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What can the lit lab do for you? a qualitative analysis of high school literacy lab participants

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WHAT CAN THE LIT LAB DO FOR YOU? A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF HIGH SCHOOL LITERACY LAB PARTICIPANTS

by

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my wonderful husband Hans David and to my two beautiful children Calista Erin and Hans Carter. Your patience, unwavering support, and occasional cheerleading made this work possible. I love you all!

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I would like to express my gratitude to the students and administration at the study site for allowing this study to take place. Also, thanks to my colleagues in the MA in Reading Program. The spirit of camaraderie and support we share made this writing process a more enriching experience. Thanks to my parents Dolores and Michael and to my siblings: Colleen, Christine, Brendan, Sheila, Deirdre, Adam, and Brian. I am the person I am today because of all of you. You are the best people I know!

Abstract

Bridget P. Jaensch
WHAT CAN THE LIT LAB DO FOR YOU? A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF HIGH
SCHOOL LITERACY LAB PARTICIPANTS
2015-2016
Dr. Stephanie Abraham
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of the study is to document the changes in student progress, motivation, and achievement. The specific aim is to see what happens when students replace a traditional study hall with small group guided instruction in a literacy lab. Motivation profiles, goal setting, and reflection are all analyzed. The focus group of students demonstrated changes in how they viewed themselves as learners and in their academic endeavor to achieve goals. The implications for teaching in a literacy lab environment are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"True wisdom lies in gathering the precious things out of each day as it goes by."

E. S. Bouton

I stand at the Literacy Lab door waiting for the final students of the day to arrive. It has been a wonderful first week of school. I have met all of my students with the exception of the single student scheduled during the last period of the day. He quietly approaches me as I wait, "Is this where I'm supposed to be?" "Yes. Hi, I am Mrs. Jaensch. Welcome to the Lit Lab." We take a seat at a small table; I review some procedures and proceed with gathering some information about his goals for the year. As he begins to write down his goals, he pauses, "So if I want to make honor roll, that would be a goal, right? Because I never made honor roll…not even in elementary school when like everybody makes honor roll."

As a teacher and a teacher researcher, this question not only captured my interest but also saddened me. I tried to imagine this, now 10th grade boy, as an elementary student wondering how everybody else was making honor roll and somehow he was not. I wondered if he had shared this goal with a teacher before and what, if anything, I could do to help him achieve this goal. As I had done with all the students that week, I asked him to write three active steps he could employ to work toward his goals. He sat thoughtfully for few moments and spoke aloud as he wrote, "Well, I need to read better cause what I see other kids read in a minute takes me like ten." In that quiet reflection, I heard what could be, the root of the issue. As an experienced teacher, I knew that there could be many variables that impeded his making the honor roll. Either way, in my role

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as the Language Arts Interventionist, I knew I needed to discover ways to find out how this student and all my other students, navigate their high school schedules while struggling to comprehend their texts.

The tenth and eleventh grade students scheduled into the Literacy Lab either failed or earned a D in English the previous school year. Additionally, standardized test scores showed evidence that the identified students warranted supplementary literacy instruction. These quantitative measures were important, but they were not showing me all I needed to know about my students. I recalled Debbie Miller's (2013) text *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades* and the colorful pictures and vignettes of children reading, writing, and fully engaging in literate behaviors. Fast-forward to my Literacy Lab, and I am reminded of Cris Tovani's (2000) *I Read it, But I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers*. What happens in the years between kindergarten and high school, and what can I do to reinvigorate my students' engagement in literacy? What can I do to foster a belief in my students' views of themselves as competent learners? What "precious things" can I gather from this experience that will help me to "understand learning from the students' perspectives" (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 4)?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study is to document changes in student progress, motivation, and achievement. The specific aim is to see what happens when students replace a traditional study hall with small group guided instruction in a literacy lab. My study is significant in that it is based in a new program started in my district. Recognizing that a group of students had literacy needs that were not being met, the district moved to find a

way to provide support. The literary lab grew out of this need. Looking to expand my

understanding of high school small group instruction, I found a qualitative article

detailing the steps taken by a Kentucky school district to meet the needs of students who

can read, but who cannot read well enough to meet the literacy demands of high school

(Blackford, 2002). After conceding that many students were struggling with the breadth

and depth of required reading at the high school level, the district hired reading

specialists to focus on strengthening comprehension skills and expanding vocabulary that

was hoped to extend into the content areas.

The district decision in this article seems very similar to my own district. As the

new Language Arts Interventionist, I was hired with a similar rationale in mind. The

district was concerned about the lack to reading remediation services for the 10th and

11th grade students. My role is to use data to determine which students need to come to

the Literacy Lab in lieu of a traditional study hall or in some cases in lieu of a Physical

Education class.

To develop my understanding of existing research on the topic of high school

literacy remediation programs, I found a study that, instead of focusing on school and

district goals, it looked at "guided study hall" from the student perspective (Welsh,

2012). While my research study is not technically about guided study hall, the need to

consider student motivation and initial resistance may be very similar. The author notes

how many of the high school students in need of literacy intervention already have low

self-efficacy and motivation. I expect that in my research study I will get some push

back from students who resent missing the freedom of study hall or the fun of PE.   As

the author did, I will need to develop relationships with the students so that they see the time they spend with me is valuable and can help them reach their goals.

As the crafting of the literacy lab goals and structure is new to the building, I was tasked with the collaborating with the two other reading interventionists. The district has three high schools and literacy labs were started in the other buildings last year. Therefore, over the summer we met to discuss goals and to begin the framework of a curriculum. In my discussion with the other interventionists, I noticed that much of our thinking connected with the work of Kelly Gallagher in his book, *Readicide.* In *Readicide,* Gallagher notes the dangers of over teaching strategies to point of losing sight of the text (2009). However, he also notes that struggling readers need explicit awareness of what good readers do in order to process rigorous text (Gallagher, 2009). With his framework in mind, the instructional approach in the Lit Lab is comprised of three tiers. The first tier is teaching reading and thinking strategies that students can then apply when working in their English and other content areas classes. The students and I discuss strategies in the context of short chunks of text as well as longer readings. I use articles from Newsela, Tween Tribune, Read Theory as well as other sources. Using a variety of narrative and informational text allows for the practice of different strategies while simultaneously building background knowledge. The second tier is supporting students while they work on school assignments. Some examples are finding the main ideas in the driver's education chapter to create a poster highlighting the laws about texting and driving, completing Cornell notes regarding the reading of *Beowulf* in English class*, writing an analysis of the science thumb wrestling bar graph results, and finding, annotating, and summarizing a current event article. The students' needs vary from day

to day and with groups of no more than seven students at a time, I can individualize and differentiate instruction. Finally, the third tier of the Lit Lab is just time to read. The students may choose to read their independent reading book (they all have one as part of the English curriculum), newspapers/magazines, online blogs, ebooks, or anything else they decide. The goal is to be engaged in reading. I only see the students once a week, so doing whole group books and traditional assignments could be a challenge.

The Lit Lab has been dubbed by my supervisor as an "incentive" program: the students have to want to be there. The Lit Lab program is not for credit and is not a graded class; it is solely to support the students. Since it bears no credit, students do not *have* to come. However, if they do attend, have a good attitude, and do what is asked of them, they will receive ten extra credit points added to their end of marking period vocabulary test.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

The purpose of the study is to document the changes in student progress, motivation, and achievement. The specific aim is to see what happens when students replace a traditional study hall with small group guided instruction in a Literacy Lab. How do students see themselves as learners? How can small group instruction influence how they see themselves as learners? How can goal setting and self-reflection impact student progress and motivation? How do students identify their own learning strengths and weaknesses? How do they describe themselves as learners? As readers? As writers? Will the time in the Literacy Lab impact students' academic growth? What can I do to build relationships with the students?

Story of the Question

My question was a natural extension of my new job. I worked as a middle school Language Arts teacher for ten years, a cooperative preschool classroom coordinator for four years, and a high school English teacher for one year and during the last two have been working toward my Reading Specialist certification, of which this study is a part. During the interview process for a Language Arts Interventionist position at the study site, one interviewer told me they were looking for a person who could make the literacy lab "a place where students *wanted* to be." I do not recall exactly how I responded, but the question resonated with me. After being hired, I immediately jumped into using student data to create a roster for the newly formed Literacy Lab program. I looked a NJ ASK scores, PSAT scores, and report card data to create a thorough and detailed rationale of the students who would get the Lit Lab placed on their schedules. I set up my room, planned lessons, made copies, and by the end of August was ready to get started.

Around that time, my classmates at Rowan and I had to create a question to guide our practitioner research. I was reminded of the interview question and realized that in the frenzy of preparation and student data, I may have been missing a critical piece of what my role was to be. I started thinking more personally about the students who would be attending the Lit Lab. I looked into their files to see pictures of them, checked the sports/activities in which they were involved. Essentially, I started thinking about what I could do to provide an environment of success, literacy engagement, and enjoyment. I started thinking about what I could do to allow these students to see themselves as capable readers, writers, and learners outside of what the standardized scores and report

card grades said about them. I started thinking about how goal setting and reflection

could impact these students.

The consideration of these essential elements of my role as a Language Arts

Interventionist led me to believe that what was happening in the Lit Lab could be the

topic of my practitioner research. Shagoury and Power (2012) say that:

> Tension is defined as both an act of stretching and a state of uneasy suspense.
> Each definition of tension applies to teaching and research. Often, the best
> research questions are in the taut spot between two points. We sometimes walk a
> tightrope between who we are as teachers and learners and who we want to be (p.
> 23).

It is this tightrope between who I wanted to be as teacher and what I needed to discover

as a learner that became the story of my research question. In some ways, I began to

realize that in order for this research study to be authentic and meaningful in the larger

body of work, I would need to learn as much from my students as they needed to learn

from me. I was truly going into an unknown realm as a teacher: new school, new

program, and new position. Equally important, I was entering new territory as a teacher

researcher. Designing a study that would guide my thinking as a teacher and a researcher

as well as allowing my students to engage and reflect on literacy became the "taut spot

between two points" (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 23).

With this in mind, I knew that maintaining close records in a teacher research

journal would be critically important. I knew I not only needed to document my own

thinking, but also to record snippets of student talk, conversations, and reactions.

Working with high school students, I concluded that I would need to develop

relationships and a rapport with each student in order to be able to meet their needs as learners and to have them share their thoughts about literacy. Using time as they entered class and a few minutes as the end of each class to have casual conversations on a variety of topics would give us a chance to get to know each other. Using my teacher research journal to keep track of my interactions with students and the students with each other would help me to track the development of relationships. Considering the building of these relationships as the beginnings of my research, I could then use my notes to delve deeper into my research question.

The remainder of this paper is a qualitative exploration of my research question. Chapter Two will review and evaluate current and historical research on the evolution of study hall, defining and understanding literacy, and engaging adolescents in literacy. Chapter Three supplies and understanding of the context of the study, the research design and methodology, and some background data on the high school Literacy Lab participants. Chapter Four will be a review and analysis of data sources. Finally, Chapter Five will summarize conclusions, limitations, and implications for the field.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

"People who read well often take for granted the real world payoffs. Struggling readers seldom get to experience how great it feels to finish a book. Or how helpful it is to read and understand a chapter in a textbook" (Tovani, 2000, p. 9). These words guide me as I begin the review of literature to more fully understand the depth of my practitioner research question. I am struck by the notion that I have taken for granted the real world payoff of reading well. Without this skill, I would not be able to manage the scope of reading that is required in this literature review, nor would I have acquired the breadth of knowledge to truly meet the needs of my students. It is this real world application that created a tension that led me to the research topic: What happens when struggling high school readers replace a traditional study hall with small group instruction in the Literacy Lab? How will time spent in the Literacy Lab change their view of themselves as students? How can goal setting and reflection impact progress and motivation? How can I build relationships that encourage trust and academic growth?

Evolution of Study Hall

As I began to delve into the literature on the topic of study hall, I was surprised by the dearth of current research on the topic. Research dated as early as 1947, noted that only half of the pupils in study hall were engaged in study based activities, and many students were socializing, but not studying (King, 1947). Furthermore, in 1983, the journal, American Secondary Education, supplied concrete suggestions of how to implement study halls where students are engaged in productive work and study (McBurney & Hatfield, 1983). In an informal Google search of the term "study hall"

many non-scholarly works note that whether used productively to cross off items from a student's "to-do" list or used to relax, study halls provide much needed time to accomplish the tasks of a busy student's life. It seems that the value and expectations of study can vary greatly from school to school.

In 2002, Fayette County Public Schools in Kentucky recognized that students were relaxing, but doing little academic work during their study hall periods (Blackford, 2002). Horrified that at all four high school grade levels, students who "supposedly knew how to read were having trouble with the sophisticated tests, especially with Kentucky's analysis heavy test, the *Commonwealth Accountability and Testing System"* (Blackford, 2002, p. 12), a radical change was proposed. A scheduled elective class, study hall, was converted in to a reading class for below level students. There were no special education or English language learners enrolled. Just "simply put, students who weren't on the reading level they needed to be…they were lost out there…they didn't have any idea how to approach texts" (Blackford, 2002, p. 12). Allocating funding and eventually placing reading specialists in all eleven middle schools and five high schools in the district, Fayette County was at the forefront of a movement to hire reading specialists in secondary schools. Furthermore, Fayette County transitioned away from the traditional study hall approach to offer small group literacy support for students who were overwhelmed by the "breadth and depth of reading required in high school" (Blackford, 2002, p. 13).

In a continued search to develop a further understanding various approaches to study hall, I discovered the work of Welsh (2012). Welsh's study revealed a study hall framework that has similar roots as my study's Literacy Lab. Welsh describes a Guided

Study Hall as a second tier intervention on the school's Pyramid of Interventions that is used to help students who are academically struggling. Students are placed in Guided Study Hall (GSH) because they are failing three or more classes. Parents can request their child be placed in GSH at any time during the semester; however, the school counselors usually place students after one of the three grading periods each quarter. The policy is that students remain in GSH until they are passing all of their classes at which point they return to regular study hall. The stated purpose of GSH is for students to catch up in their classes and then to maintain their progress so they are no longer behind in assignments. The majority of students assigned to GSH remain there for the rest of the semester (Welsh, 2012).

Another school in Washington, DC implemented the guided study hall approach. Feeling that students face many challenges when it comes to learning, Union Intermediate High School principal John Chargois initiated guided study hall as a support network for students failing core content classes. In response to high expectation for student learning, Chargois states, "All students are not the same and some need additional time and assessment and one-on-one mentoring and I feel we provide that" (Brockman, 2007, p. 1). In my review of literature, there seems to be a growing trend to elevate the literacy skills of secondary students, and study hall seems to be a natural setting in which to situate the focus of these essential skills. Educators must accept that reading education must continue past elementary school. Blackford (2002) echoes this sentiment, "We cannot make assumptions that students know everything they need to know about literacy by the time they finish 5th grade. We don't make that assumption about any other subject" (p. 60).

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The Literacy Lab in my study is not comprised of students failing three or more classes, and the focus is not on completing assignments; however, the broad concept of small group instruction to support academic success in wider contexts is similar. The research on guided study hall, while small in scale, is useful in understanding how schools are modifying the traditional study hall period to meet the diverse needs of student populations. Considering the mutable nature of study hall in schools today, allows me to position my Literacy Lab study within a growing educational trend.

Defining and Understanding Literacy

The Common Core State Standards are developed upon the underlying structure that career and college readiness are critical. The importance of career and college readiness call educators to question the "why" of their lessons, especially at the high school level: What real life application does this lesson have? Why am I teaching this? Considering these questions in the broad scope of literacy, spurred the question: What is literacy really? What literate behaviors and funds of knowledge must my students have to be college, career, and most importantly life ready?

As with the value of study hall, a clear definition of literacy is not easy to find. The definitions seem to be reflections of the contexts in which they were written. As the most basic level, the Merriam Webster Dictionary defines literacy in two ways: the ability to read and write and knowledge that relates to a specified subject. The National Center of Education Statistics revised its definition of literacy in 2003 to include an operational definition (skill-based) to complement its conceptual definition (task-based). The original conceptual definition defines literacy as "the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's

knowledge and potential" (NCES, 1992, p.1). Expanding this definition in 2003, the NCES added a skill-based element to the definition of literacy. The amendment notes that literacy is a successful use of printed material and "is a product of two classes of skills: word-level reading skills and higher-level reading skills" (NCES, 2003 p. 1). These definitions offer a basic definition of literacy; however, for the purpose of instructional gains and deeper understanding for my students and myself, these definitions are too superficial. Digging deeper, I discovered that the National Council of Teachers of English seemed to be getting at the heart of my questions about what literacy really is in in the context of career, college, and life readiness.

In 2013, the NCTE updated the definition of literacy in a position statement. This definition states:

> Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the 21st century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies are multiple, dynamic, and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities, and social trajectories of individuals and groups. Active, successful participants in this 21st century global society must be able to:
>
> - Build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought;

- Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;

- Manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information;

- Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts (NCTE, 2013, p. 1).

This definition provides a clear framework in which to situate my study. The concept of literacy as inclusive of communicative practices in many environments, simply put makes sense. This definition also claims literacy as an interactive process drawing on multiple histories and abilities instead of only the foundational practices of reading, writing, viewing, speaking, and listening. Furthermore, this definition considers how literacy influences the social and economic success of individuals in 21st century society. Developing proficiency and fluency in all literacy contexts has immediacy for my 10th and 11th grade literacy lab students. The window of literacy learning, in the traditional school setting, is closing.

The National Council of Teacher of English (2013) definition of literacy, "demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies" and that "these literacies are multiple, dynamic, and malleable" (p.1). This element of the definition combined with the claim that literacy impacts life success, led me to investigate the multiplicity intrinsic to literacy. The New London Group, a team of ten literacy scholars coming from various countries, merged in New London, New Hampshire to develop a new understanding of what they eventually termed "multiliteracies." The group's time in New London culminated in a seminal work titled, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures* (1996); this piece introduced a notion that "multiliteracies overcome the limitations of traditional approaches by

emphasizing how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic, and private lives of students" (p. 64). The New London Group places multiliteracies at the center of a student's future success (1996). They postulate that literacy is an interface of visual and linguistic text forms, which are responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of students (1996). The New London Group's multiliteracy paradigm claims that the primary goals of literacy learning for all students should be to "create access to the language of work, power, and community and to foster the critical engagement necessary for them to design their social futures and achieve success through fulfilling employment" (1996, p. 66). In my consideration of how best to prepare my literacy lab students for success in college, careers, and life, the goals of the multiliteracy paradigm create a powerful approach to literacy instruction.

While schools have always played an important role in the determination of students' life opportunities, the pedagogy of multiliteracies asks teachers to engage student in "transformed practice in which students, as meaning-makers, become designers of social futures" (New London Group, 1996, p. 76). The social futures of today's students are becoming more globally connected therefore students need to be able to read, see, listen and "design" meaning in multiple contexts and discourses. The New London Group (1996) extends the notion of designing social futures by adding:

> Every moment of meaning involves the transformation of the available resources of meaning. When learners juxtapose different languages, discourses, styles, and approaches, they gain substantively in meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic abilities and in their ability to reflect critically on complex systems and their interactions.

Only by dealing authentically with them can we create out of diversity and history

a new, vigorous, and equitable public realm (p. 82).

While working in the Literacy Lab with students, building skills and strategies,

developing metacognitive awareness, and managing authentic task are all paramount to

the student success.

The Matthew Effects

The Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2006)

reports that more than a quarter of all students in grades 8 through 12 do not meet

minimum standards for basic reading ability. According to Jacobs, Snow, Martin and

Berman (2008), half the students who leave high school are unprepared for daily reading

tasks - in banking, in jobs, in health related activities, and in general citizenship. While

there is some evidence that adolescent motivation to read can be positively impacted by

allowing students more choice in reading material, most core subjects are taught using

content driven informational texts, preventing much flexibility. The widening gap

between a student's current reading level and his/her chronological grade level can be

related to Stanovich's seminal work *Matthew effects in reading: Some individual*

differences in the acquisition of literacy.

Although the Matthew Effects was first developed by Walberg and Tsai in 1983,

Stanovich extended its original usage and applied the framework to reading. Originally,

the framework was commonly used in business and some areas relating to academics;

however, Stanovich applied the Matthew Effects as a term to model effects occurring in

the reading process. Using his research behind the Matthew Effects, Stanovich stated

that those who have a stronger foundation of reading would continue to excel, while

those who do not, would remain below level, widening the gap between students. Those with strong phonemic awareness would develop sound-symbol coding more quickly, resulting in quicker development in decoding skills, more opportunities for fluent reading, and acquire a positive mindset towards reading. Whereas, students who display deficits in phonemic awareness are slower at breaking down words, which will negatively affect their decoding skills. As a result, students will receive less exposure to text in schools and have a negative mindset towards reading (Stanovich, 1986). The phrase associated with the Matthew Effects, "The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer" can be applied to this scenario in that those who have found success will continue to strengthen their skills through increasing their reading, while those who struggle will be less likely to read.

When considering the literacy backgrounds of high school students, it is critical to review background information. What do standardized test scores show about the student's ability? What do report cards say? Do the teachers' comments reflect a motivated, but struggling student? Alternatively, has a student concluded that success in school is unattainable and essentially given up trying? While it is often difficult for a regional high school teacher to get a full picture of a student's reading background, being aware of the Stanovich's work in the Matthew Effects provides one lens by which to consider a student's literacy behavior. This lens is often times the one by which students' view themselves as learners. By the time struggling students have reached the 10th and 11th grade, they may be several reading levels lower that their grade and interventions become more critical.

Beating the Odds and Engaging Students in Literacy

Langer discusses the three distinct educational approaches that result in motivated and engaged high school learners (2002). The three approaches are termed: separated, simulated, and integrated. Separated is direct instruction of isolated skills. Simulated instruction "involves application of these concepts and rules within a targeted unit of reading, writing, or oral language" (Langer, 2002, p. 13). Integrated instruction "takes place when students are expected to use their skills and knowledge within an embedded context of a large and purposeful activity" (Langer, 2002, p. 14). Schools whose programs produced students who "beat the odds" blend the three approaches.   Students are engaged in strategies for thinking as well as doing and test preparation focuses on the "underlying knowledge and skills needed to do well in coursework and in life" (Langer, 2002, p. 17).

Langer's research also highlights that schools that are helping struggling readers "beat the odds" offer lessons which have relevance in the students' lives and often connect with other classes and the outside world (2002). This authentic connection to students' lives can be a key point in students seeing themselves as capable readers. Research shows the students who are personally motivated by their own needs and interests will invest time in reading (Guthrie et al., 1996). According to Guthrie and Wigfield (1997), motivation is defined in terms of "beliefs, values, needs and goals that individuals have" (p. 5). Thus, the closer that literacy activities and tasks match these values, needs, and goals, the greater the likelihood that students will expend effort and sustain interest in them. When some students judge reading and literacy activities to be unrewarding, too difficult, or not worth the effort, they can become nonreaders

(Strommen & Mates, 2004) or aliterate adolescents (Alvermann, 2003) who are capable of reading but choose not to do so. Educators must nurture key variables that genuinely motivate students to become engaged readers.

These variables include (a) the right kind of teachers, (b) the skills to read with confidence, (c) the right kind of books, (d) opportunities for directed and focused silent reading that students can read independently during the school day, (e) the promotion of books by every classroom teacher, and (f) superior library and media services (McEwan, 2007, p. 110).

Students must experience success if they are to become more engaged in reading to progress toward proficiency. Schools and teachers must do their best to structure learning situations that ensure success. The feeling of success can expand motivation and can increase a student's feeling of competency as a learner. Selecting materials that are of interest as well as within a student's zone of proximal development are key factors in encouraging success. For example, if a high school student is reading on a fifth grade level and is asked to comprehend text written on an eleventh grade level this will result in frustration for both the student and the teacher. Placing students who are not reading on grade level into smaller ability based groups increase the likelihood that the student will experience success (McEwan, 2007).

Conclusion

After reviewing the literature regarding replacing a traditional study hall with small group guided literacy instruction, there seems to be many places where my study could be of value. When I consider how many hours many high school students spend in traditional study hall during a week, I think the research regarding its value is less than

ample. Alternately, my hypothesis that building relationships with students seems to be fully supported by a wide range of research, however, I think the data I collect about students' reflections will be a refreshing addition to the body of literature. In my district and in many others, there has been much emphasis placed on the value of student reflection. I agree with this emphasis and think that my research could offer a new way for me to see how the students feel about small group literacy instruction as opposed to traditional study hall. Consistent with the tradition of teacher research, I think this literature review, combined with the guiding questions for the study will not only elicit new thinking, but also generate new questions.

Chapter 3

Context

Community

The study site is one of three high schools in a regional school district. Built fourteen years ago, the school met the needs of a rapidly expanding township. The study site is located in one of the fastest growing municipalities in South Jersey with a population approaching seventy thousand residents. At the 2010 United States Census, there were 64,634 people, 23,566 households, and 16,873 families residing in the township. The racial makeup of the township was 83.11% White, 11.55% African American, 0.16% Native American, 2.62% Asian, 0.02% Pacific Islander, 1.11% from other races, and 1.42% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 3.05% of the population. The median household income was $72,811. About 3.5% of families and 5.0% of the population were below the poverty line, including 7.0% of those under age 18.

School

The study site serves 1,384 students in the 9th-12th grades. The enrollment breakdown is 704 male students and 680 female students. Of the student population, 99.1% primarily speak English in their homes. Considering the racial and ethnic groupings within the district, 55.6% of the students are White, 33.7% of the students are Black, 5.1% are Hispanic, and 4.6% are Asian. The current enrollment by program participation shows that 12% of the school population is considered students with disabilities and 31.4% of the student population is economically disadvantaged, and 0% is Limited English Proficient. The teacher to student ratio is 12:1 and the school employs

110 full time teachers. The academic performance of the site is about average when compared to schools across the state. Additionally, its academic performance is very high when compared to its peers. This school's college and career readiness is about average when compared to schools across the state. Additionally, its college and career readiness is high when compared to its peers. This school's graduation and post-secondary performance is about average when compared to schools across the state. Additionally, its graduation and post-secondary readiness are high when compared to its peers. On the most recently reported High School Proficiency Assessment, 88.9% of students scored at or above Proficient and the school graduated 94% of students last year.

The district mission statement declares a commitment to educating a diverse population in an atmosphere of confidence and creativity. The vision of the school is to develop a community of critical thinkers and lifelong learners who are on the path to fulfilling lives in a changing world. Consistent with this mission and vision, the school has goals to raise the level of each student and to provide each student relevant contexts for learning. In order to develop global competence, the school fosters a culture of literacy through critical reading, writing, and personal reflection in all content areas. Furthermore, the school acts on the philosophy that concepts are to be discovered through inquiry and aims to develop the skills, attitudes and habits of mind that will enable a student to act purposefully within the community.

Classroom

The Literary Lab is a brand new program within the school. The two other high schools within the district began the program last year with Title One funding. The success of the program encouraged the program start up at the study site. Recognizing

that 9th graders and 12th graders had literacy supports in place in the form of English Lab and Read 180, respectively, the school noted that struggling 10th and 11th graders needed additional support. In order to provide additional literacy support, the Literacy Lab was created. At the core the premise is to provide the students comprehension skills and strategies which can be applied to improve their chances for success overall. The students attend the Literacy Lab once a week in lieu of either a study hall period or a Physical Education period. The physical space is situated in a small, private instructional room within the Library Media Center. Formerly, the space was a teacher workroom with a copy machine. Now, the room is equipped with a Smartboard, seven student computer stations, a teacher workstation, a large communal table, and shelves filled with materials. The bulletin boards display students' work and the walls are covered with colorful posters with motivational quotes and thoughts about literacy. The transformation has made the space a comfortable and welcoming place for the students.

During a typical Lit Lab period, students participate in a literacy mini-lesson, get teacher assistance with content area assignments, and engage in reading. The program is what has been termed "incentive-based" meaning that the course does not carry credits and is not graded; however, by attending and meaningfully engaging, students can earn up to ten extra credit point in their traditional English class. Essentially, the students have to want to be there. They need to see that engaging in literate behavior can be a pathway towards school achievement and personal pride.

Students

The students who were initially enrolled in the Lit Lab were decided upon during the summer. The initial list was generated by selecting students who earned either a D or

an F in the 9th or 10th grade English class. Then, multiple sources of data were evaluated such as PSAT scores, teacher report card comments, and NJASK scores. Students who had IEPs were not excluded; the main focus was accessing students who had no other supports in place. Essentially, this meant students in need of literacy remediation, but no means, until this point, to receive assistance. Reading the classroom teacher comments on the report cards allowed for a window into the students' abilities. Frequent absences or tardiness was sometimes the root cause for poor grades therefore those students were generally not placed into the Literacy Lab.

The thorough review of data revealed the students who would be initially scheduled into the Literacy Lab. The students' existing school schedules were considered when decided what period of the day each would attend. Able to seat a maximum of seven students per session, students of mixed grade groups were scheduled. Because the philosophy behind the Literacy Lab is to provide needed support, there were seats kept available for students who could potentially be identified through guidance or teacher recommendations as the year progressed.

Knowing that I needed to collect data over a finite time period and keeping in mind that I only saw students once a week, I chose to collect data on a focus group of five students. The group consists of two girls: Hazel, Sara, and three boys: Javi, Travis, and James. Each student completed in interest inventory during the first week of the study. Having knowledge of students' interests and experiences aided me in differentiating instruction while at the same time building rapport with the students.

Hazel is an 11th grade girl who likes to read mystery books and watches similar shows on television. Her favorite class in school is history because she loves "learning

about things that happened in the past and make our present better." She hopes that time in the Literacy Lab will "help her study for any class she needs help in" and "to see where I'm at in my reading."

Due to lack of credits, Sara defines herself as in between 10th and 11th grade. Her favorite thing about school is doing projects, but she does not enjoy reading. In fact, if given a book as a gift she would feel sort of unhappy. Her favorite subject is science because she likes doing laboratory experiments and "learning about why we act and look the way we do."

Travis is a 10th grade boy who enjoys golfing with his friends on the weekends. Although he does not enjoy reading, he does like to read books about professional golfers because he hopes to grow up to become a professional golfer. His favorite class in school is Geometry.

Javi is a 9th grade boy who likes to play and watch basketball. As a 9th grader, he is concerned his grades will prevent him from playing on the high school basketball team. He enjoys reading books about sports and politics, but states that he struggles with comprehension. He really wants to earn an A in English.

James is a 9th grader boy whose favorite thing about school is seeing and making new friends. He loves to play ice hockey for fun and would like to play in the NHL when he grows up. He states the reading is very important, but he does not enjoy reading and does not read at all for pleasure. If he received a book as a gift he would feel sort of unhappy.

Research Design/Methodology

Cochran and Lytle (2009) describe and extend the concept of inquiry. They conceptualize inquiry as a

> challenge to the current arrangements and outcomes of schools and other educational contexts and to call for practitioner research in local settings across the country and the world to ally their work with others as part of larger social and intellectual movements and for social change and social justice (p. viii).

This type of research that challenges practitioners to question and reflect on their own local practice in larger social contexts seems especially fitting for the purposes of my study. The qualitative research paradigm as defined by Cochran and Lytle will be the framework for this study. With a focus on professional practice, the qualitative practitioner research paradigm is not conducted by researchers and questions on the outside, but from tensions and natural questions that "emerge from the day to day practice and from discrepancies between what is intended and what occurs" (Cochran & Lytle, 2009, p. 42). As a unique way to intersect research and practice, "strategies for research emerge and evoke from close, intense, and shifting relationships between students and teachers" (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 4).

The work of John Dewey introduced the concept that teachers are the "channels through which the consequences of education theory come into the lives of those at school" (Wallace, 1997, p. 27-28). Emphasizing the relationships with students as critical to the research process, qualitative teacher research is in some ways in direct contrast with the quantitative research process. Quantitative research relies on "objective, large scale, and distant analyses of issues" (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 4).

Lawrence Stenhouse considers the differences between qualitative teacher research and quantitative large-scale education research as similar to the difference between big agricultural business versus the backyard garden (Shagoury & Power, 2002). A huge agricultural business looks at cost and yield, input and output, large-scale gains and losses. Backyard gardeners tend to individual plants, treating each differently depending on its needs (Shagoury & Power, 2002). The gardening analogy is consistent with the understanding that teacher research is a valuable tool in redirecting and possibly transforming our teaching and our students' learning.

Procedure of Study

Framed by the philosophy and research paradigm of qualitative teacher research, this study analyzes what happens when students are engaged in small group literary instruction. With the Literacy Lab program being brand new, the questions I had were authentic and occurred to me very organically. With the school year beginning at the time I was starting this study, I wondered about the students' view of themselves and in what ways Literacy Lab program could provide an instructive, but also reflective space for the student to grow as learners. The qualitative inquiry strategies used to collect data for this study include motivation profiles, interest inventories, student talk, and reflective writing artifacts.

To honor the naturalistic approach of teacher research I began my data collection with notes in my teacher research journal regarding my own thoughts, my own talk, and student talk on the very first day of school. In contrast to a typical high school first day of class, the students did not have Literacy Lab listed on their schedules. I decided to go to meet each student individually to introduce myself, to explain a little bit about the

program and to ask each student if he/she felt this program could be a valuable addition to his or her schedule. At that point, I provided them with a revised schedule and mailed a copy of the revised schedule along with an introductory letter home to parents. Taking a personalized approach afforded me to set a first impression as a teacher who wanted to know them and who valued their opinion. Each student I met that day seemed to see the value in the program.

Data Sources

To glean sufficient data to develop my research, I used several different sources. In *The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile*, the authors suggest that using adolescents' preferred reading materials and modes of instruction will lead to increased motivation, and perhaps make improvements in reading outcomes (Pitcher et al, 2007). This rationale guided me in the utilizing an open-ended, narrative style interest inventory as the first element of data collected. Knowing students' interests would assist me in selecting reading materials, which would relate topics of interest. Secondly, students were given a motivation to read survey. Data collected from this source offered insight into the student's motivation, sense of self as a learner, as well as an idea of how the student views himself in relation to his peers.

In addition to the above items, I have been observing and tracking daily student talk in teacher research journal. Prompting students to provide feedback on how time spent in Literacy Lab is extending into the rest of their school lives has proved to be a valuable data collection method. My observations and anecdotal notes will enhance my own personal thoughts, behaviors, and reflections, which are being recorded in the teacher research journal. Finally, students have been writing reflection statements about

their progress as a result in the Literacy Lab environment. These reflection statements relate to work toward individual and academic goals extending beyond the Literacy Lab.

Data Analysis

The data collected over the course of the study was used draw conclusion about the Literacy Lab's impact on students. The interest inventories and motivation to read profiles allowed me to chart commonalties among students as well as unique differences. This knowledge will help me to inform whole group instruction while simultaneously implementing plans for individual needs. Considering the age of the students, analyzing student talk and observing student behavior offers chances to understand the students' beyond the scope of what they are willing to write down. Noting informal conversations as they leave class, their interactions while working in the Literacy Lab, and their request to attend outside of their normally scheduled time affords me a sense of each students' increase in motivation. Finally, studying the students' reflection statement in conjunction with my teacher research journal will help me identify the emergence of changes in thestudents' understandings as well as my own changes as a teacher and as a teacher researcher.

Chapter 4

Introduction

Shagoury and Power (2012) say that data analysis is "Finding patterns with your data, viewing each bit of information as part of a larger puzzle you must put together" (p. 136). My data was gleaned from a variety of sources, so the analogy of putting a puzzle together fits the nature of my study. My sources of data involved me talking and listening to students as well as some survey collection tools. While the study extended over four weeks, my data collection did not follow a linear format, but a more organic approach. Therefore, my data analysis reflects a narrative and thematic report of what happened as I worked through the questions: What happens when struggling high school readers replace a traditional study hall with small group instruction in the Literacy Lab? How will time spent in the Literacy Lab change their view of themselves as students? How can goal setting and reflection impact progress and motivation? How can I build relationships that encourage trust and academic growth?

"Human relations are complex, so any analysis of what goes on is a classroom teeming with kids will end up with some unknowns and some ambiguities. Good research analyses raise more questions than they answer" (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 142). Building relationships with most of the students seemed to come naturally; however, I encountered resistance from students who did not want to lose the freedom of a study hall. Furthermore, I see the students once a week, and this program is new to the school so resistance from a few students was to be expected. One of my first observations was that many of the students who attend the Lit Lab do not maintain exceptionally organized notebooks, binders, and backpacks. With this reality in place,

having students remember to return the permission slip to be in the study was a challenge.

I see this situation as a question that developed out of the study and can lead to further

research in this this area. In the spirit of the study being voluntary, I chose not to follow

up with phone calls. Instead, I decided to maintain close notes and data collection on a

focus group of five students.

Motivation to Read and View of Self

In the first week of the study, the five students completed Gambrell and Palmer's

(2007) *Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey*. This survey allowed me a

look into the students' motivation and view of themselves as readers. Interpreting the

results of the survey, certain elements emerged as common threads across the students.

Table 1 is a sampling of students' responses to the survey.

Table 1
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name	My friends think I am a	I read	When I read by myself, I understand	I am	Reading is	When a teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I	When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I	I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes
Javi	Ok reader	Not as well as my friends	Some I what I read	An ok reader	Kind of hard for me	Have trouble thinking of an answer	Almost never talk about my ideas	Every day
Hazel	Good reader	About the same as my friends	Almost everything I read	An ok reader	Kind of easy for me	Always think of an answer	Almost never talk about my ideas	Almost every day

Table 1 (continued)

Name	My friends think I am a	I read	When I read by myself, I understand	I am	Reading is	When a teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I	When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I	I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes
Sara	Okay reader	Not as well as my friends	Some of what I read	An ok reader	Kind of hard for me	Have trouble thinking of an answer	Almost never talk about my ideas	Every day
James	Good reader	About the same as my friends	Some of what I read	An ok reader	Kind of hard for me	Have trouble thinking of an answer	Sometimes talk about my ideas	Almost every day
Travis	Okay reader	Not as well as my friends	Some of what I read	An ok reader	Kind of hard for me	Have trouble thinking of an answer	Almost never talk about my ideas	Every day

It seems that while students define themselves as good or OK readers, many still identify themselves as having trouble responding to questions asked by the teacher. Also of note, four of the students almost never talk about their ideas when discussing books in a group setting. This lack of collaboration may be connected to their perception of themselves as not having understood what they have read as evidenced by having trouble answering teacher questions. The data also showed that when students read self-selected material, they assessed themselves as being able to read some or almost all of what they read. The students each mentioned in their interest inventories (Chapter 3) that they preferred reading materials on topics in which they had personal interests. However, again as evidenced by the self-assessment of having trouble when answering a teacher's question,

there could be a correlation between the text complexity of school based texts and self-selected texts.

In order to assess how goal setting and reflection can impact student progress, the students completed personal and academic goals for themselves at the beginning of the study. In addition to creating goals, each student was tasked with creating three action steps to make the goal a reality. The data generated through goal setting and reflection offers a lens to see how the students' view themselves as learners.

Goal Setting and Reflection

Javi set two goals for himself. The first to get an A in English and the second is to make the school basketball team. In creating his action steps, Javi writes, "The steps I need for my first goal is to pay attention and comprehend the information, do my homework, and stop being lazy. The steps I need for my second goals is to practice ball handling shooting and aerobic capacity." In his end of study reflection, he writes, "The first marking period is the hardest. You fail most of your tests and quizzes. I stayed on top of all of my classes and did well besides English. I stayed focused and did all my work, but for English. I didn't comprehend the material. When I come to the Lit Lab, I really need to keep working on comprehension and writing."

Hazel's goals reveal that she would like to be more social and read eight books by February 2016. The actions steps she defines for being more social include talking more, listening more, and "having a smile." To read eight books by February, she notes that she has to find more books she likes and not pay as much attention to her phone. She feels having an interesting text will give her more understanding and more confidence to share ideas in class discussions. She shared that she likes books about Latinas. We talked about

Sandra Cisneros and Gary Soto as authors she may want to explore. At the end of the four weeks, Hazel reflected on her progress toward her goals. She states, "The Lit Lab helped me improve my grades in English. I had to set goals for myself and little by little I am achieving them. I think I am improving my reading stamina. I look forward to coming to this class because it really helps me, and I like the teacher."

For his personal goal, James wants to make a regional ice hockey team. In the academic arena, he hopes to get straight A's on his report card. In order to reach his personal goal, he states he needs to improve his ice hockey skills. Academically, he needs to "stay organized, study hard, and do homework." In his reflection piece after study, he said, "I kind of miss study hall because a lot of my friends are there, but I didn't reach any of my goals yet, so I need to keep coming to the Lit Lab. I really want to reach my dreams."

Sara's personal goal is to pass all her classes in order to get the credits she needs to graduate on time. She describes her action steps as, "doing all her homework, asking for and getting help, and taking good notes." Her personal goal is to become more social. She plans to reach this goal by, "talking more, getting involved in class discussions, and not being too shy to talk." She says, "Being able to communicate with others will be important to my future…I should start now." Reflecting on her progress, she feels, "proud that her grades are much better than last year." However, she notes, "it is really hard to speak up in class. I am much better when I can be in the small group like the Lit Lab. I have to keep working on this goal."

Finally, Travis sets a personal goal of becoming captain of the golf team. To do this he will take the active steps of practicing more and harder. Academically, he would

like to pass with all B's and C's. To do this he plans to, "use study hall wisely, pay attention more in class, and do all homework." In his reflection at the end of the study, he states, "I am working hard to be the captain, but I really have to keep my grades up to be allowed to get on the team. Coming to the Lit Lab gives me an opportunity to get my work done without distractions, and it is making my reading and test taking skills better."

Looking across the data that emerged from the Motivation to Read Profile survey, goal setting, and reflections, the data showed that having small group instruction in the Lit Lab gave students in increased awareness of themselves as learners and what they need to do to fulfill a personal definition of academic success. Setting very individualized goals and encouraging frequent reflection seems to push students toward deeper understanding of the steps they need to take to achieve personal success. Spending time in the Lit Lab will enable students to take stock of everything that they have accomplished on a regular basis. Celebrating successes, analyzing what they need to do to keep moving forward, and updating goals are all valuable in assisting students to see themselves as competent learners.

In addition to analyzing goal setting, reflections, and motivation profiles, I had to make the Literacy Lab a place of value for students. Since they attend the Lit Lab in lieu of study hall or Physical Education class, I analyzed snippets of talk about their time in the Lit Lab. Over the course of the study, the students made many comments that revealed their thoughts about attendance on the Literacy Lab. I asked Javi if time in the Lit Lab is different from the time in study hall. He replies, "In study hall, I would have done my vocab homework, but I wouldn't have known the words." I asked the same question to Travis and he responds, "You know, Mrs. Jaensch, I need to be here like

two/three times a week. I need help getting my work done." Hazel worried about second marking period. She cannot come to the Lit Lab because she has to make up a marking period of health class. She asks, "Can I come here and eat my lunch next marking period because I know I'm going to need help with my research paper?"

As on outgrowth of these requests, I began to tell students that the Literacy Lab is open during the school's common Lunch and Learn time. In addition to stopping in at various times during the week, many of my Lit Lab students began to bring friends during Lunch and Learn. My Lit Lab students have been bringing other classmates to work on group projects, to make flash cards for vocab quizzes, or to work on current event projects.   The overwhelming response is akin to, "So we can just come here and eat our lunch…even though you aren't our teacher...and you will help us?" I like the idea that the struggling students are the ones who are inviting their peers into "their" space. These snippets of student talk evidence that fact the Literacy Lab students not only see the value in their attendance, but also are willing to share these ideas with their friends.

The Value of Relationships

Building this relationship of trust with the students is critical to the success of the Literacy Lab program. Students need to want to be in the Literacy Lab, and they need to see me as someone who can support them in achieving higher levels of academic success. As the students progressed through the study, teachers began to take note of the students' work in the Lit Lab. One teacher emailed me (and copied our supervisor) about the progress he was seeing in class with Javi. The email reads:

Just wanted to promote some good news. I had an Accelerated student exhibit some really weak writing and reading skills early on. He failed summer reading

due to an inability to comprehend directions (I found out later this was truly the case). He also failed to meet many of the requirements of the pre assessment due to the complexity of the prompt and its directions. I spoke with his parents and they were concerned because he always struggled in language arts and now that he's in high school, they anticipated that to only increase. His sister graduated last year highly accomplished in academics and athletics and his parents voiced worry over their son striving to follow in his sister's footsteps, but often being unable to. I spoke with Mrs. Jaensch about the student and she began working with him. Today, he scored a 95 on his open-ended narrative exam. Awesome. Thanks Mrs. Jaensch! (T. Munz, personal communication, November 4, 2015). This teacher and Javi are both seeing the value of Literacy Lab. In fact, many students began asking if I could email their teachers to let them know about the work they were doing in the Lit Lab. Students began to ask if I could show them how to check their grades online to see if they were missing assignments. All of this evidence leads me to the conclusion that I am building relationships with students, and that the students' engaged time in the Lit Lab is leading to higher levels of motivation, accountability, and personal academic success.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications

"We don't learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience."

John Dewey

Conclusions

Cochran and Lytle (2009) note that teacher research "guides new understandings and improvements in practice at the local site, as well as more broadly" (p. 95). At the local level, I conclude that the participants in the study have grown both personally and academically. The setting of goals and reflecting on those goals has constructed a sense of ambition and academic endeavor that belies the initial data used to place the students into the Literacy Lab. The data suggests that the students see the value in replacing a traditional study hall with small group literacy instruction. By engaging in literacy instruction in a small group setting, the students seem to demonstrate more willingness to share ideas and take risks as learners. McEwan (2007) says "students must experience success if they are to progress in literacy. Therefore, teachers must structure learning situations that ensure success" (p. 111). Placing students into the small group environment of the Literacy Lab increases the likelihood of students experiencing success. In a broader sense, the installation of the new Literacy Lab suggests that the high school is dedicated to the district's mission of developing a community of critical thinkers and lifelong learners who are on the path to fulfilling lives in a changing world. The New London Group (1996) discussed the need for students to be able to read, see, listen, and design meaning in multiple contexts and discourses. I assert that the creation of the Literacy Lab program is a context in which this can occur. Offering a space in

which struggling students can be supported is critical to creating the conditions for success. Armed with self-assessment tools, the students who attend the Literacy Lab are encouraged to carry their new skills, strategies, and motivation beyond the Literacy Lab and to apply new funds of knowledge to all classroom situations. The data shows that the students within the study have indeed begun to do this. Not only are the students beginning to apply their new literacy skills in other classroom contexts, but also they want their classroom teachers to know that they are working on improving as learners and consequently improving academic performance. Communicating with classroom teachers regarding the progress of the Lit Lab students has become a routine part of my school day. In conjunction with creating the conditions for success, I initially conjectured that building rapport with students would be critical. The data seems to support that this was indeed the case. The National Council of Teachers of English (2013) claim that literacy is an interactive process that draws on multiple histories and abilities. Furthermore, the NCTE cites proficiency and fluency in all literacy contexts as influential in the social and economic success of individuals. These realities made getting to know the study participants' interests, histories, abilities, and goals critical. By creating a relationship of trust in which students shared their unique view of themselves as learners allowed me to tailor instruction to meet their individual literacy needs with the overarching hope that this could lead to improved academic and long term economic success.

Limitations

The nature of all research is that there are certain conditions, which may influence outcomes. Qualitative teacher research in no different. By its very nature, qualitative

research is bound by neither the statistical analysis, nor exact measurement. Qualitative research is more exploratory in nature focusing on a fuller understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. In conjunction with qualitative research methodology, this study aimed at understanding the bigger picture of how Literacy Lab attendance could affect student achievement. However, because the study was limited to a focus group of participants, conclusions cannot be fully generalized across the entire student population. Furthermore, the study was completed within a short period of time. Data collection, analysis, and reporting were conducted over the span of several weeks. This limits conclusions to only the phenomenon that occurred during this brief window of a student's educational experience. Furthermore, students' reading histories could be considered a limitation. Stanovich's (1986) research on the Matthew Effects in reading confirms that students who have a strong foundation in reading would continue to excel and those who do not would remain below level thus widening the achievement gap. In no way does this mean that students struggling will always struggle, but is does account for one variable in students' academic success.

Implications

One implication of teacher research is that it encourages the acknowledgment of new questions, which may emerge during the study process. While outside the scope of this study, many new questions occurred to me while engaged in this process. Though my initial research question focused on the study participants and myself, I soon realized that building relationships with other teachers was of great importance. I speculated about how I could further extend my study to include their knowledge, expertise, and rapport with students. I also wondered about how the literacy needs of struggling high

school learners are addressed in other districts. In my review of literature, I did not find many studies that researched a literacy lab approach to instruction at the high school level. The dearth of research on the literacy lab approach to instruction is a further implication of this study. Situating this study in the wider body of literature will offer another means by which to address the concerns about high school literacy achievement.

The framework of teacher research encourages educators to follow their interests and their needs as they investigate what they and their students do. Examining underlying assumptions about teaching and learning encourages the development of research questions based on personal curiosity about teaching and learning. As a teacher and a teacher research, I see immense value in cultivating the same spirit of inquiry that I ask of my students. By developing authentic questions, collecting data, and considering the implications of such data, teacher research is an authentic means to synthesize inquiry, knowledge, and instructional practice.

In conjunction with conclusions derived from this study, one enduring implication is the critical impact of reflecting of my own practice and encouraging students to do the same. Teaching students to reflect on their mistakes and successes is a vital part of the learning experience. Connecting to Dewey's words about reflection and learning, the results of this teacher research experience have led me to believe that inquiry as stance, reflection on process, and application of knowledge are critical to student progress, motivation, and achievement.

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Appendix A

Interest Inventory

Name

Date

1. What do you like to do on the weekends and after school?

2. What is your favorite thing about school?

3. What is your favorite TV show, video game, or app?

4. What things to you like to do with your family?

5. What are your favorite sports to play or watch?

6. Are there any pets you have or animals you like?

7. What is your favorite class and why?

8. What do you like to do with your friends?

9. If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?

10. Have you ever been on a vacation, and if so, where did you go?

11. What are some topics you enjoy learning about?

12. What class do you expect to be the hardest for you this school year?

Appendix B

Goal Setting

Name

Date

Describe one academic goal you have for the school year.

List three active steps you can take to make this goal a reality. What do you need to do to achieve this goal?

Describe one personal goal you have for the school year.

List three active steps you can take to make this goal a reality. What do you need to do to achieve this goal?

Appendix C

Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Survey

Figure 1 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name: _____   Date: _____

10. I think libraries are _____.
  - ☑ a great place to spend time
  - ☐ an interesting place to spend time
  - ☐ an OK place to spend time
  - ☐ a boring place to spend time

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
  - ☐ every day
  - ☐ almost every day
  - ☐ once in a while
  - ☑ never

12. Knowing how to read well is _____.
  - ☐ not very important
  - ☐ sort of important
  - ☐ important
  - ☑ very important

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.
  - ☐ can never think of an answer
  - ☐ have trouble thinking of an answer
  - ☐ sometimes think of an answer
  - ☑ always think of an answer

14. I think reading is _____.
  - ☐ a boring way to spend time
  - ☐ an OK way to spend time
  - ☐ an interesting way to spend time
  - ☑ a great way to spend time

15. Reading is _____.
  - ☐ very easy for me
  - ☑ kind of easy for me
  - ☐ kind of hard for me
  - ☐ very hard for me

16. As an adult, I will spend _____.
  - ☐ none of my time reading
  - ☐ very little time reading
  - ☑ some of my time reading
  - ☐ a lot of my time reading

17. When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I _____.
  - ☐ almost never talk about my ideas
  - ☑ sometimes talk about my ideas
  - ☐ almost always talk about my ideas
  - ☐ always talk about my ideas

18. I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes _____.
  - ☐ every day
  - ☐ almost every day
  - ☑ once in a while
  - ☐ never

19. When I read out loud I am a _____.
  - ☐ poor reader
  - ☑ OK reader
  - ☐ good reader
  - ☐ very good reader

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.
  - ☑ very happy
  - ☐ sort of happy
  - ☐ sort of unhappy
  - ☐ unhappy

Note. Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)