instrument, more research should be used on varying populations of reading professionals. The hypothetical student, Sandy, could be written to represent various populations, such as scenarios that emphasize differences of socioeconomic status, culture, race and/or gender.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

The ultimate goal of my research study has been to look at any connections between the perspectives literacy coaches bring to their jobs and how this might inform their instructional and staff development choices about how to teach reading at the secondary level. The district level literacy coach in the opening scenario began her career as a special education teacher. Based upon the instructional choices she made as a district-level literacy coach, she may have brought her special education perspective about teaching reading to her job where her primary responsibility was then to act as a literacy coach and consultant to administrators and teachers. To address the various issues of how she and other literacy coaches might develop their beliefs about how to teach reading, I had to study how these beliefs developed and informed their practice. The findings from this study give interesting clues as to what this might look like, and why it is important to consider the interplay between beliefs, knowledge, and practice.

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APPENDICES



Appendix A

Schraw and Olafson's (2008) Assessing Teachers' Epistemological  
and Ontological Worldviews Instructions to Participants

## Schraw and Olafson's (2008) Assessing Teachers' Epistemological and Ontological Worldviews Instructions to Participants

### **Instructions**

We want you to rate and explain your epistemological and ontological worldviews. Please read the following description of terms used in this study. Then indicate with an "X" where you would place yourself in the four quadrants shown on the Rating Sheet. To make your X, find the point where your ratings intersect on the epistemology dimension and the ontology dimensions. Please note that the descriptions provided below represent endpoints on each of the scales. Your own beliefs may lie anywhere between these two endpoints. You may use any part of the four quadrant area. After you make your rating, please describe in as much detail as possible on the Explanation Sheet your reasoning for your self-rating.

### **Epistemology**

Epistemology is the study of what can be counted as knowledge, where knowledge is located, and how knowledge increases. The personal epistemology of teachers is characterized by a set of beliefs about learning and the acquisition of knowledge that drives classroom instruction.

#### *Epistemological Realist*

An epistemological realist would believe that there is an objective body of knowledge that must be acquired. From a teacher's perspective, this position would hold that curriculum is fixed and permanent and focuses on fact-based subject matter. An epistemological realist might believe the following:

- There are certain things that students simply need to know.
- I am teaching information that requires memorization and mastery.
- There are specific basic skills that need to be mastered.

#### *Epistemological Relativist*

An epistemological relativist would describe curriculum as changing and student-centered. Problem-based or inquiry curricula are examples at the other end of the continuum from a perspective of a one-size-fits-all curriculum. One of the central features of curriculum from this position is the notion that curriculum is not fixed and permanent. An epistemological relativist might agree with the following statements:

- The things we teach need to change along with the world.
- The content of the curriculum should be responsive to the needs of the community.
- It is useful for students to engage in tasks in which there is no indisputably correct answer.
- Students design their own problems to solve.

### **Ontology**

Ontology is the study of beliefs about the nature of reality. The personal ontology of teachers is characterized by a set of beliefs regarding whether students share a common reality and what a classroom reality should look like.

*Ontological Realist*

A teacher who is an ontological realist assumes one underlying reality that is the same for everyone.

Instructionally, this means that all children should receive the same type of instruction at the same time regardless of their individual circumstances and context. An ontological realist would agree with the following:

- Student assignments should always be done individually.
- It is more practical to give the whole class the same assignment.
- The teacher must decide on what activities are to be done.

*Ontological Relativist*

An ontological relativist assumes that different people have different realities. From an instructional perspective, teachers are seen as collaborators, co-participants, and facilitators of learning who work to meet the individual needs of students. Instructional practices are less teacher-directed, such as:

- Students need to be involved in actively learning through discussions, projects, and presentations.
- Students work together in small groups to complete an assignment as a team.

Appendix B

Schraw and Olafson's (2002) Brief Summaries of Realist,  
Contextualist, and Realist World Views

Schraw and Olafson's (2002) Brief Summaries of Realist,  
Contextualist, and Realist World Views

*Vignette 1: Realist World View*

There is a core body of knowledge in my classroom that each student must learn. Some of it is factual, but some of it is based on broad concepts and principles that everyone agrees on. This knowledge doesn't change much over time and represents the accumulation of important truths and understanding in my discipline. It's important for students to acquire this knowledge exactly as it is. The best way to acquire this knowledge is through an expert like me because I have a much better sense than they do of what is important to learn. It's unlikely that students could really create this knowledge on their own, so learning it from me quicker and more efficient. For this reason, it is important to me to assume a take-charge attitude so students can learn as much as possible. It's important to me that everyone comes away from my class with the big picture. It is my job to present the big picture clearly.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Vignette 2: Contextualist World View*

Students are encouraged to develop their own understanding in my classroom so knowledge is personally useful to them. However, the fact that students are expected to construct their own understanding doesn't mean that all understandings are equally valid. While I believe that knowledge is subject to interpretation, I also believe that some conclusions are better than others. Students need to understand how to gather and evaluate evidence so they can distinguish good from poor arguments. I can teach them some of these skills, but some they will have to learn by working with other students, or on their own. I believe that each student will bring a unique and valuable perspective with them. I try to structure my class so that students will pool their resources and come to the best understanding possible.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Vignette 3: Relativist World View*

Students in my class need to understand that there are a variety of different ways to understand things. Knowledge comes and goes, and what the so-called experts consider the truth today will be viewed with suspicion tomorrow. Even people who spend years studying a topic disagree about what things mean, and in the long run, one opinion is as

good as another. This means that students have to learn to think for themselves, question the knowledge and authority of others, and evaluate how what they know affects their life. Knowledge has to be used wisely so no one is left out or exploited by society. For these reasons, I don't believe that I can really teach my students what is important, since they all need to know different things. They have to figure it out on their own, taking into account the events that shape their lives, even if the uncertainty of living in a world with conflicting views of truth bothers them. What I know and believe shouldn't really influence my students. My job is to create an environment where students can learn to think independently and take nothing for granted.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Participant's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Schraw, G. J., & Olafson, L. J. (2002). Teachers' epistemological worldviews and educational practices. *Issues in Education*, 8(2), 99-148.

Appendix C

Nora's Professional Library Survey List

## Nora's Professional Library Survey List

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	Type*
Adams, M. J. (1990). <i>Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print.</i>	E
Allen, J. (2000). <i>Yellow brick roads: Shared and guided paths to independent reading 4- 12.</i>	E; A
Allen, J. (2006). <i>Becoming a literacy leader.</i>	O
Atwell, N. (1998). <i>In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning.</i>	A
Beach, R., & Myers, J. (2001). <i>English instruction: Engaging students in life and literature.</i>	A
Beers, G.K. (2003). <i>When kids can't read, what teachers can do: A guide for teachers, 6 - 12.</i>	A
Beers, K., Probst, R. E., & Rief, L. (Eds.). (2007) <i>Adolescent literacy: Turning promise into practice.</i>	A
Blankstein, A. (2009). <i>Failure is not an option: Six principles for making student success the only option.</i>	O
Block, C. C., & Pressley, M. (2001) <i>Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices</i>	GL
Bloom, H. (2000). <i>How to read and why.</i>	GL
Collins, J. (2001). <i>Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't.</i>	O
Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). <i>Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work..</i>	O
Farstrup, A. E., & Samuels, S. J. (Eds.). (2008). <i>What research has to say about reading instruction.</i>	GL
Fulwiler, T. (1987). <i>Teaching with writing.</i>	GL
Gambrell, L. B., & Morrow, L. M., Pressley, M. (Eds.). (2007). <i>Best practices in literacy instruction.</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.).	GL



LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	Type*
Guthrie, J. T., & Wigfield, A. (1997). <i>Reading engagement: Motivating your readers through integrated instruction.</i>	GL
Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). <i>Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding.</i>	GL
Irvin, J. L. (1998). <i>Reading and the middle school student: Strategies to enhance literacy.</i>	A
Irvin, J. L., Buehl, D. R., & Klemp, R. M. (2007) <i>Reading and the high school student: Strategies to enhance literacy.</i>	A
Keene, E. O., & Zimmerman, S. (2007). <i>Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction.</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.).	GL
Lane, B. (1993). <i>After the end: Teaching and learning creative revision.</i>	GL
Lane, B. (1993). Writing as a road to self-discovery: How to reach within yourself to find the words and stories that help you understand yourself and your world.	GL
Marzano, R. J., Norford, J. S., Paynter, D. E., & Pickering, D. J. (2004). <i>A handbook for classroom instruction that works.</i>	GL
Maxwell, J. C. (2007). <i>The 21 irrefutable laws of leadership: Follow them and people will follow you.</i>	O
McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2005). <i>Understanding by Design: Professional Development Workshop</i>	O
National Writing Project, & Nagin, C. (2004). Because writing matters: Improving student writing in our schools.	GL
Noden, H. R. (1999). Image grammar: Using grammatical structures to teach writing.	GL
Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2004). <i>Crucial confrontations: Tools for talking about broken promises, violated expectations, and bad behavior.</i>	O
Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., Switzler, A., & Covey, S. R. (2002). <i>Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high.</i>	O

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	Type*
Pearson Scott Foresman. (2007). <i>Reading Street Research Base</i> .	E
Reeves, D. (2006). <i>The learning leader: How to focus school improvement for better results</i> .	O
Rico, G. L. (1983). <i>Writing the natural way: Using right-brain techniques to release your expressive powers</i> .	GL
Rief, L. (1992). <i>Seeking diversity: Language arts with adolescents</i> .	A
Robb, L. (2000). <i>Teaching reading in middle school: Strategic approach to teaching reading improves comprehension and thinking</i> .	A
Robb, L. (2005). <i>Reading advantage, 6-12</i> .	A
Schoenbach, R., Greenleaf, C., Cziko, C., & Hurwitz, L. (1999). <i>Reading for understanding: A guide to improving reading in middle and high school classrooms</i> .	A
Strong, W. (2005). <i>Write for insight: Empowering content area learning, Grades 6-12</i> .	A
Tyner, B. (2004). <i>Small group reading instruction: A differentiated teaching model for beginning and struggling readers</i> .	E; GL
Vacca, R. T., & Vacca, J. L. (2002). <i>Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum</i> . (7 <sup>th</sup> ed.)	GL
Willhelm, J. D., & Smith, M. D. (1996). "You gotta be the book": <i>Reading engagement and reflective reading with adolescents</i> .	A

\* Type of Book: E = Elementary Education; SpE = Special Education; A = Adolescent Education; G = General Literacy; O = Other

Appendix D

Jeanette's Professional Library Survey List

## Jeanette's Professional Library Survey List

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Allen, J., & Gonzalez, K. (1998). <i>There's room for me here: Literacy workshop in the middle school.</i>	A
Atwell, N. (2002). <i>Lessons that change writers.</i>	A
Atwell, N. (1998). <i>In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning.</i>	A
Beers, G.K. (2003). <i>When kids can't read, what teachers can do: A guide for teachers, 6- 12.</i>	A
Fogarty, R.J., & Pete, B. (2005). <i>Close the achievement gap: Simple strategies that work.</i>	A
Fry, E., & Kress, J.E., (2006). <i>The reading teacher's book of lists.</i>	GL
Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). <i>Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding.</i>	GL
Kagan, S. & Kagan, M. (1998). <i>Multiple Intelligences: The Complete MI Book</i>	O
Kagan, S. (1997). <i>Cooperative learning.</i>	GL
Keene, E.O., & Zimmerman, S. (2007). <i>Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction. (2nd ed.).</i>	GL
Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). <i>Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement.</i>	GL
McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2004). <i>Understanding by design: Professional development workshop (1<sup>st</sup> ed.).</i>	GL
McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2005). <i>Understanding by Design: Professional Development Workshop (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).</i>	GL
Swan, E. A. (2003). <i>Concept oriented reading instruction: Engaging classrooms, lifelong learners.</i>	GL

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Tadlock, D. (2005). <i>Read right!: Coaching your child to excellence in reading.</i>	GL
Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). <i>Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design.</i>	GL
Tovani, C. (2000). <i>I read it, but I don't get it: Comprehension Strategies for the adolescent reader.</i>	A
Villa, J. (2001). <i>Taking learning to task: Creative strategies' for teaching adults.</i>	O

\* Type of Book: E = Elementary Education; SpE = Special Education; A = Adolescent Education; G = General Literacy; O = Other

Appendix E

Pat's Professional Library Survey List

## Pat's Professional Library Survey List

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Allen, J. (1999). <i>Words, words, words: Teaching vocabulary in grades 4-12.</i>	A
Atwell, N. (1998). <i>In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning.</i>	
Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., & Kucan, L. (2002). <i>Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction.</i>	GL
Beers, G.K. (2003). <i>When kids can't read, what teachers can do: A guide for teachers, 6- 12.</i>	A
Calkins, L. (1994). <i>The art of teaching writing.</i>	GL
Consortium of Reading Excellence. (2003). <i>Reading Coach Institute: Participant resource notebook.</i>	O
Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. (2001). <i>Guided readers and writers: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy.</i>	GL
Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. (2006). <i>Teaching for comprehending and fluency: Thinking, talking, and writing about reading.</i>	GL
Ganske, K. (2000). <i>Word journeys: Assessment-guided phonics, spelling, and vocabulary instruction.</i>	GL
Gillingham, A., & Stillman, B.W. (1997). <i>The Gillingham manual: Remedial training for students with specific disability in reading, spelling, and penmanship.</i>	SpE
Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). <i>Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding. .</i>	GL
Marzano, R.J., Norford, J.S., Paynter, D.E., & Pickering, D.J. (2004). <i>A handbook for classroom instruction that works.</i>	GL
McCardle, P., & Chhabra, V. (2004). <i>The voice of evidence in reading research.</i>	GL

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Rhodes, L.K., & Dudley-Marling, C. (1996). Readers and writers with a difference: A holistic approach to teaching struggling readers and writers.	GL
Rief, S.F. (2005). <i>How to reach and teach children with ADD/ADHD: Practical techniques, strategies, and interventions.</i>	SpE
Schoenbach, R., Greenleaf, C., Cziko, C., & Hurwitz, L. (1999). <i>Reading for understanding: A guide to improving reading in middle and high school classrooms.</i>	A
Shaywitz, S. (2003). <i>Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level.</i>	SpE
Shinn, M.R. (1998). <i>Advanced applications of curriculum-based measurement.</i>	O
Strong, W. (2001). <i>Coaching writing: The power of guided practice.</i>	GL
Tovani, C. (2004). <i>Do I really have to teach reading?: Content comprehension, grades 6- 12.</i>	A
Tovani, C. (2000) <i>I read it, but I don't get it: Comprehension Strategies for the adolescent reader.</i>	A
Wiggins, G.P., & McTighe, J. (1998). <i>Understanding by design..</i>	GL
Wilhelm, J. (2007). <i>Engaging readers &amp; writers with inquiry: Promoting deep understandings in language arts and the content areas with guided questioning.</i>	

\* Type of Book: E = Elementary Education; SpE = Special Education; A = Adolescent Education; G = General Literacy; O = Other



Appendix F

Stacy's Professional Library Survey List

## Stacy's Professional Library Survey List

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Allen, J. (1999). <i>Words, words, words: Teaching vocabulary in grades, 4-12.</i>	A
Allington, R. L. (2000). <i>What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs.</i>	GL
Baillie, J. (2006). Celebrating a 3-tier model that works!	O
Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., & Kucan, L. (2002). <i>Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction.</i>	GL
Consortium of Reading Excellence. (2003). <i>Reading Coach Institute: Participant resource notebook.</i>	O
Duncan, M. (2006). <i>Literacy coaching: Developing effective teachers through instructional dialogue.</i>	O
Honig, B., Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L., & Mahler, J. (2000). <i>Teaching reading sourcebook: Sourcebook for kindergarten through eighth grade (Core Literacy Training Series).</i>	GL
Marzano, R. J. & Pickering, D. J. (2005). <i>Building academic vocabulary: Teacher's manual.</i>	GL
Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). <i>Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement.</i>	GL
McCardle, P., & Chhabra, V. (2004). <i>The voice of evidence in reading research.</i>	GL
National Reading Panel (2000). <i>Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.</i>	GL
Rodgers, A., & Rodgers, E. M. (2007). <i>The effective literacy coach: Using inquiry to support teaching &amp; learning.</i>	O

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Vaughn, S. & Linan-Thompson, S. (2004). <i>Research-based methods of reading instruction</i>	O
Wolfe, P. (2001). <i>Brain matters: Translating research into classroom practice.</i>	O

\* Type of Book: E = Elementary Education; SpE = Special Education; A = Adolescent Education; G = General Literacy; O = Other

Appendix G

Claire's Professional Library Survey List

## Claire's Professional Library Survey List

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Bear, D. R., Inverizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2007). <i>Words their way.</i>	GL
Beers, G.K. (2003). <i>When kids can't read, what teachers can do: A guide for teachers, 6- 12.</i>	A
Consortium on Reading Excellence, Inc. (CORE). (2004). <i>Assessing reading: Multiple measures from kindergarten through eighth grade.</i>	GL
Glazer, S. M. (1998). <i>Assessment in instruction: Reading, writing, spelling, and phonics for all learners.</i>	GL
Killon, J., Harrison, C. (2006). <i>Taking the lead: New roles for teacher and school-based coaches.</i>	O
Lipson, M.Y. & Wixson, K.K. (1996). <i>Assessment in instruction of reading writing disability: An interactive approach (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)</i>	O
Morris, D. (1999). <i>The Howard street tutoring manual: Teaching at-risk readers in the primary grades. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)</i>	E
Rasinski, T.V. (2003). <i>The fluent reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency and comprehension.</i>	E
Santa, C. (1999). <i>Early Steps: Learning from a reader.</i>	E
Tate, M.L. (2004). <i>"Sit &amp; get" won't grow dendrites: 20 professional learning strategies that engage the adult brain.</i>	O

\* Type of Book: E = Elementary Education; SpE = Special Education; A = Adolescent Education; G = General Literacy; O = Other

Appendix H

Peggy's Professional Library Survey List

## Peggy's Professional Library Survey List

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Adams, M.J. (1990). <i>Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print.</i>	E
Bear, D. R., Inverizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2007). <i>Words their way.</i>	GL
Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., & Kucan, L. (2002). <i>Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction.</i>	GL
Consortium of Reading Excellence. (2003). <i>Reading Coach Institute: Participant resource notebook.</i>	O
Ehri, L.C. (1998). Grapheme-phoneme knowledge is essential for learning to read words in English.	E
Fuchs, L., Fuchs, D., Hosp, M., & Jenkins, J.R. (2001). Oral reading fluency as an indicator of reading competence: A theoretical, empirical, and historical analysis.	GL
Guthrie, J., & Davis, M. (2003). Motivating struggling readers in middle school through an engagement model of classroom practice.	A
Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). <i>Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding</i>	GL
Kuhn, M.R., & Stahl, S.A. (2000). CIERA Report #2-008. <i>Fluency: A review of developmental and remedial practices.</i>	GL
Marzano, R.J., Norford, J.S., Paynter, D.E., & Pickering, D.J. (2004). <i>A handbook for classroom instruction that works.</i>	GL
Moats, L. (2001). When older kids can't read.	A
Moats, L.C. (2000). <i>Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers.</i>	E
Moats, L.C. (2006). How spelling supports reading: And why it is more regular and predictable than you may think.	E
Morris, D. (1999). <i>The Howard street tutoring manual: Teaching at-risk readers in the primary grades.</i>	E

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Oczkus, L.D. (2003). <i>Reciprocal teaching at work: Strategies for improving reading comprehension.</i>	GL
Pressley, M. (2001). <i>Effective beginning reading instruction: A paper commissioned by the National Reading Conference.</i>	E
Shaywitz, S. (2003). <i>Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level.</i>	SpE
Tierney, R.J., & Readence, J.E. (2005). <i>Reading strategies and practices</i>	GL
Torgeson, J., Houston, D., & Rissman, L., Decker, S. M., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S. et al., (2007). <i>Academic literacy instruction for adolescents: A guidance document from the Center on Instruction.</i>	A

\* Type of Book: E = Elementary Education; SpE = Special Education; A = Adolescent Education; G = General Literacy; O = Other



Appendix I

Pam's Professional Library Survey List

## Pam's Professional Library Survey List

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Alvermann, D. E., Hinchman, K. A., Moore, D. W., Phelps, S. F., & Waff, D. R. (Eds.). (2006). <i>Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives.</i>	A
August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2006). <i>Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the national literacy panel on language-minority children and youth.</i>	GL
Barkley, S. G. (2005). <i>Quality teaching in a culture of coaching.</i>	O
Beers, K, Probst, R.E., & Rief, L (Eds.) (2007). <i>Adolescent Literacy: Turning promise into practice.</i>	A
Block, C. C., & Parris, S. R. (Eds.). (2008) <i>Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices.</i>	GL
Bradford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.). (2000). <i>How people learn: Brain, mind experience, and school.</i>	O
Christenbury, L., Bomer, R., & Smagorinsky, P. (Eds.). (2009). <i>Handbook of adolescent literacy research..</i>	A
Farstrup, A. E., & Samuels, S. J. (Eds.). (2008). <i>What research has to say about vocabulary instruction.</i>	GL
Farstrup, A. E., & Samuels, S. J. (Eds.). (2008). <i>What research has to say about reading instruction.</i>	GL
Fresch, M. J. (Ed.). (2008). <i>An essential history of current reading practices.</i>	O
Gambrell, L. B., & Morrow, L. M., Pressley, M. (Eds.). (2007). <i>Best practices in literacy instruction.</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.).	GL
Hall, K. (2003). <i>Listening to Stephen read: Multiple perspectives on literacy.</i>	GL
Irvin, J.L. (1998). <i>Reading and the middle school student: Strategies to enhance literacy.</i>	A
Israel, S. E., & Duffy, G. G. (Eds.). (2009). <i>Handbook of research on reading comprehension.</i>	GL

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Jetton, T. L., & Dole, J. A. (Eds.). (2004). <i>Adolescent literacy research and practice</i> .	A
Kamil, M. L., Mosenthal, P. B., Pearson, P. D., & Bar, R. (Eds.). (2000). <i>Handbook of reading research, Vol.III</i>	GL
Marsh, J. A., McCombs, J. S., Lockwood, J. R., Martorell, F., Gershwin, D., Naftel, S., et al. (2008). <i>Supporting literacy across the sunshine state: A study of Florida middle school reading coaches</i> .	O
Marx, S. (2006). <i>Reading the invisible: Confronting passive racism in teacher education</i> .	O
Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). <i>Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement</i> .	GL
McCardle, P., & Chhabra, V. (2004). <i>The voice of evidence in reading research</i> .	GL
Moore, D. W., Alvermann, D. E., & Hinchman, K. A. (Eds.). (2000). <i>Struggling adolescent readers: A collection of teaching strategies</i> .	A
Moore, D. W., & Hinchman, K. A. (2006). <i>Teaching adolescents who struggle with reading: Practical strategies</i> .	A
Pressley, M. (2002). <i>Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.).	GL
Rodgers, A., & Rodgers, E. M. (2007). <i>The effective literacy coach: Using inquiry to support teaching &amp; learning</i> .	O
Ruddell, R. B., & Unrau N. J., (Eds.). (2004). <i>Theoretical models and processes of reading</i> .	GL
Samuels, S. J., & Farstrup, A. E. (Eds.). (2006). <i>What research has to say about fluency instruction</i> .	GL
Smith, N. B. (2002). <i>American reading instruction: Special edition</i> .	O

LIST OF BOOKS IN PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY	TYPE*
Snow, C. E., Griffin, P., Burns, M. S. (Eds.). (2005). <i>Knowledge to support the teaching of reading: Preparing teachers for a changing world.</i>	O
Stahl, K. A. D., & McKenna, M. C. (Eds.). (2006). <i>Reading research at work: Foundation of effective practice.</i>	GL
Stone, C. A., Silliman, E. R., & Ehren, B. J., Apel, K. (Eds.). (2004). <i>Handbook of language &amp; literacy.</i>	GL
Sturtevant, E. G., Boyd, F. B., Brozo, W. G., Hinchman, K. A., Moore, D. W., & Alvermann, D.E. (2006) <i>Principles practices for adolescent literacy: A framework for instruction and policy.</i>	A
Sweet, A., & Snow, C. E. (Eds.). (2003) <i>Rethinking reading comprehension.</i>	GL
Toll, C. A. (2005). <i>The literacy coach's survival guide: Essential questions and practical answers.</i> Newark:	O
Tracey, D. H., & Morrow, L. M. (2006). <i>Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models.</i>	GL
Vacca, R. T., & Vacca, J. A. L. (2002). <i>Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum, (7<sup>th</sup> ed.).</i>	GL
Wineburg, S. (2001). <i>Historical thinking: And other unnatural acts charting the future of teaching the past.</i>	O

\* Type of Book: E = Elementary Education; SpE = Special Education; A = Adolescent Education; G = General Literacy; O = Other

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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## EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- 2012            PhD in Curriculum & Instruction, Utah State University
- Area of Concentration: Reading/Writing
- Dissertation: A Study of Secondary District-Level Literacy Coaches Beliefs about How To Teach Reading
- 2007            Masters of Secondary Education: College of Education, Department of Secondary Education (now TEAL), Utah State University
- Area of Concentration: Reading/Literacy
- Project: *Historical Thinking is an Essential Literacy: The Research of Samuel S. Wineburg*
- 2000            Northern Utah Writing Project: California State University, Chico
- 1995            Teaching Credentials: California State University, Chico
- Multiple Subject Credential (Elementary)
  - Single Subject Credential (Secondary) History & Social Science
  - English Supplementary
- 1994            Bachelor of Arts in History (Honors): California State University, Chico
- Areas of Concentration: Teacher Education and U.S. History
- Honors Project: *A Comparative Analysis of the California, Oregon and Mormon Trails*

## PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL HONORS

1994            Graduated both with both Honors and Cum Laude from the History Department, California State University, Chico

## PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHING AND WORK EXPERIENCES

2004 – 2005    Teacher: Preston Junior High School, Preston, ID

- 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade Drama

1996 – 2001    Teacher: Westwood Jr./Sr. High School (7 – 12), Westwood, CA

- 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts (Department Chair)
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade Math
- Local History
- Junior Varsity Volleyball Coach

1996            Teacher: Summer Institute, Private Industry Council, Redding, CA

1991 – 1992    Chapter I Aide: Columbia School, Redding, CA

## UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2009 -- 2011    Assistant Professor—School of Education, St. Bonaventure University  
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778

University Service—St. Bonaventure University

- 2009—2011 University Code of Conduct Committee
- 2010—2011 University Graduate Council
- 2010—School of Education Graduate Assistant Hiring Committee

2002—2008    Graduate Assistant – TEAL, Department of Secondary Education  
Utah State University (6 ½ years total)

- Research Assistant to Dr. Kay Camperell, (Associate Professor and Acting Department Chair) over multiple semesters
- Research Assistant to Dr. Sherry Marx (Assistant Professor) over 1 semester

- Taught five (5) sections of SCED 4200 Reading, Writing & Technology
- Taught one (1) section of ELED/SCED 6310 Content Area Reading
- Taught one section (1) of SCED 5500 Student Teaching Seminar, an online course already prepared by Dr. Jan Hall of the Office of Field Experiences
- Assisted with a semester-long Content Area Literacy Workshop under the direction of Dr. Kay Camperell at Mt. Crest High School, Hyrum, UT
- University Supervisor of 117+ Student Teachers for the Office of Field Experiences in English and Social Studies
- Managed the calendaring of the Portfolio Interviews for SCED for 2 ½ years
- Supervised the development of the SCED website

#### PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS

- International Reading Association (IRA)
- Utah Chapter of the International Reading Association (UCIRA)
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

#### PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

- 2007 *The Challenges of Secondary Literacy Coaches*. Paper session presented at the American Reading Forum, December, 2007, Sanibal Island, FL. Presented with Dr. Peggy Clelland.
- 2003 *Teaching Text Structure (6 – 12)*. Workshop. 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Utah Council of the International Reading Association, November 2003, Salt Lake City, UT.
- 2001 *Teaching Political Cartoons as a Genre (6 – 12)*. Session presentation. 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Northstate Reading Conference, March 2001, Redding, CA.

## CURRENT PUBLICATION POTENTIAL

Paper based on Master's project, *Historical Thinking is an Essential Literacy: The Research of Samuel S. Wineburg*, to be submitted for review by publication yet to be chosen.

Invited in 2007 to coauthor a chapter in an upcoming edited volume by Dr. George Hruby, Assistant Professor, TEAL, Utah State University.

Acted as a secondary investigator in 2007 – 2008 for a research project on secondary writing conducted by Dr. Alison Heron-Hruby, Assistant Professor, TEAL, Utah State University. I will be coauthoring possible future publications from this research study. (She has since moved to Kentucky where her husband teaches at the University of Kentucky.)

Dissertation topic: A STUDY OF SECONDARY DISTRICT-LEVEL LITERACY COACHES BELIEFS ABOUT HOW TO TEACH READING. The data for this qualitative research dissertation project was carried out in an urban school district in the Intermountain West. This topic has high potential for publication since adolescent literacy and reading coaches are both hot topics. My approach to this topic is new and innovative. The secondary literacy intervention program being developed and implemented in this district may also act as a pilot for the state.